

Crockett's Timeline March 1894.

In what follows I am laying out the 'facts' as we know them evidenced from correspondence and publications, but I'm adding my own comment – which you might call speculation – to give something of a more 'real' flavour to the events. I think it's important that we remember these were real events in the life of real people and as such, the jealousies, foibles and excitements should not be ignored in favour of 'pure' objective factual recall (which is, of course, impossible). As researcher of course I mediate and edit the information I discover, but I have tried to do it as authentically as possible to give as clear a picture (as I see it) of the events of March 1894. Backing up my view is best kept for a different piece of work! You can find all the articles and stories referred to here in the file THE WHOLE SHEBANG (a large pdf) available for download from MEMBERS AREA from Feb 24th.

Thursday March 1st.

The month started somewhat inauspiciously for Sam with the publication (in *The Young Woman Magazine*) of a short story 'Saucy Susy Singleton'. It gave little idea of either the style or the content of what was to come. It was bread and butter. And perhaps ill advised. Certainly Ruth had dismissed his attempts to write in the Lancashire dialect she had grown up with. She felt Sam should stick to what he knew. He felt that he needed to cast his net as wide as possible. He was flexing his humour muscles in a suitably British way. After all, his 'Scotch' writing was meeting some critical resistance. But these Englishy ways did not come naturally. Perhaps he thought of Jimmy Barrie as he wrote it. He might think that Jimmy would see the funny side of it. But then Jimmy was in thrall to his own Saucy Susy at that time. I have the distinct feeling that Mary Ansell, who never really took to Sam, was cut from the same cloth.

Friday March 2nd

Trying to forget that his hopes had been predicated on a March 1st publication date, on Friday March 2nd Sam went to meet Dr Alexander Whyte in Edinburgh. He took a copy of *The Raiders* with him. It was dedicated to Whyte as follows:

To Alexander Whyte, my friend, I offer this story of the hills of my Home land - to me also, friends ancient, unforgotten, well-beloved.

They would have talked about all manner of things. They had a mutual friend in Jimmy Barrie. Whyte was Jimmy's elder brother Alexander's oldest (and possibly closest) friend Sam was due to have dinner with Barrie when he went to London. Whyte would doubtless have sent on his best regards.

Monday March 5th

The following Monday, March 5th the trouble started. *The Scotsman* had put in a notice of *The Raiders* and of course the book was still not published. As Sam had noted with TFU the previous week, knowing that a reviewer had read a work could be construed as publication. Sam assumed that Unwin had sent the review himself. The correspondence suggests that Unwin may have accused Sam of underhanded dealings. Of course, there would have been no problem if the book had been published as Sam anticipated on March 1st. Unwin wrote swiftly to *The Scotsman* to correct the details regarding publication.

That week, in perfect counterbalance to Saucy Sucey, came the publication of another story, more or less guaranteed to cause trouble. 'In the Matter of Incubus'...

Evidence suggests it was first published on Tuesday March 6th (though the actual copy I've sourced comes from a bound annual and the actual date of first magazine publication is unclear).

This could very much be seen as biting the hand that fed. It certainly pulled no punches about the Kirk.

Friday March 9th - Saturday March 10th.

Letters suggest that Sam travelled to London on the 9th. He had hoped to stay with the Nicolls, but Nicoll's wife was sick and so Sam stayed instead in quiet lodgings in 11 Craven Street, between the Strand and the Embankment, just behind Charing Cross. He was definitely in London for Saturday 10th March, the date *The Raiders* was finally published.

Sunday March 11th.

That evening Sam had dinner with Jimmy Barrie. They probably talked about *The Raiders*, about boys, about women, about Stevenson, about islands and *The PlayActress*. They may have discussed Samoa and a proposed trip there.

Tuesday March 13th.

That evening Sam was at the Cheshire Cheese - a well known haunt of London literati. It's likely that the Pennell's and Marriott Watson were there as well as Unwin. Work is still ongoing to find out who else spent that very important evening with him.

Wednesday March 14th.

Sam wrote to Marriott Watson sending him a copy of *The Raiders*. The suggestion is that he had met MW (perhaps with Pennells) either at Cheshire Cheese or after, at the Pennells house.

Thursday March 15th

The Raiders was reviewed by WRN in his guise as Claudius Clear in 'The British Weekly'.

Saturday March 17th.

Reviews were generally positive but one bucked the trend. Henley's review (written anonymously) came out on March 17th in the 'National Observer.' It look like Sam had an enemy in Henley. But the review was more about Henley's chagrin with RLS than anything else. It was ill advised, but perhaps indicative of the difficulties Henley himself was in at that time. His daughter Margaret had died aged 5 and a half on Sunday 11th February. While it was stated that it was tubercular meningitis, it was probably a consequence of inherited syphilis, so Henley had good reason to feel more than the usual level of grief. Jimmy Barrie was friends with Henley, and interestingly, Margaret, was the template for Barrie's 'Wendy'.

Added to this, in February the 'National Observer' changed proprietors and Henley basically got the boot - though he wrote for them till end of March. So he had lost his child and was losing his job. It's perhaps not surprising that he didn't take to the 'next best thing' in the form of Sam Crockett. It's interesting to observe that Henley gathered a group of 'young men' around him, and brooked no challenge to his authority. He was a

'big' figure and I can't see how Sam – a physically bigger specimen and a man unlikely to worship at the cult of 'young men' would have bowed in deference to Henley. Which seems to have been a prerequisite of friendship with Henley. He was not renowned for treating his friends well, so to be an enemy of his would be a dangerous position for a 'new' writer. However, the anonymous review that came out on the Saturday was not as a consequence of any possible first meeting at the Cheshire Cheese, as Henley wrote about it to his friend Fitzroy Bell on 12th March:

*'Books are very scarce indeed & I've the greatest difficulty in eking out the reviews. That is why I stretched out over Jamie B. You may judge of the scorn and rage that filled my heart when I beheld the result of your study of the works of Smith! **I took Crockett's new book for my own hand: being minded to drop the jacket of Master R.L.S, for his impudence in likening C to J.M.B. A betise contained in a letter to a friend and & now converted into a publisher's advt which meets you at every turn.**'*

The review (to me) smacks of an element of jealousy. Putting the best 'spin' on it, perhaps Henley was trying to 'protect' RLS and JMB - but from what? (Note he'd already fallen out with RLS and his attempt to revive their friendship came in the context of Henley all but begging for money from him.) It seems more like he was trying to cause trouble. And certainly, off the back of this, a lot of trouble was caused over the following year in particular, but with a long tail that carries over to this very day. I contend that this is the start of the Kailyard slur! I believe Henley was at the root and the heart of it and it's a contention I am working hard to 'prove'.

Crockett stayed in London for the rest of the month meeting people and soaking up the reviews. His activities included:

Monday March 19th.

Sam spent the evening with the Pennells

Friday March 23rd

A long review of *The Raiders* came out in the 'Literary World'.

Saturday March 24th.

Sam went to Greenwich with the Pennells.

Thursday March 29th

St James Gazette reviewed *The Raiders* the same day that they started serialising *Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills*. It would come out as a novella in August.

Raiders 125 members can download March 1894: The whole shebang, which includes all the articles/stories mentioned as well as more commentary, in one LARGE document. Available from The Members Area from March 1st.

Members can also download a free DIGITAL BOX SET (pdf) version of the Raiders Trilogy from March 1st from the Members Area.

If you want to buy paperbacks or box set ebooks, go to www.unco.scot. Head for the Crockett Collection in the Bookstore.