

Mind a' that
ye see but...

1894 Galloway Raiders 2019

#Raiders 125

forget a' that folk
say about ye

The Raiders. The Lilac Sunbonnet. Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills. The Play Actress

MARCH 1894

'Mind a' that ye see, but forget a' that folk say about ye!'

There are not many wiser observations than that to be got for nothing.

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Introduction.

The publication of Crockett's first novel *The Raiders*, on Saturday March 10th 1894 was a seminal event and on behalf of The Galloway Raiders I wanted to commemorate this by pulling together contemporary information, published and unpublished, to give modern readers a flavour of the times and the context in which this book came to the public. By drawing together a combination of correspondence, commentary and contemporary articles and stories, I hope you will experience something of the context and background to this exciting and important time in the life of S.R.Crockett.

I have made this information available in one long downloadable document for members of Galloway Raiders as part of the Raiders125 commemorative project. Much of the content of this document is previously unpublished material from the archive, or hard to find public domain information, some of which may have disputed copyright and therefore while it is perfectly acceptable to read for your own pleasure and insight, I would not recommend copying or quoting from it without checking with me first! I have undertaken a lot of transcription (in a short space of time) and so there are bound to be the odd typo, or gap [] where original text was unreadable (a feature of Crockett's handwriting particularly) but I hope errors have been reduced to the minimum and will not spoil your enjoyment or understanding. Some of the contents will be available in other formats in other places in the weeks and months ahead. But Raiders members get free first sight!

I am more than happy to engage in conversation regarding the contents and their significance – just email me gallowayraiders@gmail.com with questions, thoughts or feedback.

Cally Phillips

February 2019.

Correspondence: March 1st 1894.

Penicuik

March 1 1894

Got any more envelopes. Very useful to lazy man, ie me?

Dear Unwin,

All right! Glad of the other copy or copies when you get them. For format strikes me as handsomer and handsomer each time I look at it; but I do hope that, like a good fellow, you will get a cr 8vo catalogue to bind up with it. The doxed and cropped gentleman in my copy spoils the look of the book. The paper is first rate. By the way there is a bad mistake in the tablet shot opposite the title. I did not see proof of that. 'I know I was NOT in Scotland' There should be no 'Not' of course. You have it right in the 4pp Publisher's note of which you sent me proof. The edition will all be printed off, but in the next it will not need to stand. It makes nonsense.

I am scurrying up all the artists. I have the enclosed note from James Paterson RWS. He has some capital things... impressionist etc but I want that school, which is a local one, represented. Could you get the loan of the blocks from Virtue, and the Artist people. In spite of what he says the Artist blocks would go nicely into the text

With Kind regards ever truly yours

SRC

Earnest A Waterlaw ARA is doing a very small Stickit Minister Ploughing which will make a first rate frontispiece. I think you might go 500 copies. We shall see

SRC

Saucy Suzy Singleton - The Young Woman March 1st 1894

Saucy Susy Singleton had a sweetheart. In fact, several. But these, as it were, simply attached themselves to the staff. John Frobisher was on the staff. The innocent newcomer wondered why Miss Singleton could not possibly be called Saucy Susy. Susy did not herself understand. She was demure as a kitten, and perfectly certain herself that she never meant any harm; men are so foolish, especially young men - and how could she help it, you know? Of course you knew; we all knew. If not, we found out. We had seen Miss Singleton drop her eyes till the lashes swept her cheek. There was a little well of dew concealed somewhere under them. Their owner kept them down till they were very large as to their pupils, and the little well of dew brimmed over and made them dark and moist; then she flashed them at you. That is, if you were worth it.

And that is why she was called Saucy Susy Singleton.

But she never could understand it herself. She dropped her eyes and called it most unjust. Did not *you* think so? At that moment you had the benefit of that upflash of the downcast eyes. And you thought so too. In fact, you were quite sure that she was a much maligned maiden, full of innocence and guilelessness.

Then you joined the staff and carried parcels.

But John Frobisher was the old guard. No one knew his position with Susy Singleton, least of all John Frobisher himself. He was not engaged to her. He owned this sadly to himself. He had no privileges, and insisted on no rights. He took the mitten at the church door when it pleased Susy to take the arm of some more favoured *attache* of the staff, temporarily raised to dazzling glory for the night. He went home without feeling aggrieved. But nevertheless he was on hand if wanted. If not, it was also well. Susy was never tender to him - at least, only once that he could remember, when he had stood on the road wet through from seven till nine, waiting for Miss Singleton to conclude an evening call to a classmate who had received a new gown from London.

She said when she came out, 'I can't take your arm, it is such a sop. Why could you not keep yourself dry, John?'

John began to explain, but Susy cut him short.

'What a goose you were to wait!'

John admitted as much by his silence.

They came to Miss Singleton's door. That young lady put her best glove for a moment on John Frobisher's arm.

'But then you always were a silly old John!' she said, and ran in quickly so as not to take the curl out of her white hat feathers.

John Frobisher went home with a beating heart.

Truly he was, as Saucy Susy Singleton said, a very 'silly old John.'

All this happened in the town of Westerton-on-Sea.

Now, Saucy Susy Singleton was not a member of the aristocracy, and she had no titles, unless it is honorable to be loved by everybody and to be called Susy. Her father was a painter and decorator, and went to church twice every Sunday. Think of that! And Susy never played tennis instead of going to church on Sunday mornings. So you see in what ignoble society they moved. In fact, they dined in the middle of the day, and let the servants out in the evening. This shows what common people they were.

But Susy was just as pretty as though she wore the strawberry leaves, and all her friends were devoted to her - especially Old John Frobisher.

John was thirty-two, and was therefore quite a patriarch. He was Director of the School of Art at Westerton-on-Sea. That is to say, he was a drawing master. He was

called Old John because he wore a beard. A moustache was the rule among the young men of Westerton, and not much of that. But John Frobisher wore a beard, large and fair, of a colour something between hay and straw, according to the light on it.

All the young men of Westerton made fun of John Frobisher's beard when he came -unobstrusively and behind his back, be it understood, for Old John had broad shoulders, and could sky a ball over the pavilion at the Westerton Cricket Ground.

Henry George Mason, chief clerk at Hughson's intimated that he would be hung if he would make a billygoat of himself by wearing such a thing. And in order to prevent a fatality he wrote for a bottle of Professor Quackwack's 'Invaluable Specific' and rubbed it all over the smooth skin of his chin boldly, and more cautiously between the fifteen hairs on his upper lip. There were just fifteen, seven on the one side and eight on the other. Henry George Mason had seen Susy Singleton looking at his moustache. He was sure of it. She must be mentally comparing it with John Frobisher's hay-coloured yard-brush. Henry George waxed up the ends of the seven hairs on the one side of his nose, and the eight on the other, and waited for Professor Quackwack to take effect.

But a stranger came to Westerton-on-Sea. He came in the off season, when the lights are out, and the whole town sheeted down under misty wrappers for repairs.

At these times Westerton exists on church socials, occasional dances, and the enormities of Susy Singleton. I mean unmarried Westerton of church-social rank. There were, of course, such things in Westerton as politics, babies, and each other's characters to excite numerous people, who had contracted themselves out of the Susy-Singleton set.

But in that set, for at least a week, there was nothing talked of but the mysterious and fascinating stranger. Whence he came no one knew. He was pale, and his dark hair clustered becomingly about a marble brow. He spoke little, but apparently thought much. He attended church, and sat leaning his head wearily upon his hand, - some said that it was in order to show his ring.

Yet he had good impulses, and when it was discovered that the Reverend Hilary Lambert had called upon him, and approved of his principles, there was a general move who should be the first in Westerton to take him up. It came out that he had been born in Italy, and that his name was Signor del Blanco. His popularity was assured. There was a run on Italian novels at the circulating library. Young ladies turned the leaves tremulously to see if the hero had the thrilling syllable del half-way through his six-barrelled name. If not, they tried another. The vogue of the Signor was assured. They called him the Signior. It is a way that Westerton folk have. It was so fortunate he was Italian. Signior is so much prettier than Herr, and so much easier to say than Monsieur.

There were other Italians in Westerton, but in the quite other society. It was remarked that the Signior did not like to hear them mentioned. They were in the fried-fish trade in the winter-time, varying this with the ice-cream in summer. So it was no wonder.

But the Signior continued his immense social successes. He wore shirts with lace on the fronts and waistcoats with coral buttons, which opened very low to show the lace. He wore strange, foreign looking cuffs fastened with enamelled bracelets, and whenever he appeared in public he was swathed in an immense fur-lined coat; which Mr Hughson himself, having a chance of running his hand over it in the ante-room of St Thomas's Church hall, declared to be genuine and worth sixty pounds. And Mr Hughson was a judge of furs especially imitation.

The Signior spoke with a certain sententious slowness, strange in so young a man, except when you came to remember that he was a foreigner.

Sometimes he was asked to say his nationality, but he would only say that he was of Italian parentage. He had also been educated abroad, he said.

Old Mr Singleton, who was exceedingly English and brusque, put the question direct to the Signior.

‘Signior del Blanco, are you an Italian?’

‘I have had no immediate connection with that country since my boyhood,’ said the Signior cautiously.

‘Of what country are you then?’

The Signior smiled patiently, ‘I am of no country,’ he said calmly.

‘What shall we call you, then?’ continued Mr Singleton, pressing his point.

There was a long pause.

‘If you feel it necessary to call me anything,’ said the Signior, caressing his moustache with his white hand so that the rings sparkled, ‘call me a citizen of the world.’

So ‘The Citizen of the World,’ he was called by all the younger men. For we hated him, especially those of us who were on the staff of Miss Susy Singleton. For there is no mistake about it, he cut us out. We wondered what Old John Frobisher thought of it. But John was not demonstrative, and whatever he thought he said nothing, but contented himself with stroking his beard and waiting for Susy as usual till he saw if she wanted him.

But she never did. She went home with Signior del Blanco. The other girls said this was quite like Susy. It was not that she wanted him a bit; but she was a horrid girl, and must always step in and have the best. It was Susy’s way; but they were not at all reconciled to the fact.

But Signior del Blanco smiled upon all, and so kept the peace. He sang *tirra-lirra* songs at the socials, and bowed with his hand on his heart at the applause in a way that made all the young men sick to look at him. We stopped calling him ‘The Citizen of the World’ and called him ‘The Organ Grinder.’ Henry George Mason asked him one day where he had left his monkey.

But the Signior was equal to the occasion, which indeed was an easy one.

‘I have *not* left him,’ he said. ‘Here he is!’

And he pointed at Henry George Mason.

Cruel Susy Singleton, who was on the Signior’s arm, laughed.

‘Good evening, monkey!’ she said, as she moved away. And we all said that it served Henry George right. He was always putting his oar in. Though we hated the Signior, I don’t think any of us were very sorry for Henry George.

It was John Frobisher’s turn next; but the Signior came off rather differently, for John Frobisher is not quite a Henry George Mason.

The St. Philip’s Choral Union were to give a recital at the inland town of Clumpington, eight miles away. Clumpington was understood by Westerton-on-Sea to be inhabited by clodhoppers, and was duly held in contempt. They had a cattle market there, but no tennis club. This was enough. It stamped the place. So it was an artistic mission to the St Philip’s Choral Union to instruct Clumpington as to the possibilities of art. Also the girls thought the drive home pleasant, when the young men were nice, and there were enough of them.

We went on three coaches; but Signior del Blanco hired a dogcart, with a high-stepping horse, from the Victoria livery stables, and asked Susy Singleton to drive down with him. Susy did so. What happened has not been divulged; but when the concert was over, Susy intimated her intention of going home by coach. It may be that she had had enough flattery, for indeed the Secretary of the Clumpington Committee of Reception had been insufferable. We young men could not understand how Susy Singleton could endure him, though he was adjutant of the local volunteers and wore a frogged coat. We did not see anything in him.

At any rate, Susy Singleton went in the first coach, and got the best seat too, to which she had no claim, being an intruder. But that was also just like Susy.

Somebody, however, had to go with the Signior, because there was no room for another in the coach. Nobody would consent to go, so John Frobisher had to do it. We expected this of him, and we all sighed a sigh of relief when he mounted up beside 'The Citizen of the World.' Susy Singleton was very silent all the way home. Perhaps she was tired. It could not be that she remembered the adjutant's frogged coat. No, we were quite sure of that. He was quite a a jackanapes.

The coaches got to Westerton first. Then John Frobisher drove up alone.

'Where is the Signior?' we asked in surprise.

'He stopped behind,' said John Frobisher calmly.

'Stopped behind?' we said all speaking together.

We were astonished, for the snowflakes were falling fast and the wind was rising.

'I tipped him out in a snowdrift,' said John Frobisher, patting the horse's head quietly.

We crowded about him.

'Why did you do that John?' we clamoured.

'Ask the Signior,' said John shortly.

'Do tell us, John,' we said. 'Was it for something he said?'

Only Susy Singleton never said anything. But she handed John Frobisher her wraps, and took his arm as if it had belonged to her for a thousand years. However, we were none of us jealous of Old John. He was too still and sober to be dangerous.

We expected that the Signior would challenge John Frobisher the next morning; and Albert Fenton, who is romantic, went up to offer to be John's second. John said that he was much obliged, but he thought he could manage to be his own first, second and steerage as well. He seemed quite cool, though one knew that he must be putting this on.

Yet no challenge came, which was strange.

The vicar's wife was passing the vicar's study door next day, when a stout, red-faced, rather jovial-looking lady was shown in. She had green and pink flowers in her black crape bonnet. She wore a fringed shawl with black jet bugles, and carried a little black basket.

The vicar's wife is the least curious person in the world, and she did not listen. She would scorn to do such a thing. But she overheard accidentally, which (as she told the sewing circle) is quite a different thing.

She heard the lady of the bonnet and the black bugles saying something to her husband, and she could tell by the way Hilary said 'Indeed!' that he was much surprised. It is strange how much you can make out of the tone of one word after living with a man twenty years. So, at least, the vicar's wife told the sewing circle.

'An' 'ee's a good husband to me, sir,' the lady was saying, 'but 'ee's young an' must 'ave his fling. Now 'ee's in a good place as gentleman's gentleman, an' 'ave been hall over the world with master. An' 'im an' me (as was cook) made it hup, an' we got married nigh six months since. An' we was quiet an' happy till Halergnon, which his name is White, took master's clothes an' come down here for a change. I didn't mind about 'im takin' the clothes, becuase 'ee's the man to take care on 'em - better than master, as is careless by natur'. An' you'll excuse me, sir, but master has sent one of them tellygrafts that he's to be expected tomorrow, an' I wants to get Halgernon home quiet.'

The vicar's wife said that she came away then because she did not want to listen. She only heard her husband say that he would do his best.

But the vicar's wife did better than listen to more. She came and told the sewing circle. The sewing circle dispersed within sixty-three seconds by a stop watch, and all Westerton knew within half an hour.

Mrs White found her loving Signior del Blanco, and marshalled him to the railway station, with the great fur coat of 'master' over her arm.

John Frobisher saw them off, and shook hands with them both. 'The Citizen of the World' was sulk and would not speak. But his wife was exceedingly cheerful and contented.

'Ee's not doin' himself justice, sir,' she said.

'You see, 'ee's downhearted about master a-comin' 'ome afore 'ee was expected; but 'ee'll come all right and 'ee's the lovingest of husbands.'

Just then the train moved out of Westerton station and left the good lady nodding and fluttering till the bugles clashed. But 'The Citizen of the World' was grumpy and sat in a corner.

John Frobisher stroked his beard and turned on his heel.

This was eight days ago, and we were never more surprised in our lives than when the vicar read out in church, as calm as 'Dearly beloved brethren -' 'I publish the banns of marriage between John Frobisher and Susy Singleton, both of this parish.'

He was so quick about it that we had no time to think of just cause or impediment, though we all tried to remember some.

And Susy was in church, and never blushed a bit. The girls said it was very bold of her. John Frobisher said nothing when we congratulated him ironically at the door of St Philip's. He only stroked his beard and said, 'Come along, Susy.'

So they marched off together as cool as if they had been married ten years. Was there ever such an assurance?

All the young men say that they never thought it of John, but the girls say it is just what they expected of Susy Singleton from the first.

Commentary – Surprise, surprise?

You may be surprised, or even confused to read this kind of story from the pen of Crockett – certainly, it could hardly be more different from *The Raiders*. Whatever your response to it, I think it is useful because it illustrates that Crockett was writing for a number of markets; indeed that he was more than capable of writing for different markets at the same time and that he was generating a lot of content at this point in his career. In March 1894 the success of *The Raiders* was not assured and he was well aware that the reputation of *The Stickit Minister* would not sustain him professionally, it was a stepping stone. At this point *The Raiders* offered the prospect of Crockett breaking free from the short story/serial market. As far as I'm aware it is the only one of his full length works that was issued solely as a novel. At the time the big (and smart) money was in serial fiction and Crockett's agent A.P.Watt made sure that he got maximum bang for his buck. This is perhaps one reason why Crockett has not been vaunted as a 'classic' novelist. While many of his contemporaries wrote for serials; Hardy, H.G.Wells to name but two; bridging the gap between the stand alone 'literary' novel and the more popular style whose aim was mass market readership was difficult. I suggest that instead of focussing on whether Crockett had the 'skill' to write literature, we might focus on where and how his work was commissioned and the necessity behind that. Where it was placed was a commercial decision which had an impact on how he was 'received' both in his own time and subsequently. *Saucy Susy* is an example of 'bread and butter' work, but as *The Raiders*, *Mad Sir Uchtred* and *The PlayActress*, to say nothing of *The Lilac Sunbonnet* and subsequent works, testify – he was well able to write across a range. Sometimes he had to subdue his original 'voice' but generally he manages to let it shine through no matter what the restrictions of the commission. Only when we consider him from a more nuanced perspective will we find a more coherent understanding of his place in our literary and cultural history.

Correspondence– March 5th and 6th: Jumping the Gun 1.

Postcard postmark Penicuik Mar 5, London Mar 6

TFU (T Fisher Unwin, Crockett's publisher)

I shall send a copy but I suppose you have one already.

Dear U. I have just seen the Scotsman article. It has first place and does the trick as far as Scotland is concerned. It shd be reprinted at once or quoted in advts specially part about the breeze and the weather, but it is all good and very well written. I got a start when I saw it, but as you sent it I presume it is all right. It does not matter much what other Scottish papers say now. It was a very wise doing of yours to send an advance copy to them.

Ever

SRC

TYPED THEN SIGNED NO DATES

I am coming to town on Monday 12th March and if it's convenient for you would call at your office on Tuesday morning (13th Feb) at an hour convenient for you, and have a general talk over things. Will that do? There are many points of past and future I should like your mind upon. Please do not address anything here after Friday or Saturday.

My town address will be

c/o Mrs Henley, 11 Craven Street.

*I am not going to a hotel but to a quiet lodgings this time. I shall have work to do. Indeed I am bringing up *The Playactress* to see if I can get something done to it. It will need a considerable doing up, before it has the polish of *The Raiders*. I have been over the latter again carefully in its present handsome form, and there are hardly half a dozen changes to make. Am rejoiced to hear of the editions going off well. Of course (teaching egg-sucking again) you will watch and have the second edition ready to put on the market as soon as the first is exhausted. There was an awkward hiatus of three or four weeks when no copies were to be got at least in Scotland.*

Your letter in Scotsman duly appeared Tuesday morning

Ever yours

SRC

Commentary – Who writes what?

'The Scotsman' published a review article on Monday March 5th. Unwin sent a letter which went in on 6th saying the novel wasn't published till 10th. [However the letter is inaccessible to me at the moment – hidden behind the 'firewall' of the British Newspaper Archive.] There are a number of problems which emerge from this. Some revolve around potential trouble for Unwin linked to the fact that if anyone wrote about the content of a work before it was published, this in effect constituted publication and so advance copies were not legal. Crockett thought that Unwin had sent a copy to 'The Scotsman' which suggests he was unaware of this issue. Later correspondence never fully clears up how this 'leak' occurred but since the original publication date was set at March 1st and Crockett had been telling people this, it is most likely just an error. The decision to delay publication date happened quite late in February. It is possible (perhaps likely) that the review article was written by Professor David Masson, but we can only speculate how he came by the book prior to publication. It is feasible that it had something to do with Dr Alexander Whyte. Either way, Unwin was clearly unhappy and, it seems, blamed Crockett. This presents an example of the kind of 'trouble' that dogged him, either through Crockett's naivety or deliberate malice from others regarding correspondence with Stevenson. It should also be noted that Unwin had something of a reputation as a difficult man. Previous critical analysis has tended to construe as Crockett being less than honest or overly zealous/ambitious. I think there is a balance to be drawn with more primary source information. I see him placed between a rock and a hard place on many occasions. There is a potentially deeper, more complex version of this whole period, but for now, suffice it to say there were plenty of people with axes to grind against Crockett both in his own day and since, who have mediated or created the 'facts' as we have come to know them. It's for us to read the lines (where available) as well as between them!

The following notification is most likely the 'offending' article, though there may be more hidden behind 'The Scotsman's' firewall.

The Scotsman Books of the Week. Monday March 5th 1894

The number of new books that came out during last week was not noticeably large; but it includes some works of importance. Messers Hodder & Stoughton, London, published a new volume of 'The Expositors Bible' containing a commentar... []

Mr T. Fisher Unwin, sent out 'The Raiders' a Galloway romance by Mr S.R.Crockett.

The Raiders: Being Some Passages from the Life of John Faa, Lord and Earl of Little Egypt. By S.R.Crockett. London T.Fisher Unwin.

The cruises which Mr Crockett has hitherto made in the literature of fiction have been short and tentative. In 'The Raiders' he strikes out boldly into mid-stream, and lets I bear him far into the charmed realm of romance. At the very putting-out he proves himself native to the element. It is safe to say that this tale of the Galloway of the early part of last century will bring him at a bound into the front rank of those writers of the day who may be said to have founded among them a new school of

Scottish romance. 'The Raiders' is alive and throbbing with the Gallwegian spirit; the strong and wholesome air of the hills and seas of the Stewartry blows through it. In all the earlier chapters one seems to hear the accompaniment of the tides of the Solway chafing around the rocks or racing over the sands around Isle Rathan. When the scene changes, and instead of watching the game of bo-peep between Patrick Heron and the Black Smugglers, among the caves and churchyards, we keep him company in hunting and in being hunted by the Gipsy Outlaws who defy the law in the recesses of the Dungeon of Buchan, the feeling of the moorland is rendered as freshly and truthfully as the feeling of the shore. The breeze blowing across the moss-hags has the scent of the heather and the peat stack, and the cry of the whaup and the moorcock is in the air. Although of wild adventure there is full measure, heaped up and running over, and although the daring experiment be made of writing the narrative in the first person and the style of the period, you instinctively know that in its marrow the tale is true - true in the scenery, in the local traits of character, dialect and customs, and in the human nature which it contains. Yet one might search the map in vain for Isle Rathan and Dullarg; in more senses than one, they look towards Killantringan. On the chart of romance, which draws the line of the Solway shore somewhat differently from matter of fact mapmakers, they will be found set down along with Ellangowan and Brokenburn. But when Captain Yawkins and his tarry-breeched crew have sailed away out of the story, to end by swinging in the winds on the sands of Leith, and when we give chase to the raiders who have made the 'red cock crow' on the roof of Craigdarraoch and carried off May Mischief and many head of Galloway nolt to the hills, we are led on to solid ground.

Every step of the way can be followed to the ford of the Black Water of Dee, the Links of the Cooran, the Wolf's Slock, and the outlaw's hold in the isle of Loch Enoch, behind the shoulder of Merrick and back again by Glentool and the Cruives of Cree. Once again Patrick Heron is made to retrace this path, although in the opposite direction, and on a still more perilous quest. It is an experiment full of risk for the romancist as for his hero; for after the scene of the charging of the Brig of Dee by the maddened cattle, the gruesome adventure of the Black Sea Chest, in the shieling of Craignairny, and the fight with the bloodhounds above the 'Murder Hole' of Loch Neldricken, other incidents might well appear tame. But Mr Crockett brings himself and the Laird of Rathan triumphantly out of the ordeal, after witnessing in the Sixteen Drifty Days spent in the famous 'Auchty of the Star' the final retribution dealt out by the hand of Providence on the evil-doers of Loch Enoch and the Wolf's Slock. Young Heron, who tells the tale, has been spoken of as the hero. But a strong case might be made out for giving the place and title to Mary Maxwell - 'May Mischief' - surely one of the blithest, sweetest, and most mettlesome lasses of fiction, and almost too good for the Laird of Rathan himself. Yet better, perhaps, is the claim of Silver Sand. It is betraying no secret, since it is made known to us on the title page, that this peripatetic vendor of keel and scythe-sand, who, with his not less wonderful dog Quharrie, fairly haunts the book, is none other than 'John Faa, Lord and Earl of Little Egypt.' But he is many things besides - the Loathly Beast, the terror of lone churchyard and moorland, the good-natured Brownie of the farmhouse and 'recording angel of the night and fields;' and, strangest of all, a Cameronian gypsy. In this last Mr Crockett perhaps overstrains the readers [grasp] of faith. Old Richie Maxwell, the Covenanter and smuggler, who in the same dying breath prays and invokes savage curses on his enemies, charging his sons that, while he himself forgives those who have wronged him, they are to pursue them to the death, is perfectly in keeping with his age and his type and locality. But a gipsy of the gipsies, who is also of the sect of the Hillside men, and has 'lain at the back of Peden,' strikes one as a monstrosity. Minor faults in construction, plot, and character drawing are, no doubt, and unconscious touches of imitation of older romancists might be noted. Yawkins himself has borrowed several of

the family features as well as the pursuits and haunts of Dick Hatteraick. Much more grateful is the work of pointing to the many rare and original excellences of the work. Sammler Tamson of Mossdale and his 'through-gaun' wife Eppie are worthy of a place in the gallery of national character, near to if not abreast of some of the best remembered of Scott. As much can be said of that exceedingly plainspoken old Scottish gentlewoman, Lady Grizel Maxwell, and her like minded and tongued servitor Jen Geddes and of other minor characters. The episodes of the 'Forwandered Bairn' and the tragedy at the Linn are as fine in power of narrative and in pathos as Mr Crockett (or anybody else) has done in their style. The Free Church minister of Penicuik is at home in divining and expressing what is passing in the hearts and thoughts of the sturdy people of the Glenkens and of the Stewartry shore. Nor are all the pictures flattering. It was 'dourness' rather than devotion (according to the shrewd Laird of Rathan) that took the feck of the Galloway folk to the hills in the Killing Time. *'It is ever the nature of Galloway to share the credit of any victory with Providence, and to charge it wholly with any disaster. 'Wasna that cleverly done?' We say when we succeed. 'We must just submit,' we say when we fail.'* A 'comfortable theology' that is not unshared by other districts of the country. An extract from one of Silver Sand's Brownie experiences, related to himself, may best exhibit, along with the fancy, the insight and the humour of the author, the power he shows in the handling of the strong and racy dialect:

'Then,' continued the story teller, 'there were nichts on the corn rigs when the shearin' was at its height, and the farms lay sleepin' under the cool, clear air - nichts when it was just heaven to work among the sheaves and bear the crap ,crap! of the short-bladed reaping hok driving through the corn. Every sheaf was like a friend. Every stook added another to the weel-buskis army that made glad the heart and exercised the brain of the bit farmer body when he cam' oot in the mornin' an' gaed dudderin' about the oothooses, an' syne cam' dawnerin' doon the field to plan the wark for the day.'

'Hi,Rab!' he would cry to the cotman, as he saw my handiwork, 'come ye here.'

Then Rab would come oot, dichtin' his neb, frae the byre, belike whaur he had been preein' the sweet milk can, or else the moo' o' the byre lass, wha kens - gye sheepish an' shamefaced whatever.

'Rab! D'ye see that?' his maister wad say (me up the muckle tree a' the time.)

Rab looks, Rab better looks. The fashion of his countenance changes.

'The Lord preserve'a,' he cries, as he catches sicht o' the dizzen mair rigs cut, past the mark whaur he had finished at the gloamin' o' the nicht afore, 'the midnicht fairies had been here. I'se gang hame. I'se no work wi Broonie.'

'Ye muckle nouw,' says his maister, 'be thankfu' that Broonie things so weel o' the place as to work on it. A licht heart an' an untired leg has the lads about the bit whaur Broonie works. Heartsome be his meal o' meat puir fella.'

So the neist day at e'en there's a basin o' parritch an' a great bowl o' milk set oot at the barn end.'

Galloway folk should be proud to rank 'The Raiders' among the classics of the district.

Commentary – Mauricewood.

Tuesday March 6th.

I have not been able to conclusively date the first magazine publication of this story to this date, as the copy I've worked from was in an 'annual'. But references suggest that this is the date of first publication of this contentious piece. It's certainly in stark contrast to Susy Singleton and shows, at the very least, Crockett working across the 'market'. 'In the Matter of Incubus' was inspired by the 1889 Mauricewood Pit Disaster. For me, this story stands testament to the range and depth of Crockett's writing skill – and his interests. His attitude is one of criticism rather than praise or complicity. It shows clearly that he was not a 'sentimental minister' writing 'Kailyard' work (as is still too often a criticism levelled at him from the highest sources – who should know better) as much as it shows that his career as minister was on a shoogly peg from very early on! McKill, Grindlay, Job and Sleekman? If you've read any Dickens you'll understand what he's doing here.

'In the Matter of Incubus and Co.'

(First published in 'Vox Clamantium: the gospel of the People' by Andrew Reid, - believed to be in the March edition 1894.)

THIRTY years ago Carronbrae feared God. A year ago it feared the Incubus Coal and Iron Company. To-day the fear of the Lord is getting a second chance. The originator of the Incubus Company was a far-seeing German analyst from Dusseldorf, who, upon departing this life for parts unknown, left his daughter to the senior of the present partners in the business, and his Latinized name to the great concern which had grown up at Carronbrae in the Scottish westlands.

It was thirty years since Carronbrae entered upon its present career of prosperity. Mining contracts were made. Royalties were arranged; the railway brought to the works; and the tall stagings, with the swiftly spinning wheels, were set up on the hillside, where for generations only the gowan had bloomed.

McKill and Grindlay were the sole partners in the Incubus Coal and Iron Company. It was Hector McKill who had wedded Sophia, the serious-minded daughter of Fritz Inkob, the Dusseldorf chemist, and settled himself down to rule Carronbrae with a firm but indubitably pious hand. Grindlay, on the other hand, was an unmarried man who attended to the worldly side of the connection, and did the swearing in the office. He was a red-faced man with a massive watch-chain of shining gold, and was not particularly attached to any of the Carronbrae kirks. But he was known at every drinking-bar within fifty miles of the pithead.

Hector McKill was ruling elder in the Kirk of the Valley, and a great hand at all the prayer-meetings. Indeed, it may be said, he kept them up; for if his foremen did not come out to hear their ruling elder and master jerking petitions out of himself much as though he were working a ship's pump, they might discover some fine morning that at the works of Incubus and Company, there was no further use for their services.

The Valley Kirk was not the fashionable kirk of Carronbrae. The county families did not frequent it, and perhaps that was one reason why it seemed to offer fairer scope for the peculiar talents of Hector McKill than the Kirk of the Hill. For one thing,

the Kirk of the Hill did not believe in prayer-meetings. But it had an admirable and eminently aristocratic Primrose League attached to it, and the minister was said to be shaping for candles on the altar and the eastward position. Also most of its elders were better judges of whisky-toddy than of prayer-meetings. Grindlay, for instance, was a member of the Hill Kirk, for he was a man of no pretensions to religion, and he found himself at home there. But Hector McKill wrought the piety end of the business to perfection. It does not do, in a thriving business, to overman any department. Yet in the Incubus pits this division of labour wrought well. If it were desired to get rid of a man who belonged to the Valley Kirk, and was a regular attendant at the prayer-meetings, Partner Grindlay dismissed him. He had been taking up with ranters, to the neglect of his proper business. If the man attended the High Kirk (or, what was very much the same thing, if he attended no kirk at all), Partner Hector McKill called him into his office, wrestled with him in the spirit, prayed with him for his soul's good and then dismissed him without a character. The men on the whole preferred Grindlay's rough 'We've no use for you. Get out of this!' to the suaver methods of Hector McKill. Now, so long as the Reverend Silas Sleekman was the minister of the Valley Kirk of Carronbrae, all things went according to the will of Hector McKill. Incubus and Company had the rule all its own way. The Valley Kirk, with a splendid history of protest against the oppression of king and state, had become only the ecclesiastical arm of Incubus and Company.

McKill was indeed not so imperious and autocratic in the pits of the Carronbrae hillside as he was in the session of the Valley Kirk. The minister, Mr. Sleekman, was an admirable man of unblemished character, a great authority upon the typology of the Book of Numbers in his way, both a gentleman and a scholar.

But he was so thoroughly under control of the blatant personality of Hector McKill, that at all meetings he confined himself to saying, 'I think what our dear friend has proposed will be best!' The rest of the session murmured and abode their time, for they were not men to be thus set aside. The congregation seethed in silent and helpless discontent. But there was no mistake that the arm of Incubus and Company reached far in Carronbrae, and the man who openly opposed it in the long run went to the wall.

Yet somehow Incubus and Company, with all their graspings, did not seem very greatly to prosper. They paid the poorest wages, and, as a consequence, they had only good men in the most indispensable situations. But there was no manner of doubt that in Job Henderson, their underground manager, they had an excellent man. He was firm with the men under him, and, in consequence, at first he was not over-well liked. But as the men of the Carronbrae pits grew to know Job Henderson, they found how often his calm, mild strength came between them and the wrath of the partners of Incubus and Company.

It was at this time that the Act of Parliament was passed requiring all pits whatsoever to provide themselves with a second exit within a certain time, under pains and penalties to be enforced by the newly appointed Government inspectors. Job Henderson openly rejoiced, and started the construction of the spare shaft at once. McKill and Grindlay were not often down the workings, and it was some time before Hector McKill knew that the work was proceeding.

But as soon as he heard of the matter, he ordered such nonsense to be stopped at once. It was a waste of money. Besides, there had never been any accident in the Carronbrae pits, and the whole thing was wholly unnecessary and uncalled for. Surely a pit which was under the protection of the prayers of so noted a vessel as Hector McKill could come to no harm. The ruling elder of the Valley Kirk did not put this last into words, but his whole manner inferred it. Job Henderson went to lay the matter before the junior partner, Walter Grindlay. He found him at the bar of the Royal, telling a sultry story, which was causing uproarious laughter.

To him he stated the necessity, and what had been ordered. Grindlay, in a very brief manner, condemned the expense.

'But the Government inspector?' said the underground manager.

'Leave him to me. I know how to work such cattle,' said Walter Grindlay, returning to the bar.

So Job Henderson went back to the works and wrote out his resignation. He was a man with a family, and he did it painfully. But he could not consent to play with the lives of men. He stated the reasons for his resignation in his letter to the firm of Incubus and Company. Walter Grindlay laughed as he read it.

'Risk to the lives of men!' he said. 'Well, I suppose we pay them for taking the risk, and they know it as well as we do. I never did read such cant.'

But the senior partner spoke seriously of it at his prayer-meeting. He had been that day, he remarked, wounded in his tenderest feelings by one whom he had trusted a serpent whom he had taken from the gutter, and warmed in his bosom. Yet he was eminently sustained in his affliction, and enabled to bear it all meekly.

So the spare shaft was stopped on the morrow, and a new manager came to the pit whose conditions of service were that he obeyed orders without question, made no complaint, cut down the working expenses, and increased the profits. He was a good man, this new manager, according to his lights; but his lights were the conditions of his managership, and the continued good-will and favour of Incubus and Company.

The shifts came and went with great regularity. The pit filled and emptied, and the narrow twin air-shaft, which ran alongside the main incline or 'dock,' was half filled with steam-pipes; for it was, according to Incubus and Company, a great pity to have an empty space which could be filled with what was useful.

But one or two men who spent their lives down there in the deeps of the earth tightened their lips, and said a prayer for wife and bairns that had little in common with the laboured paragraphs of which, on the evenings of the prayer-meeting, the senior partner delivered himself before going home to arrange for cutting down his men's wages ten per cent, all round.

Then came the Government inspector. The men had heard of his coming, and looked for great things. The obstructions were cleared away from the bottom of the abortive second exit, which had been carried so far and then abandoned at the end of the rule of Job Henderson.

But Mr. Grindlay had the inspector well in hand. He had treated him generously before he came, and Grindlay was the best of good company, and made himself liked when he chose. The inspector descended, admiring, as he did so, the perfect working of the cage, and feeling the strong draft of air. He walked along the working faces; he saw the men at their tasks. He passed the end of the partially constructed tunnel, which Grindlay indicated with a wave of his hand.

'Our new exit,' he explained generally.

'Ah, indeed; that is right!' said the Government inspector, for who could look too narrowly into the affairs of so pleasant and hospitable a man of the world as the junior partner of the great firm of Incubus and Company?

Alas that there was none to tell him that the tunnel ran up to within a hundred yards of the surface, and there stopped where, on the day of Job Henderson's resignation, the last hole had been driven, and the work dropped to cut down working expenses!

'Now,' said Mr. Walter Grindlay, hospitably, 'we had better go up to dinner. It is hot and stuffy here; and I told them to ice the champagne. You are to dine with me, of course; I arranged that. Our old man is a teetotaler, and I thought you would prefer it.'

And the Government inspector did prefer it.

This was all that the inspection of the Carronbrae pits accomplished, and the report was enough to certify that there was no health-resort in Britain so entirely salubrious in climate and appliances as the pits of Incubus and Company.

But, in the mean time, the senior partner was having trouble considerable in his ecclesiastical relations. The Reverend Silas Sleekman was laid quietly away to rest from his labours in the graveyard in the valley, and there was a vacancy in 'McKill's kirk,' as the commonalty named it irreverently. This meant the reaching of candidates, and an exceeding interest among all the members in the election. But it was generally thought indeed, taken for granted that, though patronage had been abolished, Hector McKill would get in his man. Mrs. McKill (nee Incubus), for her own part, meant to have a young man with at least some tendencies to ritual. Hector did not much care one way or the other, but he was resolved like iron to have a man who would do as he was bidden, and who knew his place. In fact, he had found the very man. Providence had brought him to hand.

There was yet another Sleekman, and it was thought that the people would like a second of the breed one of the same meekness and ineffectiveness as that Silas who had recently laid himself down to rest from labours which apparently ought not to have tired him very much.

The Reverend Alexander Sleekman was a probationer of some standing, meaning thereby that he had been out of college several years without finding a resting-place for his foot in kirk or manse. But he had preached several times for his relative during the summer holidays; and Mr. Hector McKill, with that interest in the young for which he was famous, had sounded the lad, and found him of a very adaptive and facile disposition. The senior partner thought that this would be most suitable in a minister of the Valley Kirk, who, above all men, ought to be a model of humility. Mr. McKill liked all his sermons from the Old Testament, and especially rejoiced in denunciations of the wicked which, being interpreted, meant those who did not agree with Hector McKill. On the other hand, Mrs. McKill loved expositions of 'the little horn,' and the settling of the exact year and day of the end of the world. She subscribed to the Prophetic Herald, and questioned all young preachers as to their views on the literal fulfilment of prophecy.

So the Reverend Alexander Sleekman satisfied both the chief inhabitants of Gripp Castle, which stood among sprouting larches over the hill out of sight of the pits. He was asked there to lunch. He stood with his hat in his hand on the gravel walk when he spoke to Hector McKill, and he expressed the most lively delight at finding a copy of the Prophetic Herald, 'my favourite journal,' on the drawing-room table.

Mr. Sleekman did not mean to miss the good things of this life if he could help it. He was altogether a suitable young man, and Hector McKill said, 'He'll do fine!'

Now, the senior partner in the great firm of Incubus and Company had not the least doubt that he should be able to carry the congregation of the Valley Kirk along with him. Indeed, that was a factor which he had not so much as considered. Were not most of the members his own employees? Hector loved the word. He was their employer, their master; and it would be a strange thing if he could not hire them to think as he thought as well as to do as he bade them.

Yet it will hardly be believed that there was rank treason and rebellion against so good a master being freely mooted in the pits themselves, and preparation was being made for the congregational meeting, with a view to disappointing his earnest and just expectations. This was a matter to which it is eminently painful to allude. We hardly like to enter into the depths which are to be found in human nature. Hector McKill made it a matter of public prayer that he should get his own way, and Mrs. McKill frequently consulted the Prophetic Herald. Who would dare to gainsay two such single-minded and powerful Christians?

Now, in the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland, a selected number of those who have been proposed as candidates for the pastorate have to preach on one or more Sabbaths before the congregation, so that the people may judge as to the merits and popular gifts of the man whom they elect to rule over them in spiritual things.

Accordingly, the Reverend Alexander Sleekman reached first. He had a plaintive and monotonous voice, and he selected his text from the Prophet Daniel to please Mrs. McKill. But he was far from pleasing the rank and file of the free and independent members of the congregation. They complained that he whined whenever he did not snivel.

'That craitur can never preach. He can only peep and mutter!' said Angus Gilruth, gardener and theologian.

'That piece o' machinery wad na work bena (except) when Hector McKill turned the handle!' said Sandy McClymont. And so the word ran through the congregation.

But Hector went about the next day, saying to every member and adherent he met, 'You were at the kirk yesterday, John. Wasna yon a grand sermon?'

And John thought that it was, having regard to the fact that he was speaking to his master. But he relieved himself when he sat on his hunkers at the pit-bottom, waiting for the cage.

But there was one of those who came to preach whose name was David Oliphant. He certainly did not peep and mutter. He had a message to deliver, and, at least, he stood and gave it forth like a man. He had long been wrestling with a poor district, where sin was the handmaid of poverty, and where prayer was not so divorced from the brotherhood of helping as it was in the theology of Hector McKill. He prayed with the people in the evening, and saw that they got milk for their babes in the morning.

In the Valley Kirk he preached on the address of Paul to the men of Athens, from the Hill of Mars.

'This agitator,' he called him, 'this inciter of the populace, this socialistic lecturer, proclaimed his message, and the Athenians listlessly hearkened.' For God hath made of one blood all the nations of men that are upon the face of the earth.' And the citizens smiled at one another as they heard the new doctrine. Did the little swarthy Jew think himself of the same race as themselves? And the Roman centurion smiled behind his hand like a stalwart British policeman in his pride of place. The slave-owner shrugged his shoulders and turned away. But on the skirts of the crowd, here and there, one listened and set his head nearer to catch every word. The helot heard a new thing. Of the same blood; equal in the new faith; neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free; all free and equal in Jesus Christ the new Prophet.' Swart Ethiopian and flaxen-haired Goth, they paused ere they went to their task, hearing of 'a new burden and easier yoke,' a brotherhood of man! There was hope for them in the new faith. No wonder the common people heard him gladly, and the rich and increased in goods passed him by, for it was a helot's faith, this of the Nazarene, and once more to the poor the gospel was preached.'

David Oliphant's words rang through the Valley Kirk like the accents of a new inspired prophet. Such things had never so been spoken there. The workers had been dulled into apathy. Use and wont alone took them to their accustomed places on the morning of the Sabbath day; but the words of the preacher had fallen dully on their ear as something with no possible bearing upon their daily life.

And as the kirk emptied itself, there were many who whispered one to the other, 'We have heard a new thing to-day!'

But they said little aloud, for Hector McKill was condemning the unhallowed doctrine in no measured tones. He would write to the officers of the Kirk about the men whom they sent out to preach to vacant congregations. He never had heard the pulpit so prostituted before. It was all he could do to keep still in his place. There was

not a word of spirituality in the whole discourse. The young man was a disgrace to the presbytery that licensed him.

‘But he'll no get off with the like of that!’ said Hector McKill.

Yet he took him over the hill to Gripp Castle for dinner, and tried to overwhelm him with his importance. But David Oliphant was not overwhelmed. He had not met the great ones of the earth in vain, and he could give a reason for the faith that was in him. He told Mrs. McKill several things about Christ and his religion which considerably astonished Hector. More than that, he had the passages at the end of his tongue to bear out his doctrine.

‘He said to me in the smoking-room,’ said Hector to his astonished wife, ‘that there was no doubt that Jesus was a working-man, and His followers Socialists.’

‘But you surely did not sit and listen to such doctrine?’ queried his wife, aghast.

Hector McKill looked uneasy. He shrugged his shoulders and played with his watch-chain.

‘But, Sophia, in a manner he proved it that was the awkward thing.’

‘Nonsense,’ said Sophia, sharply; ‘I wish I had had him through my hands. I would puzzle him with the ‘little horn’ and the ‘time and a time and half a time.’”

Which indeed was likely enough, for David Oliphant devoted most of his attention to the vials of wrath which were being poured on the earth at the present time, and the horn that he was interested in was mostly to be found on the palms of the workers with whom he consorted, and in the hearts of such firms as Incubus and Company, whose employees they were.

So it was decided at Gripp Castle that Alexander Sleekman was to be their minister, and that Hector McKill should write to all the vacant churches, and warn their committee against the life and doctrine of David Oliphant.

‘I owed this duty to the Church at large,’ said Hector ‘such a wolf ought not to be allowed to masquerade in fleecy clothing among the silly sheep.’

But at the congregational meeting a sharp and horrid surprise was waiting for this worthy and notable follower of the apostles. He proposed the Reverend Alexander Sleekman. He lauded his likeness to his worthy predecessor. He called him ‘a chip off the old block’ (an irreverent person in the back benches interjected the syllable ‘head’ at this point, which raised a laugh among the unthinking). Hector McKill repeated his observation with greater emphasis, and again the objectionable syllable came from the back of the church. Then he went on to advert to the excellent doctrine which they had heard in the discourses of Mr. Sleekman, and the admirable manner in which the preacher had settled disputed points in the prophetic interpretation of Daniel. It would be a blessing of no ordinary calibre if they were privileged in the Valley Kirk to listen Sabbath after Sabbath to such teaching. For his part (Hector McKill's part), he asked nothing better than an eternity of such Sabbaths. He concluded by proposing the name of Mr. Sleekman, and he said that, were Mr. Sleekman elected, he should personally make it his business to give him all the assistance and advice in his power in fulfilling his onerous ministerial functions in their midst.

It will hardly be believed, yet it is a fact that at this point a deliberate wink was observed to pass round the congregation. Hector McKill caught Sandy McClymont in the act, and Sandy coughed and pretended that some obstruction in his throat was bringing the water to his eye. Man is by nature depraved.

Then there was a pause in the proceedings, till one of the firemen at the Carronbrae pits seconded his master's motion, as he had been ordered that morning to do. He kept his head down, and appeared very unhappy. But he had ten of a family, and was two quarters back with his rent. Then, without note or comment, Angus Gilruth stood up and moved the election of David Oliphant. A member at the back of the hall, believed to be another of the pit firemen an unmarried man swiftly seconded the motion. The worthy moderator, who was minister of a neighbouring church, all

innocent of the complication of interests, rose to put the matter to the vote; but Hector McKill, choking with anger, was before him.

He fell upon David Oliphant, his character and doctrine, with tooth and nail. His doctrine was unspeakably bad. His opposition to constituted authority showed what manner of man he was better than anything else. His character, also, was more than doubtful. He would be a disgrace to the parish, and, for one, Hector McKill would give no support to a congregation which would call such a man to rule over them.

'I and my wife,' said Hector, speaking after his manner, 'have had opportunities of diagnosing his character denied to the others here present, and we can vouch that our impressions were not favourable.'

Mrs. McKill nodded her head violently. David Oliphant's views on the 'little horn' had been very unsatisfactory indeed.

'But I do not doubt that this factious opposition to such an admirable man as Mr. Sleekman, against whose character and doctrine there is no breath of suspicion, is confined to one or two irresponsible persons of no particular standing.'

Mr. McKill paused for a reply.

The people did not reply; but every man and woman made ready to vote.

Yet when the election proceeded, and a show of hands called for of those favourable to the candidature of the Reverend Alexander Sleekman, only eleven could be counted; and there was even a considerable uncertainty about some of these, for as soon as Hector McKill took his eyes off several of those who voted for his candidate, strangely enough their hands instantly dropped to their sides. These were all married men with large families and in the upper places about the Carronbrae pits. The moderator, indeed, declared that he could only count seven at any one time.

Then came the vote on behalf of David Oliphant. A whole forest of hands arose. The moderator thought there were about two hundred. Hector McKill was on his feet all the time, turning round like a teetotum, trying to focus his attention upon those of his employees as were voting against him; but it is a strange thing that for every one of these whom he really got his eye upon, and by dint of frowning prevailed upon to keep his hands beneath the pew, at least two others who were not so focussed held up their hands, so that the moderator could not in any way make the numbers of those voting for David Oliphant less than two hundred and ten. He rose to give his decision, and was interrupted by Hector McKill. But the moderator was not under the thumb of Incubus and Company. He lived in another parish, and so he made short shrift of the ruling elder, who only managed to say that he washed his hands of the responsibility of bringing such a man into their midst.

When David Oliphant came to Carronbrae, he was welcomed with a great assembly in the Valley Kirk to do him honour, and down in the pits and along the working faces there was joy which did not readily find expression. And, what pleased these swarthy miners as much as anything, their owner, the senior partner in the great firm of Incubus and Company, was explosively indignant, and refused to have anything to do with the ceremony. This was a capital introduction to the confidence of the workers of Carronbrae, and there was a larger contingent of them at church on Sabbath than had ever been there before. But the McKills' pew was empty, and the congregation whispered to each other that Hector McKill, lord of Gripp Castle, and of the serfs of the Carronbrae pits, had left the Valley Kirk, and betaken himself to the Kirk on the Hill. The 'little horn' went with him.

But this was not yet decided. Hector and his wife were that day deep in debate as to their future action. Should he secede forthwith, or remain to be a thorn in the side of the new minister? He could not hope to have the same authority in the Kirk of the Hill. On the other hand, the Reverend Septimus Easiman was ready to have any views or none upon the 'little horn,' and he was entirely sound on the question of the rights of employers; so that it was finally decided by the conclave at the Castle that

immediate withdrawal from the tainted and disgraced Valley Kirk was absolutely necessary. So Hector McKill 'lifted his lines' and removed his Bibles during the week.

Then, being without employment for his facility in petitioning, he started a prayer-meeting at the offices of the company, and invited those who attended to send in notices of requests for prayer. But the notes received showed the evil minds of the senders. One stated that the sepulchres of the neighbourhood stood much in need of a new coat of whitewash, and urgent prayers were asked for the same. Another remarked upon the tattered condition of the hypocrites' cloaks, and suggested a fresh supply. Another referred to the 'second exit' at the Carronbrae pit as a subject for Mr. McKill's petitions; while yet another suggested a rise of ten per cent, and an examination of the insanitary condition of the company's houses. The proposed prophetic prayer-meeting in Mrs. McKill's drawing-room was abandoned, and in the town of Carronbrae all things went on as they had done before.

The Government inspector came every three months, and strolled along the mains of the pit accompanied by the junior (drinking) partner. The senior (whitewashed) partner kept out of the way. Then at a certain fixed point Walter Grindlay proposed a return to the surface in time for dinner. So, with a magnum of champagne before him, the inspector rested from his labours and found all things very good.

And David Oliphant, cleared of Incubus and Company and all their works, preached the gospel as it was given to him, and instructed his people, among other things, that the fatherhood of God meant the brotherhood of man.

But on a day unforgotten in Carronbrae, swift and unexpected as lightning, fell the terror of great darkness.

At Carronbrae pit No. i, the day shift had turned out at six in the morning, stolidly taking its way to the pit to do the day's darg. In the little red houses the men and boys breakfasted mostly with little said; and as silently rose to go, each with his dinner-can along with him, into the still sunshiny morning. The men went to labour. The women abode at home, worked, and waited. The laddies followed their fathers as soon as it was time for them to leave school and go to work.

'Weel, I'm awa!'' was the more effusive greeting heard as the men shut to the doors. Yet some of the younger of them took a look at wives and bairns ere they went forth, for to all who win the coal from the deeps of the mine, there is the grim risk that they who go forth in the morning with head erect, may be brought home before ever evening come with drooping head and feet that are carried first through the door.

So in scattered groups, fathers with their boys walking manfully by their side, sometimes running a few steps to keep up, and single men in silent companionship with their mates, they took their way up the hill to the pit-mouth.

The wheels spun round opposite ways on the tall scaffolding. The cage sank and rose. The engineman pulled his levers and tested his throttle-valves. Down to the bottom of the long dark shaft and along the 'incline,' the parties of men and boys sped to their work. Tools clinked as the men lifted them to their shoulders.

Fifteen hundred feet beneath the yellow cornfields, fifteen hundred feet beneath the great house of Gripp Castle, where Hector McKill, senior partner in the firm of Incubus and Company, was not yet out of bed, lay the workings where the picks began to play a merry tune. The pony-boys brought the waggons quickly along the dark underground ways. Here and there the lamps glimmered and danced over the mounds of rubbish. From the abandoned workings there came strange faint smells, and the lamp-flame sometimes forsook the centre wick and seemed to cling strangely to the wire of the Davy frame.

Few of the men in that great pit remembered as they wrought that the yellow sunshine of the autumn day slept above them. For the pit hummed like a hive, and there was little enough time for thought.

The door-boys heard the whistle of the men running the coal-trucks through the dark passages, and threw back their doors. Then with a yell and a gust of wind, a long line of cars rushed through the open doorway. Sometimes one of the men upon them would wave a hand kindly to the lonely boy, left by himself in the darkness. And the flames of their hat-lamps streamed back like the smoke-track behind a railway engine.

Suddenly that day in August, as the boys were bringing their loads of coal to the bottom of the 'dook,' John Roy, the 'bottomer,' looking upward, saw thick volumes of smoke pouring down the shaft of the long incline.

'The pit's afire!' was his quick and terrible cry.

There was but one way to the surface; but one to the outer air, and the flame had gripped it, as John Roy well knew when he saw the red glow in the heart of the smoke.

Now, doubtless it was his duty to bide by his signals, for the bottomer is the man at the helm, and only he can communicate up that long incline, nearly a third of a mile in length, with the men in the engine-house on the surface, whose levers and wire ropes control in turn the movements of the cage by which alone safety can be reached. But John Roy had little time to think. Bewildered, stunned, not knowing which way to turn for the blinding downpour of smoke and the crackling of the deadly fire among the timbers of the pit, he leapt into the cage, and stood with his hand on the bell-lever.

But before he 'belled himself away,' he called to the three boys who stood beneath with their loads ready for the trucks,

'The pit's afire, lads; come away with me!'

Then these three lads, whose names deserve to be written in golden letters, though no more than boys in years, returned to the bottomer the answer of brave men. They said

'No; we will gang and warn the men.'

John Roy jerked the lever thrice, and was whisked through the smoke and fire just in time, leaving the hundred men below to their fate.

But the three boys sped on their way. The weight of many men's lives was on their boyish hearts. Breathing deep to give them vigour, they ran through the gathering smother, which, instead of feeding the great pit with pure air, was carrying down the deadly smoke along all the faces of the pit. They raced with bent backs under the black archways. Every moment they were risking their own lives to warn their comrades.

'The pit's afire; run, men, run!' they cried, and at the word each man and boy dropped his tools and ran for the bottom of the incline.

But when they arrived there they found only the red fire glowing down from above on the dull waters of the 'sump,' and the cage gone, which ought to have been there to take them to safety. Some started for the air-shaft; but it was blocked with steam-pipes, and no man could climb thirty yards up it. The legal second exit had, as we know, never been driven, and a hundred yards of solid rock lay between. So down there men and boys were penned, with the great fire roaring in their only exit. They were no better than rats caught in the trap set for them by Incubus and Company, and baited with thirty shillings a week. But the senior partner was a pious man, and had often prayed for them only he had not finished the second exit. The thought must have been a comfort to them at that moment.

But on the plans of the pit, approved and passed by the Government inspectors, there were splendid exits, wide and clear. All was completely arranged on paper. It is a pity that men cannot escape on paper.

And above in the sunlight women wailed and wept, and watched and waited. Through the long and anxious August night the women-folk, many of them with their babies, stood about the pit-head. Hector McKill, in a white waistcoat, moved among them, telling them that they had better go home; they could do their men no good.

Suddenly a woman broke down, and the weird, unforgettable sound of the Irish 'keen' went out on the air. It nearly broke the hearts of those that heard it. Grief among the Scottish women was quieter more patient, stiller.

But when the dead-carts began to rumble, and the bodies were brought home, the women broke loose from all restraint, and clambered on the waggons, crying for their husbands. Then David Oliphant, who had gone from house to house, ran along to meet each cart, and, reverently laying the cloth aside, he identified the poor clay, and so drove the husband home to his wife's fireside, which he had left sound and well that morning.

Yes, the boys had warned the men! The three heroes who thought of no Victoria Cross had done their deed, and now they lay quiet one in his father's house, with the deadly reek oozing stilly out of his nostrils; another as quiet, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. But one lay at the bottom of the black water of the 'sump,' so deep that even the ruddy fire scarce glimmered down upon him. But the boys had warned the men.

On a quiet Scottish Sabbath they were laid in their resting-graves on a breezy hilltop, looking down on the lace that had been their death-trap. The fields over them were yellow with the corn, but under the sheaves fifty men lay buried in a deep common grave. They had a service on the green, and the lift of the widowed and orphaned voices as they sang their psalm almost broke our hearts,

'Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale, Yet will I fear none ill; For Thou art with me, and Thy rod And staff me comfort still.'

And at the open-air service, behind the rows of weeping women, the children played upon Carronbrae Green, or stood staring open-eyed as at a show, with never a father among them all. But Hector McKill went to the church with a conscience void of offence. He had subscribed a hundred pounds to the relief fund.

Now David Oliphant had a word to say, and he said it. 'I do not stand here to apportion blame or to decide legal quibbles; but I say that the men who are responsible for failing to provide a way of escape for these men are responsible for the loss of these hundred lives, and one day shall have to answer for the murder before the bar of God.'

Two mornings after David Oliphant found on his table a legal letter from the solicitor of Incubus and Company. The letter informed him that he had laid himself open to an action for libel, and requested the name of his solicitor. David Oliphant had no solicitor; but he had an answer, and his answer ran thus :

'I specially declared in my address that I had nothing to do with apportioning blame before human tribunals; and I shall rejoice to meet your clients at the bar which I mentioned, on the great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, when all wrong shall be righted, and all evil punished.'

David Oliphant's faith was simple; but, like many simple things, it wore well and carried him through. He heard no more of the action for libel.

The water had filled the mine. It was seven months before it was again pumped out of the flooded pit. Then once more the explorers enter the dread place where the smoke choked, the fire burned, and the water drowned so many lives that were bright and young. They are again at the pit-bottom. They pass along the dripping passages, from which the great pump has sucked the water. They clamber over falls of rock which have thundered down from the roof. They shade their eyes and hold up their lamps as they go down the slope.

'Stop! what is that?'

This is what they see dark shapes, leaning against the wall, some sitting as if in thought, some resting at ease as if asleep, some lying prone on their faces.

'I declare,' said one of the searchers, 'they were sitting there, after seven months under water, as if they were waiting for the oversman to call the next shift!'

He was right. The Great Oversman had called the next shift, and every man had answered to his name. One little lad had run upon the first alarm to find his father. The men who lifted him had strong arms, but the tears ran down their cheeks upon their grimy hands. And well they might, for the boy lay lovingly and confidingly with his head upon his father's knee. He had found his father. Perhaps so had they all. At any rate, it was better to die with them than to live with Hector McKill.

Incubus and Company still survives, but does not greatly prosper, though Hector's white waistcoat is broader and whiter than ever. But, though he got clear in the Government inquiry, the Great Court of Appeal has not done with him yet. There is a certain white throne to be set up; and even if there be no hell, as the new-fangled folk say, God is going to set about making one specially for Hector McKill.

S. R. CROCKETT.

Commentary - After Mauricewood.

The Mauricewood Pit Disaster of 1889, during which time Crockett was Free Kirk minister in Penicuik, was an event which pitched him against the Kirk hierarchy. Brought up a Cameronian, when that branch ceded in 1876 the closest branch of 'belief' was the Free Kirk. So this is the 'brand' into which Crockett trained. However, it is clear from the start that this was not a match made in heaven! Cameronian Crockett, always determined to stand up for the underdog and for the ordinary folk; voiced the opinion that the unmarried widows of miners should be accorded the same financial recompense as those legally married. He petitioned many rich and famous people (including Robert Louis Stevenson) to help fund the relief effort. The conflict which he experienced here perhaps offers some explanation to his eventual decision to leave the ministry in favour of a career in fiction. It took him another four years to achieve this, however one cannot help but think the die was cast very early on. He certainly planned his actions; when the family moved from the Free Kirk Manse in Penicuik to Bank House in May 1894 he privately shared his intentions with the Macmillans of Glenhead 'we are just flitted from the Manse, *not yet* from the Kirk'. The plan was thus laid a good year before he actually left the ministry in January 1895. The success of *The Raiders* might be seen as the final element in the 'great escape' plan.

Mauricewood cast a long shadow for Crockett, and it was a theme he returned to more than once. He wrote another, more fictional version of the 'Incubus' story in *The Stickit Minister's Wooing* first published in 1900. The story is called 'The Respect of Drowdle.' And he revisits the story again, fleshing it out into a full length serial in 'The People's Friend' in 1907 after which it was published as a novel, according with the standard literary route Crockett's work now familiarly took. In *Vida: The Iron Laird of Kirktown* the Incubus Mining Company is central. There is much of the original story to be seen which suggests that it held importance for Crockett nearly two decades after the original event. *Vida* is a significantly sociological novel, in which Crockett strives to explore and expose the wrongs of society (and capitalism!). It evidences that in the early 20th century, 'The People's Friend' was something more than simply the purveyor of romantic stories for women of a certain age, which is its current reputation. Note that 2019 is the 150th anniversary of the founding of that magazine.

Correspondence March 7 -9 - Jumping the Gun 2

Penicuik

Mar 7

Dear Unwin,

I know nothing about any author's sanction. I had no communication with the editor about the Raiders till after the review appeared. Last week we were in correspondence about another matter... the review of the Stickit ... which somehow had been done apparently by the office boy, but I said nothing about the Raiders review. Our correspondence was a very friendly one, and he might have a general impression of friendliness in intercourse, but there was nothing else. I cannot imagine what he means. I wrote him a note after the review to thank him for his kindly notice... they have not been kind to a Free Churchman and a Liberal hitherto, and I thought it was wise, I promised the editor a private copy. You might send one, at my charges, to Charles A Cooper Esq, Scotsman office, Edin. 'With the author's compliments.' Please send me the list of private persons to whom books have been sent at my cost so that I may not duplicate them when my own copies come. Four of these came from you this morning
SRC

Mar 8 POSTCARD

Don't understand about books being on sale at Edinburgh bookseller. Dr W must have mistaken I presume he mistook Saturday 3rd March for Sat 10th March, mentioned in your letter. My six copies are all here yet except a copy given to Dr Whyte to whom R is dedicated, so certainly none of these on sale.

Molyneaux of Tract Soc (99 ST ... st Ed) wrote to ask a sight of book before ordering, I referred him to Dr Whyte but on Dr Whyte sending him book he returned it saying Mr Austin had left one with him.

SRC

FCM

March 8th

Dear Unwin,

Jolly glad to hear of 2nd edition at the presses; only corrections p151 l14 Yetholm for Yethom.

Dedication, line 5

For 'to me also' read 'like himself.'

Not a heavy bill!

And remember the alteration in the tablet opposite title (which I wish were out of there altogether but I suppose is inevitable)...

Line 'not in Scotland' delete not.

Foster birket F's son has sent his drawings. He does admirable work, specially humorous. I shall bring them with me. The Scotsman review is admirable. Said to be in northern literary circles (from which I hold sternly aloof) to be by Professor Masson. It is almost brilliantly written, and a great contrast to their shabby treatment of 'the Stickit.'

We owe them thanks. I do not know Cooper. He is a dreadful spitfire; but he has been kind to me lately – beginning over the head of a Burns Supper at which I made the oration of the 'Immortal Memory'

The Scotsman is a wonderful power here – not altogether for good – but indubitably a power.

See you next week, all being well,

Ever Truly

SRC

The fact of the second Edition being on the presses is an impressive one and should be widely known – I mean before publication of the first edition and all that; but I am sure you will take what steps are necessary if any.

FCM

(top... Is this dress or 'free and easy' mind and say.

Commentary : Reviewing the situation.

From the above correspondence you will note a number of things. There is more detail about the 'stooshie' over 'The Scotsman' review and the publication issues surrounding *The Raiders*. Crockett observes that his treatment from 'The Scotsman' is not always positive and so he wants to take advantage of any good publicity they will give. He gives his version of events as to how they might have got hold of it. And note the suggestion that it was Professor Masson who wrote the review. That's certainly a line of interest worth further pursuit. Masson had been Crockett (and J.M.Barrie's) professor while at Edinburgh University, and was a supporter of both writers as well as being a respected elder statesman of English (and Scottish) literature. As a small but perhaps significant aside I would note that W.E.Henley was overlooked for the Regius professorship in 1895 when David Masson resigned. Of this, more to come.

In the correspondence Crockett then turns to the matter of the 'tablet advert.' This is going to cause even more trouble than 'The Scotsman' early review. You will note that he is still trying to correct 'type' removing the 'not' which makes the entire thing nonsensical. We also learn that the second edition is being printed before the first has even been published. He writes about: *'the tablet opposite title (which I wish were out of there altogether but I suppose is inevitable)...'* The impact of this small advert cannot be underestimated in all that follows. So it's important to note that Crockett

didn't even want it there. The following day, we assume this is just before he sets off for London, he writes more:

Correspondence March 9th: The Cheshire Cheese.

Dear Unwin,

Cheshire Cheese next Tuesday at 6.30! That is all right, an' thank'ee kindly! I shall bring a good appetite. Mind no 'Reverends.' I don't use the title in literature and I may soon drop it altogether in fact (this in your ear) I see the Chronicle (confound 'em) always puts the Rev SRC's new book.

The Scotsman gives us another little lift this morning.

I am [] of congratulations on Scotsman article strange that it should be so much though

Ever yours

SRC

Commentary: Were you at The Cheshire Cheese?

'The Cheshire Cheese' was (and still is) a pub on Fleet Street, with long standing literary associations dating back to Samuel Johnson and Charles Dickens. The 'Rhymers Club' - founded by W.B. Yeats in 1890 met there, so it was certainly a hub for literary men. We can expect that holding a meeting there was a way of 'introducing' Crockett to his society contemporaries. It would be wonderful to know who was there the night Crockett had dinner with Unwin. Correspondence gives some clues, but there is still much research to be done on this score. Suffice it to say, Crockett was being 'shown' in London and his celebrity would become a double edged sword. Note also that Crockett is very keen to play down his 'religious' identity – considering it not relevant to his literary work and indeed hinting that it will not be relevant at all soon enough! He certainly did not want to be seen as a 'minister' or an apologist for that profession.

Extant correspondence at this time certainly confirms that Crockett spent time with Bret Harte, J.M.Barrie, H.B.Marriott-Watson, Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell – and we can comfortably assume with many others who were around. A question might well be asked 'were you at the Cheshire Cheese on Tuesday 13th March 1894?' I'd love to know the answer and to have been a fly on that particular pub wall.

Correspondence – March –the London stay.

Postcard

10th march

MEM

Dear Mr Unwin

Will you kindly send to my lodgings address SRC c/o Mrs Henley 11 Craven Street a dozen copies of The Raiders and any stray fiction you have worth reading when a man is in town and wants a book. Do look out some'at

Yours

Crockett

11 Craven Street

March 11th

Dear Unwin,

I have the enclosed telegram from Burn-Murdoch of whom I wrote that his drawings had not come to time. If they have not arrived yet, you will I daresay know what to do better than I. His address is W.C. Burn Murdoch, University Settlement, Riddles Close, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh.

I am nearly out of my copies of The Raiders – I suppose the rest will come. We had a very pleasant afternoon with old Bret Harte yesterday. Today Barrie is coming, I am sorry I am engaged tonight with him.

Ever yours

SRC

March 14th

11 Craven Street,

Dear Mr Marriot Watson,

Will you accept this copy of the Raiders as a little memorial of an evening on which Pennell misconducted himself in his long but not lazy fashion (yet we never wished him shorter) and on which you were good enough to exchange books with,

Yours

SRC

Commentary – keeping company.

Craven Street is just off Trafalgar Square, close to the more upmarket Morley's hotel (now the South African Embassy) in which Crockett stayed on a number of occasions – including at the same time as fellow Edinburgh alumni, Arthur Conan Doyle. It's quite possible that the two men discussed Quharrie and that the conversation planted a seed which later became *The Hound of the Baskervilles*)

Marriott-Watson was an Australian author of swashbuckling adventure romances. He was also a staffer on Henley's 'National Observer'. If there was no immediate direct meeting between Henley and Crockett on this trip, certainly they were but 'one step removed.' Henley was a big 'cheese' far beyond The Cheshire Cheese and it seems he viewed Crockett as an adversary. Elizabeth Pennell includes a light sketch about Crockett in her biographical 'Nights' (1916) where she says:

'S.R.Crockett never wrote anything for Henley. Henley would have been outraged by the bare suggestion, and Crockett the writer was never handled with the gloves by Henley's Young Men in the National Observer. But with Crockett himself they had no quarrel. We all liked him – a large red and white Scotchman, the Scots strong in every word he spoke, hustling us all off for a fish dinner at Grenwich on the strength of his first big cheque for royalties; or as happy to spend the evening sitting on our floor and diverting William Penn with the ball of paper on the end of a string that William never wearied of pursuing, partly for his own amusement, partly because, with his innate politeness, he knew it contributed to ours.'

It is almost certainly through the Pennell's that Crockett became acquainted with Whistler, who started but never finished, a portrait of him. All these small jigsaw pieces point to the significance of developing context beyond the obvious to build a clearer picture. Placing Crockett in the setting and company of the London literary elite in March 1894 informs much that happened later in his life and career. And the story is told differently, depending on who is telling it.

The next article is from 'The British Weekly, The Correspondence of Claudius Clear.' Dated March 15th 1894, this is William Robertson Nicoll's literary pseudonym. Worth remembering that in publishing then, as now, for every enemy there is a friend, and vice versa.

Mr S.R.Crockett's new book. To the editor of The British Weekly.

Sir, - It is now about a year ago since I noticed in this column Mr Crockett's book 'The Stickit Minister.' He has now followed it with another which, I venture to say, is a great advance on its predecessor, and one which give him a front place among our younger writers of fiction.

It is inevitable to begin by saying that in form Mr Crockett follows Mr Stevenson. A very able critic in the Daily Chronicle says that in 'The Stickit Minister Mr Crockett followed Mr Barrie and that in 'The Raiders' he follows Mr Stevenson.

So far as Barrie is concerned I cannot go with this judgement even a little way. As Mr Stevenson says 'Gavin Ogilvy and The Stickit Minister do not derive from one another,' and I would add, they do not derive from anyone else. Mr Stevenson has no doubt a share in 'The Raiders.' But the question is - does Mr Crockett borrow salt from him? The answer must be a decided negative. I have no hesitation in saying that 'The Raiders' in all its saving characteristics, is as independent of Stevenson as it is of Richardson. Nay, it seems to me that it would have been a better book if the author had never opened a Stevenson volume. For its only fault is that the style is too composite - not even enough, not careful enough. Sometimes it is contrived and fantastic - and the author of Treasure Island is then in evidence. At other times it is facile and cheap. Mr Crockett can write admirably; and indeed his book as a whole is exceedingly well written. But it would have been improved by a thorough revision, in which what must be considered very good, and what he must on reflection admit to be very bad, would have been cancelled.

The truth is - and I say it without a shadow of disrespect to a man of whom we are all proud, whom we all regard with constant affection - that Mr Crockett's affinities are with an older and greater school than that to which Mr Stevenson belongs - the school of Scott. He does best when he is least conscious of his subject. Prettinesses are all very well, but when they are deliberate they are foreign to the highest art. It is good for many authors to keep note-books, and set down therein every fresh phrase that occurs to them, and in process of time to transfer said phrases to the printed page. But we cannot think of Scott keeping such a book. As his pen ran on, it traced at times sentences of the most memorable sort, but it did not pause, and all it wrote was new. So in Mr Hardy, who is the best writer among living novelists, we never come on a patch, purple or other: all the fabric is of one stuff. If Mr Crockett had let Mr Stevenson's style alone, the critic would have been reduced to silence.

In another vital matter Mr Crockett is on a higher level than Mr Stevenson. After 'Catriona' we cannot say that Mr Stevenson cannot give us a heroine. But he produced a heroine such as Mr Gladstone might have produced a diestablishment measure. The thing had to be done somehow, and in the end it might not be done ill. But it was sorely against the grain. But Mr Crockett is as much at home as Scott with his female characters - rather let me say character. May Mischief is one of the most delightful heroines in recent fiction. Now a ministering angel, now a creature as variable as the aspen shade, she is always charming. She is never so dear as Di Vernon was, but who could be so virginal and so kind?

There is something French about Mr Stevenson's view of women. He is very far from that school of novelists who know nothing about women except so far as she is a

hunted cat. But in Mr Stevenson's view - often expressed directly as well as indirectly - the business of life is adventure, and marriage cannot well be fitted into that. The path then lies 'straight and dusty to the grave.' But Mr Crockett is essentially a 'douce man,' enjoying his pleasures keenly, but temperately. To him adventure is merely an episode in life, and the end of it is happy wedlock. 'The Raiders' settles down into a stable serenity.

The Chronicle has led me into this talk for it was not of Stevenson I thought when reading 'The Raiders' but of a far different writer - Captain Mayne Reid. Mr Crockett has chosen for his tale of adventure the most absorbing of all subjects - the pursuit of an abducted girl. Shall I ever forget getting possession of a volume of Chambers Journal, the old blue-covered numbers, and reading therein 'Oceola'? The maiden has been captured by the Red Indians, and the chase lasts to the end. How we are hurried on chapter after chapter, in an agony of fear! I cannot decide whether it is a merit or not that Mr Crockett keeps our mind easy. We never have a doubt that May Mischief will in due time, be restored to her lover, and so we have time to mark the many beauties of the narrative. Mayne Reid had no style and no episodes but he could lead a breathless gallop. For each author his own way was best. Mr Crockett has managed his adventure magnificently. There is abundant imagination, great fertility and freshness, and, in the best part of the story, perfect ease. What more can be said?

But the chief triumph of Mr Crockett will not be seen by every one. It takes some knowledge of the Scotch nature and of religion to understand it. Silver Sand, the friend of Patrick Heron, the narrator, is the disguised John Faa, Lord and Earl of Little Egypt. How was the transformation wrought from gipsy and a Faa into a believing man and a follower of Richard Cameron? It is in his answer to this question that, to my mind, Mr Crockett proves himself to be a man of true genius. He shows us by a few touches that there were in John Faa from the first the strong tenderness of an excited and passionate nature and a sincere desire not to suffer himself to be corrupted. These must be worked on. The execrated lag whom Faa was following seized a child of ten, and tried to make him an informer. He shook the boy over a great precipice, and whether he meant it or not, let him fall, with the words, 'The corbies will hae sweet pickin' aff that whalp's bones.' Faa had enough of it. He went to the poor mother with the dead child. 'He was a carefu' boy' she said, 'an' that guid to his mither, my bit boy Willie! Ye helpit her ilka day, and ye slipit in her bosom ever since her ain guid man won awa' Aye Willie, my wean, ye sall sleep this yae nicht in yer mither's airms, for they shall never meet about onything that is the desire o' her heart in this world mair.' To the end Faa could not tell the story without uncontrollable emotion. That hour broke up the fountains of his heart and reversed the current of his life. Mr Crockett has gone deep to understand this, and has achieved much more than an artistic triumph.

There is very little to say about the faults of this book. They could all be removed by a slight revision. The worst - and it is typical - is in the description of the death of Richard Maxwell, who is said to have passed 'to where beyond the shadows there is peace,' 'Beyond these voices' is the hackneyed form, and Mr Crockett hardly improves it. To put such words into the mouth of Patrick Heron at that age of the world is almost a capital crime. Even to use them now is a base mannerism. Barry Pain has been telling the story of the men whom he has murdered. One of them was guilty of the following among other phrases :

'Pilson's married. I sent my condolences. That's not bad.'

'If the cap fits, you can put it in your pipe and smoke it.'

'People may praise Browning, and I don't say he wasn't a poet; what I do say is that he would have been a greater poet if he had been more intelligible.'

'Noos avony charnjay too celaw.'

I have no doubt Mr Pain would heartily agreed with me in adding to these 'Beyond these voices there is peace.' Mr Crockett is safe; May Mischief and Willie and Silver Sand, and Sammler and Eppie and many others protect him. Had it been otherwise, Mr Pain would have done his duty and received an illuminated address of thanks from the inhabitants of Galloway. '

I am sir, yours, etc
Claudius Clear.

Commentary: Friends and foes.

If we are to believe that 'The Scotsman' review of *The Raiders* was written by Professor Masson, and with the support of William Robertson Nicoll, it's clear that Crockett had some 'big hitters' supporting him at this time. He could also count on the support of J.M. Barrie and Andrew Lang at this time. But this certainly 'positions' him in the opposite camp from the likes of either the 'realists' or the 'decadents' of the London Literary scene. When trying to 'place it' or contextualise the impact of *The Raiders* and Crockett on the literary 'scene' of the late 1890s, it matters less what Crockett's actual fiction style was, more that it was something 'new' and 'different' and as such potentially confrontational (in terms of market even more than in terms of ideology). The battle for 'popularity' was rife and the rewards great in this 'emerging' market. How much Crockett was a pawn and how much a player remains to be established. Certainly, in some significant quarters, he was a great potential threat. As we shall see from our next review:

Review of Raiders by Henley (anon) In *National Observer*

Saturday March 17th

Mr R.L. Stevenson is surely a little unfortunate in his correspondents? For instance, it was very natural that he, a Scot abroad, should tell the members of a Scottish club at Honolulu, that he could not read *The Stickit Minister* 'without a gulp,' for the book had reminded him of 'the graves of the Martyrs' – (those coerced coercionists!) – and therewith the whaups, 'calling above them his heart remembered how.' Again, that on the strength of *The Stickit Minister* aforesaid, he should take advantage of 'a letter to a friend,' to equal Mr Crockett to the master by whom that gentleman lived and moved and had such being as was his – this, too, was natural, we make no doubt; for Mr Stevenson is nothing if not daring, and this is daring enough to make the common reader to turn and be changed, as by a hard knock in the pit of his stomach. 'They do not derive from each other,' he says: 'they are complementary.' *The Stickit Minister* is out of doors: Barrie is within doors. By different ways ye shall attain.' Now this is all very nice for Mr Crockett: but – and here is the unfortunateness – it is also very good business for Mr Crockett's publisher in that it enables him to rig the market in the matter of Crockett, by creating an artificial demand for his wares. For of course the 'friend' made haste to communicate so surprising a discovery on the part of a distinguished correspondent to the national newspaper; and now it figures as a sort of testimonial to the merits of Mr Crockett on the fly-leaf of Mr Crockett's new venture; and it is set forth, together with the opinions of other 'well-known critics, in a leaflet compiled with a view to the bold (not to say impudent) advertisement of Mr Crockett

and all his works. Mr Stevenson, that is, is shown to the public in the act of recommending a book he has never read on the strength of a book he has read to singularly little purpose.' Not even Mr Gladstone, that bill-sticking archangel (so to speak,) has ever, we believe, been made to do such duty. And it seems safe to assume that Mr Stevenson is not the man to relish the position; especially as this cheapening of him impressions of *The Stickit Minister* cannot but quicken such an expectation in favour of *The Raiders* as *The Raiders* itself most certainly must disappoint and kill.

The book has merits; there is no doubt of that. But it has not merits enough to blind you to its vices. To be plain, it is not authentic work; it is a piece of pure mimicry, and the writer is overbold in his choice of originals. On the one hand, he is not to be parted from his R.L.S; on the other he cannot refrain from his J.M.B. His hero recalls the oddest memories of David Balfour; he catches certain Stevensonian tricks of style in a way that, while it is very creditable to himself, is extremely irritating to his readers. Again, he might never have essayed to create a May Mischief but for Babbie; nor to trot out a Sammler Tamson but for the folk in Thrums; nor to picture the Sixteen Drifty Days but for the storm in *The Little Minister*. The intention is strictly honourable, of course. 'Seulement,' as the man say in *Les Faux Bonshommes*, the effect is very often disconcerting. There is no better model for a beginner in fiction than the R.L.S. of on *Kidnapped*, let us say. But one can *not* conceive of him putting the character of a Galloway laird (Early Georgian), and writing 'donkey,' for 'cuddie,' or allowing any thing in his pages to 'execute a fandango'; while you are sure that he would rather die the death than see a man of his making, not 'hanged' but, 'hung' – like a picture or a piece of pork. Again, when Mr Crockett falls to his English, he is capable on occasion of 'little tongues of *crawling* cloud,' which first came 'shooting down' and then go 'curling upwards like the winkers of an old man's eye': all in the space of a couple of lines; 'Neither... or... or,' he writes: and you are sure that this time his turn for mimicry has played him false. Achievements of the kind may be 'Galloway in particular,' and also 'Crockett at his best,' as the publisher assures you that they are; but they do not conduce to a belief in the identity of Patrick Heron. In any case, they can hardly be the 'good Galloway Scots,' which Mr Stevenson demands of Mr Crockett; being indistinguishable from common Fleet-street English. The same imperfect mastery is shown in Mr Crockett's treatment of his second set of inspirations. Babbie is always charming; and very often she is so by reason of her wilful petulance, her gay indifference to the proprieties. But May Mischief is not: May Mischief is sometimes, at least, a tomboy and in the end is somebody not May Mischief. The Earl of Little Egypt, despite some touches here and there, is mainly incredible; for reasons the reader must discover for himself. The best you can say for Sammler Tamson is that he is visibly strayed in Galloway, and should hie him northward to the tents of his kindred with all speed. Worst of all, perhaps, is the author's lack of art in the arrangement of his material. He is prodigal of incidents; but they are all too breathless (as it were) to convince you of anything but their own unreality. Adventure is hurled upon adventure; and nobody knows why. The characters turn up in all sorts of places; and your sole emotion is one of wonder how the d—l they got there. In Mr Crockett's conduct of his plot there is nothing of the too too obvious neatness of which we complained in *The Little Minister*; as there is nothing of the deliberate choice of means to an end the austere reserve of power, which

delights one so in *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*. There is no atmosphere, no perspective, no sense of heat and cold. Nothing is realised: so that you no more believe in May Mischief in the Murder Hole than you do in Patrick Heron on the Wolf's Slock, on the ice, in the gypsy's hut; and you are as sure that the Loathly Dogs are 'jimmy' as you are sure that Captain Yawkins had read *Hard Cash* before he fired his parting defiance in the teeth of Lieutenant Mountenay, and that old Maxwell watched Mr Barkis go out with the tide, ere he proceeded to go and do likewise.

And yet the book has merits: merits of humour, character, description, dialect, intention above all. Mr Crockett has done the best in it he could; and that in these days of cheap and easy writing is much to his credit. You may read him with a certain entertainment or you may not: you must with a certain respect. You feel, too, that it is most unlucky for him that being 'complementary' (let us say) to so many others at once, he should be made the hero of a sort of 'corner.' But so it is; and even as we write somebody is comparing him to Mr R.L.Stevenson, even as that gentleman has already compared him to Mr J.M.Barrie. Is it not written that 'by different ways ye shall attain?'

Commentary: what colour are your eyes?

This anonymous article flies in the face of the general reception for *The Raiders* – and indeed one might conclude that one learns many things from it, the least of which is anything to do with the merits or otherwise of the actual novel. It is a deliberate (Henley admitted as much) attempt at a snub of Stevenson, with Crockett just so much collateral damage. We should note that in March 1894, Crockett was 'on the up' and Henley was 'on his uppers'. I think it is important to remember that we are dealing with real human beings here, albeit ones who make their living publicly criticising and judging the work (and personality) of other people. My best interpretation is that Henley was going through a bad time personally and lashed out.

Oddly, to me at least, experience shows that there is something appealing to a certain sector of the public in boorish, larger than life figures who command authority by what is little more than ill spirited pontification. Personally it holds no appeal to me, and I consider it something of a canker in literature – but it was (and sadly still is rather too often) to be found in the literary 'elite' who demand that their opinions and partisan views (often market or ideologically driven) are in some way an 'authority' that the rest of us must buy into. Crockett did not buy into this, nor do I. That may provide some explanation why he is still overlooked. He still makes those at the top of the hierarchy uncomfortable (as I fear, do I) and where they cannot ignore him, they denigrate him. There is a view (waning as the years pass, I hope) which suggests that if we like or can appreciate his works, we are somehow either out of step (nostalgic) culturally, or uncritical (of a different view) in a literary sense. This, I contend is what's behind the whole Kailyard debacle. It was, and remains, an argument about cultural and literary values, perceptions and stances. I am currently working on producing a sound explanation and rebuttal of previous literary critiques. You will have to wait a bit longer for my findings, but I hope they are worth waiting for.

Correspondence – Business matters.

11 Craven St, Strand, 19th March

Dear Mr Norman,

I have just heard that it is the intention of someone who is to lead off or take part in the Agent discussion to introduce my most private affairs into his letter, and that they have been already spoken about at the Author's Society.

I do hope you will not allow a word to appear in the Chronicle about 'a poor Scotch parson' the phrase I heard. You have no idea what terrible harm that might do me in Scotland where it is a culpable thing for a man for any cause to be without money.

Will you accept my word and assurance that Mr Watt took up at my request my work on his usual terms long before he was good enough to oblige me financially to a certain (not very large) extent and entirely outside his usual line of business. That I asked him having told him fully the circumstances, to do for me what was a considerable relief at the time. He did so purely as a friend (and on accordingly favourable terms) and the matter is at any rate a temporary and very inconsiderable one. After it I remain in precisely the same position as before with regard to my agreement with him. Mr Watt in fact acted as my banker for a short time and the arrangement was entirely and obligation to me and no benefit whatever to Mr Watt.

At the same time it might be (and indeed would be) misunderstood by my people in Scotland, and I am sure you will not allow anything to appear which would injure me in that tenderest of all points to a Minister.

I suppose everyone has found a time when temporary accommodations done in a friendly way helped a lame dog over a stile; but it would be very hard if another man's quarrel all that (misrepresented) should be printed in a great literary journal.

On the general question. I am sure you will let me say my say if need be; but I am also sure that you all men will be the first to understand and sympathise with my difficulties as a Minister and an author as well

I shall look in and have a talk if you care, and in any case I am coming to see your wife. I have got volumes of Dulce Cor and Valete Fratres for you from home.

Only this matter came upon me like a flash and I write hastily to tell you the exact truth.

Ever truly yours

SRC

11 Craven Street

Mar 20 1894

My dear Unwin,

You are a good chap. I am 'muckle obleeged' for the cheque and it comes in exceedingly useful in London now where the saxpences bang so close on the heels of one another.

I enjoyed last night enormously. I talked to Mrs Pennell the whole evening (almost) I don't think I bored her. Therefore I was happy. I got notes about more books. Send them when you have them. I have to give away a beastly lot. Here – my fine fellow, here's 3/- to you! I sa to 'em or words to that effect.

Sent two copies 1) to ed of ILN 2 to Editor of Sketch today. I had a letter from Shorter. He is going to do book as Book of the Week in the Sketch. So send books right away. Don't ask if they have not got them. A note of some of your people about copy for Bookman made Nicoll furious. Looked as if he were touting for copies he said. I gave him one to send to Bookman critic. Yeats I think, which pacified him, but it is best to give and grumble privately. Not so?

Cordially yours

SRC

11 Craven Street

Mar 20 1894.

Dear Mr Shorter,

A man who can talk as you can about Meredith does not deserve 'no' to his name from any one who also loves the great genius of Good Women. However I put it this time. I shall look forward to meeting you again, for I enjoyed our animated table. I hate a man who agrees.

I shall go up to your Baker St man some bright day (today or tomorrow). I have written Unwin to send two copies of the Raiders to the office for the I.L.N. and the S. Why they were not sent I know not. They have been twice out of copies I know, but they ought to have sent first to the papers. Some mistake I guess, for Unwin sends out pretty freely. Did you see the uncircumsized triumphing over Unwin's method of advertisement? I shall autograph your Raiders when I get a chance.

A good Easter to you. Go and get married or do something amusing. I am staying on in London, I think,

Ever truly yours

SRC

11 Craven Street

Mar 21st 1894.

Dear Mr Marriott-Watson.

You kept a decent man out of his bed reading stories most of which he has read before. They are admirable and I read far into the morning with increasing delight. 'The stroke of one' seems to me to rate with the two or three most powerful stories in the language. Your temptation to make an anti-climax and send Harland upstairs to finish his lovemaking would have been quite irresistible to me; but you did better. There is no question of that.

I like 'Don Q' also much – being interested in it simply as a story which keeps its secret to the last. To me the place of problems is in whatever the modern equivalent for Mr I. Todhunter may be. But a good story as a good story is immortal.

Accept my warmest thanks and kind regards. I shall treasure your gift.

Faithfully yours

SRC

Commentary: What price friendship?

In the letter to Mr Norman, we see reference (oblique) to earlier financial arrangements between Crockett and his agent A.P.Watt. If you have read the 'pre' 1894 timeline you'll have some understanding of the complexity of their relationship and, while private, it seems that Crockett is concerned it is about to become public knowledge as part of a spat aimed against Watt and the 'job' of literary agent in general. Publisher W.Heineman had published a satirical (or bitter) article in 'The Atheneum' on November 11th 1893 which suggested that agents were parasites. Publishers at the time were greatly against the emergence of literary agents, perhaps mostly motivated by fear of direct competition in the relationship between themselves and their authors. Unwin on more than one occasion expresses regret that Crockett has taken on Watt to manage his affairs. What the rights and wrongs of the agent/author relationship were or are, it's certain that Crockett's career would never have achieved the stellar status it did without Watt. The complexity of the business dealings over the ensuing 20 years are eye-watering, and no author would have been able to keep his eye on the ball and write. You'll doubtless remember Crockett has already given the 'I'm a writer' crie de Coeur in letters. And when you see the complexity and confusions either inherent or deliberate in the interactions between Crockett and Unwin (author and publisher) it does not seem ridiculous to suggest that an agent was vital on many levels. I suppose that in one sense, agents replaced 'patronage' so that success was developed on market lines rather than on those of genteel society. That may account for much of the controversy and ill will at the time. What is less clear is how this private information came to Mr Norman. More research needed.

It is clear from the letters to Unwin and Shorter that Crockett is having to juggle finances and business as well as self-promotion at this time – and that it’s not always clear who is ‘on his side.’ In the event, the relationship with Watt long outlasted that with Unwin. We may feel a deal of sympathy if not awe to realise that he also had to find time amongst all this to keep writing. He had *The Playactress*, *Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills* and *The Grey Man* on the go, as well as the shorter ‘bread and butter’ articles and stories.

There is one particular line in the letter to Clement Shorter that intrigues me:

‘Did you see the uncircumsized triumphing over Unwin’s method of advertisement?’

This could be read in so many ways. We might take ‘uncircumsized’ to simply mean ‘unhealthy’ and I’m guessing he is suggesting that the likes of Henley’s review is simply an act of ill-advised chagrin. It’s likely that Shorter was at the Pennells on the 19th which might be the site of the lively debate he refers to: *‘I hate a man who agrees’*. In this letter he is turning down Shorter’s request – presumably to write something for him – and it seems a quite robust and subtle response. It is my suggestion that the letter reveals something of his attitudes and responses to the immediate criticisms he was facing from the Henley and his coterie. We do well to remember that the literary circles of the 1890s was much more complex than we are aware of today – attitudes and relationship between men such as Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, George Gissing and many, many more, have all been seriously mediated through history from then to now. It’s a much more complicated, and nuanced set of relationships than we are aware of; especially given the ‘myth’ that this Late Victorian period was really one of decline before the emergence of Modernism in English and ‘Renaissance’ in Scottish literature. You have to unpick the story a long way to make sense of it – and Crockett is one of the strands which has been most deliberately tangled.

The letter to Marriott-Watson perhaps shows where Crockett’s real interest lies and it isn’t in the machinations of an elitist literary society. As he says *‘a good story as a good story is immortal.’* Far from being a parochial, sentimental ‘stickit minister’, Crockett is a man who was unafraid to call a spade a spade. But he was invariably polite when he did so.

In a world where we are encouraged to take sides, to follow brands and to close off our minds to anything which does not accord to what we are told is our ‘tribe’ – perhaps one lesson from the past we might adopt is to reach out beyond the obvious, even beyond our personal experience and comfort zone and understand that variety can indeed be the spice of life. ‘Good stories’ come in many forms.

In that spirit, perhaps as you read ‘The Literary World’ review of *The Raiders* in contrast to Henley’s anonymous one of the previous week, you will agree with me on the importance of source material being critically examined and of the crucial role of being informed and open minded in the interpretation of it. What I am trying to achieve in my archival wanderings, is to build a more complete picture. I am working towards as constructing as complete a jigsaw as it’s possible to achieve, given that we will never have all the pieces. I do not believe we should abandon the quest simply because it is impossible to reach a fully objective position. I certainly think it’s an

error to rely on the easy lies and partisan viewpoints that we have been fed for so long. There's much more to this 'story' than meets the eye even after a century.

Review of *The Raiders* - The Literary World March 23rd 1894

We must confess to a little complacency on finding that our prophecy concerning the author of *The Stickit Minister and some common men* is having so speedy a fulfilment. *The Raiders* puts it beyond dispute that Mr Crockett has come to stay as one of our modern masters of Scotch fiction. It is impossible to read it without being perpetually reminded of Mr R.L.Stevenson - a rather unexpected revelation, by the way, to readers of *The Stickit Minister* who thought only of a possible Barrie influence; but though Mr Crockett has caught the spirit, and not a little of the trick, of the author of *Kidnapped* he is no mere copyist. His characters - as a rule, powerful and rugged - are the creation of his own genius, while the story is told with a verve and a swing - nay, with a rush - that is as skilful in its way as it is exhilarating. If he has not Stevenson's deft touch and masterly working out of a character, he has more passion and abandon, touches a deeper and holier pathos, and knows child nature with a knowledge denied the older writer.

The story of *The Raiders* is told in the first person by one, Patrick Heron, of Isle Rathan, in Galloway, who desires, ere it passes from human memory 'to write down the things that befell us in those strange years, when the hill outlaws colloqued with the wild freetraders of the Holland traffic, and fell upon us to the destruction of the life of man, the carrying away of much bestial, besides the putting of many of His majesty's lieges in fear.' Those striving and trying times in the eighteenth century with the local colour of Galloway's manners and scenery, are reproduced with life-like fidelity. From beginning to end of the story the spell of the place and the times is on us. We follow Patrick with breathless interest and completest sympathy through all his varied experiences. We reign with him as despot over his boy companions on the lonely little isle; we smart with him under the lash of the tongue of that elf, May Mischief, and all the same fall desperately in love with her; we tramp the weary heather and face the wild caterans of the hills with him to rescue her when stolen for the bride of the gipsy king; we fight with him, laugh with him, cry with him, woo with him, laugh with him, and finally rejoice with him at the consummation of his hopes, while all the time we feel he is, perhaps, the weakest character in the story and does not seem to merit the devotion paid to him by the boys, Allison and MacWhirter, by the mysterious and powerful Silver Sand, by May Mischief, and, indeed, all the womankind he comes across.

All the chief actors in the story are vivid and lifelike portraits, which time will not easily efface from the memory. First and foremost is the heroine May Maxwell - generally called May Mischief - an elfin sprite with the roguishness and weakness of a girl, but with the courage of a lion to match and support her ardent affection. Old Maxwell, her father, the stern Cameronian and ex-smuggler, dying in the Cave on Rathan like an old-world prophet, surrounded by his wild, war-like sons, and Silver Sand, the Deus ex machina of the story, are grandly rugged characters, like their native hills. Captain Yawkins, of the contraband brig Van Hoorn, is a real salt-unlovely but matchless in his seamanship. Among the more laughable and lovable characters which will linger long in the memory are Sammlle Tamson, with his dog-like and pathetic devotion to his masterful, but motherly-hearted wife, Eppie; Lady Grizel and her servant Jen, ancient maidens both, but with the susceptibilities of young girls, scolding each other with the freedom of the times, but devoted the one to the other beyond the power of change, and with hearts running over with the milk of

human kindness. But it is time to give our readers a few specimens of the book. Sammle Tamson tells the story of his Child Marion:

‘But there was the lassie, Marion, that was mine an’ my first wife’s—a bonny wee bit lass; noo the silly, ill-contriving folk had been tellin’ her about a step-mither, and when we drave up to the door, or as near it as the laird’s powny could tak’ us, here’s wee Marion sitting on the doorstep (and ye could see that her heart was like to break, though she had the greetin’ by wi’ and only a begrutten face turned up to us as peetiful like). Waes me—to mind on’t!

‘Then when we lichtit doon, here wee Marion comes to meet us, wi’ her bit underlip quivering and the clear water standing in her blue e’en—O man, man, to think on’t! And, says she, as clever as if she had been savin’ it ower an’ ower to hersel’ to learn it by heart afore we cam’—

‘This hoose is yours noo, I ken,’ she says to Eppie (she was but five year past in September). ‘But, maybe, ye’ll let wee Marion bide in the hen-hoose aside the calf. I’se no asturb him ava’,’ she says. ‘Marion will be rale quiet, and see, I hae ta’en Black Andra’ there already!’

‘Black Andra’ was her bit bairn’s dolly that I had made oot o’ a bit stick and pentit for her red and black.

‘See,’ she said, ‘Black Andra’s there the noo, waitin’ amang the hay, an’ him an’ me will never say cheep—wull ye let us bide in the hen-hoose?’

‘O man, O man,’ burst out Sammle Tamson, sobbing to himself in a passion as he leant on his staff, ‘it was like death to me to hear the bit bairn. And the wife, Eppie, oh, but she took it sair to heart. She sat doon there on the doorstep and sabbit till she took to the laughing. And then she couldna stop. Never in my life had I seen onybody ta’en like that. It was a maist peetifu’ hamecomin’.

Then, when she came to a wee, she took the bit lass in her airms and kissed her; but Marion had been talked to by silly folk, and had gotten her mind fu’ o’ the going to the hen-hoose, so she would not go willingly to Eppie.’

‘But I sent Marion to bed in the spence, and saw her snugly happit up wi’ Black Andra’, that was a gruesome-like tyke pented wi’ tar and cart-red, and shrouded in an auld clout—yet she took him in her airms and grat quately on the pillow, for she loved him. So I left them. But in the mornin’ it happened that I had to rise early—and it ser’ed us richt for marryin’ in the lambin’ time; so it was in the very earliest blink o’ day that I took the door ahint me, an’ gaed my ways unwilling to the hill. Eppie was lying wide awake in the dark o’ the morning, thinkin’, nae doot, and no the pleasantest o’ thochts, about what she wad do wi’ Marion. When, as she has telled me fifty times, and fifty to the back o’ that, the spence door gied a bit cheep as gin the cat were coming ben. Then a wee white facie lookit round the corner o’ the door, and wee bare feet pailed across the floor till they stoppit by Eppie’s bed.’

‘It was Marion. She looked a while afore she spoke, but Eppie said no a word. ‘They say that ye are my mither noo,’ said wee Marion, haudin’ up yae bare foot aff the cauld stane.

‘An’ what if I war your mither?’ said Eppie that is my wife, as kind as she could say.

‘Wi’ Than,’ says Marion, emphatically, ‘gin ye be my mither, I thocht that I wad like to creep in aside ye a wee into your warm bed, for it’s cauld, cauld in the spence.’

‘Eppie was oot o’ bed in a moment, and had the bairn in her airms, greeting ower her and rejoicing a’ at vince.’

‘Can I come in, then?’ said Marion.

‘Aye, blessin’s on ye, ye can that!’ said Eppie, heartily.

‘And bide?’ continued the wee lass in white.

‘Aye, come awa’,’ quo’ Eppie.

‘And pit my cauld feet on ye?’

‘Hoot aye, bairn, onygate ye like.’

‘Then I’se come and bring Black Andra!’

‘When I cam’ back frae the hill there was sma’ room for me, for Eppie and Marion and Black Andra’ were a’ lyin’ sleepin’ wi’ their arms about ither!

‘And that was the beginning o’t!’ said Sammle Tamson of Mossdale.

‘And where is the lassie noo? I wad like to see her. Is she up and married, or oot to service?’ I said, without due caution.

Sammle shook his head. He did not sob again, but there was a look of wae on his face that was very touching to the heart.

‘She’s gane!’ he said.

‘Gane!’ said I, startled. ‘Did she die?’

‘Na, no that; she was lost on the hills—it’s a lang story, and we’re getting ower by the Black Craig o’ Dee noo. We’ll hae to be cautious.’

The insight into child character and the pathos of this story it would be hard to match. Another as pathetic in its way is that told by Silver Sand of ‘wee Willie’ a boy of ten, whom the murderous Lag dropped over the Linn, but the pathos is in the mother’s sorrow. Mr Crockett’s powers of description have constant and great demands made on them, but they are never found wanting. The burning of the Maxwell homestead, the attack in the Cave of Rathen, the seige of Lady Grizel’s castle, and the march to the country of the outlaws, are all spiritedly descrsibed, but they are too long for quotation. Take the following, however from the great

Yet it was an amazing sight—Dee Bridge that night, with its high-arched span—men standing two deep in the centre of it; men stride-leg on the parapet of it; gunshots cracking, pistols spitting. Then in front of us the white, pitiful eyes of a myriad (so they seemed) of wild cattle—maimed and tortured they knew not why, sending up a great routing of dumb prayer to the God of all ill-used, over-driven beasts that never did a sin. Beyond these the dark forms of the mounted outlaws contriving new plots in the rear.

I wanted the Maxwells to charge and break the column of cattle, but Will Maxwell overruled, saying, ‘No; we will hold the bridge.’ So the bridge was held.

Then suddenly a great fierce light arose in the rear. The outlaws had kindled a fire, and the red light burned up, filtering through the ranks of the cattle, and projecting great horned shadows against the clouds. For a few minutes this picture stood like a painted show, with the Dee Water running dark and cool beneath—a kind of Circe’s Inferno where the beasts are tortured for ever.

Two half-naked fiends ran alongside the column or cattle, carrying what was apparently a pot of blazing fire, which they threw in great ladlefuls on the backs of the packed beasts that stood frantically heaving their heads up to the sky. -Then in a moment from all sides arose deafening yells. Fire lighted and ran along the hides of the rough red Highland and black Galloway cattle. Desperate men sprang on their backs, yelling. Dogs drove them forward. With one wild, irresistible, universal rush the maddened column of beasts drave at the bridge, and swept us aside like chaff.

Never have I seen anything so passing strange and uncanny as this tide of wild things, frantic with pain and terror, whose billows surged irresistibly to the bridge-head. It was a dance of demons. Between me and the burning backs of the cattle there rose a gigantic Highlander with fiery eyes and matted front. On his back was a black devilkin that waved a torch with his hands, scattering contagious fire over the furious herd. The rush of the maddened beasts swept us off the bridge as chaff is driven before the wind. There was no question of standing, I shot off my pistols into the mass. I might as well have shot them into the Black Water. I declare some of the yelling devils were laughing as they rode, like fiends yammering and girning when Hell wins a soul. It is hard to make any who did not see it, believe in what we saw that night. Indeed, in this warm and heartsome winter room, with the storm without, and the wife in bed crying at me to put by the writing and let her get to sleep, it is well-nigh impossible to believe that any of these things came to pass within the space of a few years. Yet so it was. I who write it down was there. These eyes saw the tossing, fiery waves of maddened creatures that ran forward seeking death to escape from torture, while the reek of their burning went up to heaven.

I looked again. Beneath at the ford I saw a thousand wild cattle with their thick hair blazing with fire, their tails in the air, tossing wide-arched horns. I saw the steam of their nostrils going up like smoke as they surged through the water, a hundred mad Faas and Marshalls on their backs yelling like fiends of the pit. In a score of pulse beats there was not a beast that had not forced the bridge or crossed the ford. We who defended were broken and scattered; some of us swept down by the water, powder damp, guns trampled shapeless—dispirited, annihilated, we that had been so sure of victory.

Just one more extract illustrative of the perils and hairbreadth escapes with which the story abounds. Patrick Heron has rescued his love from the hands of a set of villainous cut-throats, but in escaping he stumbles and is injured.

And again I weakly fainted—I that had resolved to do so much. Now I seemed to lie for a long time void of speech and hearing, the blood draining from my head and my brain reeling.

But I had a dream which was more vivid than the yelling of the bloodhounds.

This is what I dreamed, as it were in a flash of great clearness. I thought that May Maxwell took me in her arms, saying, ‘I will kiss him once before I die. Only once—for I love him and he is mine. He came all alone to find me, when my own had forsaken me. And he did find me, and we shall die together.’

Then in my dream May Maxwell gave me not one, but many kisses, and so laid me down. But I knew it was a dream. It could be no other.

Then I awoke, and in the brighter light—for the sky was now swept clear of clouds—I saw May Maxwell with a knife in either hand, and so changed was she that I hardly knew her. She crouched as it were like a lithe, wild cat on the spring, and there was glinting fire in her eyes. Down the wind came the baying very near, and the soft gallop of the feet on the heather. Then like a bolt came a great dog out of the darkness, with white fangs dripping froth. Voiceless it sprang at May, but with the knife in her hand this girl, that had held up her skirt as she ran, thrust the steel with more force than many a man into the open mouth of the beast, which fell roaring and snapping upon the iron. Yet she recovered the weapon and struck again and again. Then another brute sprang past her at me as I lay helpless, for it was my trail on which the dogs had been laid. But my bravest girl drove sideways with her knife as the dog came on; yet so heavy and fierce was the beast that it overbore the knife, and would have fallen full upon me had she not thrown herself across my breast. The beast seized her left arm and bit savagely before, with her right hand free, she got home the knife that had been fatal to the first. The brute rolled over, and with a long whine like a puppy whipped in a fault, it died.

Then came behind the dancing rows of lanterns, and I knew that we were doomed indeed. But there was the spirit of an army of men in this girl, for she knelt over me with my bleeding head on her knee, set her back to the rock, and waited.

It had not been good for the first man who should come this way.

Now we were on a platform on the north side of Loch Neldricken, but close down by the waterside. There was a strange thing beneath us. It was a part of this eastermost end of the loch, level as a green where they play bowls, and in daylight of the same smooth colour, but in the midst a black round eye of water, oily and murky, as though it were without a bottom, and the water a little arched in the middle—a most unwholesome place to look upon.

As she knelt over me May Maxwell pointed it out to me, with the knife which was in her hand.

‘That is their Murder Hole,’ she said, ‘but if we are to lie there we shall not lie there without company.’

The lights of the pursuers were dancing now among the heather, and their cries came from here and there, scattered and broken.

In a little, waiting thus together, we could see Gil clear against the sky. He also could see us, for he cried out to the outlaws behind him.

But in that moment of great terror, when my love knelt beside me—who, alas! in that time of need was no better than a log—suddenly something vast and terrible sprang past me—a shaggy beast infinitely greater than the dead bloodhounds, followed by another beast, less in size but even swifter in action. They were the same we had seen together that first night in the kirkyard of Kirk Oswald. These flashed out of sight and disappeared in the direction of our pursuers.

It was the Ghost Hunters that hunted only at the Dark of the Moon.

Gil turned in his tracks and began to flee.

‘The Loathly Beasts!’ we heard them cry, ‘the Witch Dogs are out!’

Then there was a shriek of pure animal terror, the lights darkened, and the cries reeled hither and thither—but not now of hunters encouraging each other, rather of men fleeing singly in the deadliest terror and crying out as they ran.

‘Oh, the Beasts—they are not of this earth,’ cried May, holding my hand tightly. ‘Oh, Patrick, do not faint away again and leave me all my lone.’

At this appeal I sat up and looked about. The two dead beasts were lying there. May took a napkin out of her bag and very tenderly wiped my face. Then she put it back and dropped, unconscious herself, into my arms.

Out of fairness to the author we have purposely omitted giving any outline of the story, but very few who take up *The Raiders*, undeterred by its Scotch, which is excellent Galloway, and not over difficult, will be able to eat or sleep until they have followed the chief actors in the story through their stirring adventures and deadly perils until the happy close.

Mr Crockett is to be congratulated upon having scored a great success, and upon having made a great advance; but is there not a greater advance yet possible to him? Has Patrick Heron a sequel to offer us, in which he will not only explain the mystery of his name, but give us the development of his religious life? If not, still our author need not travel beyond his much-loved Galloway to find material for a story, either ancient or modern, with the finest moral and spiritual types ready to hand. His genius will find its consummation in the portrayal of such types, if we mistake not. Will he try?

Correspondence- looking forward.

Craven St

Mar 24th

My dear Unwin

I shall have to be in Scotland on the 6th or 7th April at the latest, so I'm very sorry about the dinner. But never mind some other day we'll have wigs upon the green. I have been much with the Pennells and we are going down to Greenwich today coming back in the evening. Of all the people in London they are the best – best for me at any rate. I like them both more than I can say. I have got JP drawings. They are magnificent – best things for giving heart of Scotland I ever saw – better than anything we have!

Ever

SRC

The Old Romance St James Gazette, March 29th 1894

We like to think that we were among the first to recognize Mr Crockett's powers; it delights us still more to find from his latest work that we were far from over-estimating them. 'The Stickit Minister' is good, but 'The Raiders' is much better. Mr Crockett has been called a 'second Barrie,' mainly (we suspect) because they both use freely a northern dialect and occupy themselves with Scotch preachers and peasants. 'The Raiders' will probably set the same sort of critics calling its author a second Stevenson, or Blackmore, or possibly Sir Walter Scott: for the comparison with the English author here named something might, perhaps be said. Mr Crockett's tale is of a young Galloway laird in the earlier days of the last century. Patrick Heron, of Isle Rathan, is left an orphan in his boyhood, and uses his life in a fine boyish adventurous spirit. His history, as here narrated by himself, is mainly the story of the wooing of Merry May Maxwell, and the troubles it brought him into. May Mischief, as she is called, is a delightful mixture of roguery and womanhood, of a beautiful angel with a saving spice of Puckishness. She lives on the coast opposite Rathan with seven tall brothers and an old father. The patriarch is a grand old Cameronian, too old for taking active part in illicit traffic in contraband goods, but not finding his excessive

piety any bar to a keen interest in his stalwart sons' ways. There is an attack made upon the Maxwell house by a party of angry Dutch sea-robbers and Highland gypsies: the pirates seeking booty and vengeance for trade quarrels; the gypsies meaning to carry off May as a wife for Hector Faa, their leader. Patrick plays the hero's part in the approved way; but, in spite of his doughty deeds and his defence of the mysterious island cave in which he conceals the old man and his daughter, the maid is carried off. So away he goes to track the reivers; and, after many moving accidents and hairbreadth 'scapes, he succeeds in recovering her unharmed - much helped thereto and at all times by a humble pedlar, who turns out to be the great John Faa, 'Lord and Earl of Little Egypt.'

The characters in 'The Raiders' live and move and are on the common high ground of human passion and emotion; the narrative is excellently told; the pathos is genuine; and the descriptions - especially when it comes to killing or wooing - often first-rate. Faults, undoubtedly, the book has; but we are not inclined to put our finger upon them; heather and sea, good downright fighting and honest love-making, a fine firm style, plenty of the genuine 'old' humour, and behind it all a man - what wonder if, in face of these, the critic feels just tempted to forget altogether that it is part of his function to curse, and in blessing the giver to value the gift at perhaps even more than its intrinsic worth? 'The Raiders,' when all allowance is made for its defects, is indubitably a fine book, and this is the 'psychological moment' for its appearance surely: sick of incompetent diagnosis of unimportant aspects of neurosia and allied diseases, the public will eagerly welcome this clean virile romance. And sensible folk will not esteem it the less because it is the very book for the 'young person' - because generous boys and fresh young lasses will love it. Let us add that this romance is a solid bit of work, full of thought, and by no means what is known as 'light reading;' yet we read it through at a sitting and wished it longer.

Conclusion...

At this point we leave Crockett for now – on the cusp of the success that would change the rest of his life – but the story is really just beginning. I hope that the work shown here from March 1894 serves to open your eyes, if not convince you, that Crockett’s ‘story’ as much as Crockett’s stories, have a significance and interest which holds even now, 160 years since his birth and 125 years since this was simply his life and daily work. There is so much to explore, so much to learn and so much to enjoy both in his fiction and in discovering more about his life in context of his times and how it relates and reflects down to our own. You can argue all you like about the pre-eminence of Walter Scott, the ubiquity of Robert Burns and the greatness of Robert Louis Stevenson (and others) but I hope you will see that, irrespective of your own personal ‘taste’ in prose literature (and indeed whether you feel the need to privilege fiction with such a title or not), Samuel Rutherford Crockett the writer and Sam Crockett the man, has a vital and significant place in our literary, social and cultural history and should have a place in our hearts. The only question is - are Scots hearts big enough to allow him in, or do we see our hearts as limited and believe that we must resist competing claims or stepping outside of where we feel familiar? Personally I find it ironic that Crockett has been (and is still) accused of being in a parochial camp while his detractors are generally those who simply ‘belong’ to another tribe (and one that descends in many cases from traditional, class-based English society) and do not want to brook any alternative to their own gods. You may have other views. I’m happy to debate them as long as the debate is informed and respectful. The more of Crockett’s own correspondence I read the more I realise he did not need anyone to act as apologist for him, and it’s not a position I need to occupy today. Just call me a friend of his legacy. I leave him to have the last word:

‘Mayhap that is the best fortune of all - to be loved by a few greatly and constantly, rather than to be loudly applauded and immediately forgotten by the many.’