

PROLOGUE TO RAIDERS 125

Some correspondence and commentary about the six months leading up to the publication of *The Raiders* (September 1893 to February 1894)

PART ONE – September to November 1893

September 1893

In Sept 1893 RLS addressed the Honolulu Thistle Club, saying:

'I received a book the other day called 'The Stickit Minister' with a dedication to myself, which affected me strangely so that I cannot read it without a gulp. It was addressed to me in the third person and bade me remember the places 'where about the graves...'

It is clear that RLS was very moved by SRC's dedication (and some of the stories) since it inspired him to write a poem almost immediately for SRC which he then sent to SRC.

In a letter to SRC (unclear date but probably July/August) RLS also gave him his verdict on the book:

'I have carried out my promise and read every word, and while some of your stories are a trifle light and one at least seems to slender and fantastic – qualities that rarely mingle well, the fantastic demanding considerable solidity of texture -

The whole book breathes admirably of the soil, 'The Stickit Minister' and 'The Heather Lintie' are two that come near to me particularly. They are drowned in Scotland. They have refreshed me like a visit home. Cleg Kelly is a delightful fellow. I enjoyed his acquaintance particularly. Likewise that of the Junior Partner. By all accounts, you have described at least a possible descent for me in your fickle maiden; daft Elliot blood I have – and now it appears I may also have some of the tide of the Red MacGregors in my veins. So you see I am, by many directions, sib to your volume.

I have to speak of Gavin Ogilvy, however; he and you are complementary. When I read your first page, the Stickit Minister ploughing – I knew I was in Scotland and I knew I was not with Gavin Ogilvy. You are out of doors; he is within doors. You would die (and I think all the rest of us might be hanged) or we could write the inimitable tragedy called 'The Glove' in the Window. That is great literature. But ask Barrie to do the scenery and atmosphere of your Stickit one, and where is he? Look at his flood in the Little Minister; it is pitiful. Do you believe in that island? No. No more do I. By different ways, ye shall attain. Might I just breathe in your lug, that Angus is rather a dreary point of the country.'

The poem Crockett's dedication inspired (which is in part quoted on The Crockett Memorial at Laurieston) is as follows:

To S. R. Crockett

Blows the wind to-day, and the sun and the rain are flying,
Blows the wind on the moors to-day and now,
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying,
My heart remembers how!

Grey recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places,
Standing Stones on the vacant wine-red moor,
Hills of sheep, and the howes of the silent vanished races,
And winds, austere and pure!

Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,
Hills of home! and to hear again the call;
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees crying;
And hear no more at all.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Crockett would certainly be buoyed up by the comments and the poem and while he was later accused of making inappropriate capital out of Stevenson's comments, I am increasingly convinced that the 'blame' should there be any, is more reasonably to be laid at Unwin's door.

As it was, on September 13th Crockett wrote back to RLS:

*'Dear Master of mine,
Your beautiful verses are like heady wine to me. That my phrase should have suggested them to you is beyond my thought or hope. All that I thought or cared was that you should not think me presumptuous in so writing of you. Yet I thought you would understand why I did it. You have no doubt much affection coming to you overseas, but O man I think whiles I loe ye like a lass, wild Eliot, red-hand Macgregor and a'' This also is Scots and only a Scot would understand.
Gavin is great, and it rejoices me to see that you see that I did not derive from him – as said sometimes the Common (or Tom) reviewer... Gavin could not help them saying it, I don't think they will say it next time. Yes 'the Glove' is great – nothing less, and the 'registrardly letter – serene, unapproachable, but as you say the 'flood' and the 'Island' are not good enough for the Surrey side, let alone the Lyceum. Indeed all his action is not seen but only described and he does not write about the oot o' doors as if he have leaved there – and Angus is, as you say, interesting and the feck o' its fowk a kennin'*

dreich. His friend Nicoll, whom I ken well, tells me that when he gangs oot walkin' he sees nocht but the road slidin' atween his richt fit an' his left, an' that when Gavin wants to describe a scene in a story, he gangs hs way oot and looks at something, syne comes ben an' writes it doon.'

You'll no say me nay to prent it at the page opposite of the next edition, noo that the Letter Declaratory has done its work. The second edition (2000) gaed in a month, and the third's weel through by noo.'

Crockett's correspondence with his agent and publisher throughout this month are more prosaic (though the 'mystery' of the debt remains unclear thus far.) I hope that reading it gives you some insight, and also whets your appetite for what is to come. I have not added comment or contextualisation at this point but that's a work in progress.

I hope it goes without saying that you shouldn't share this information without checking with me first as much of the Galloway Raiders archive is photocopied from other archives who may not be entirely happy with public dissemination. Here, privately among friends, it's a different matter!

Free Church Manse,
Penicuik
Sept 2nd 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

I returned to find your letters waiting for me. I gave Wylie my address to communicate to you but fear it has somehow miscarried. Your first letter did not reach me till August 31, apparently having gone north to Orkney. I put all my literary matters into Mr Watt's (2 Paternoster Sq) hands some time ago. He has placed all my articles and short stories since. He has the manuscript of the 'Lilac' and will no doubt, communicate with you, if he has not already done so. I am glad to know that the 'Stickit' goes off in the market of America, and thank you for the review in the 'Nature.' Kindly tell your Mr Laurie, referring to his letter of 28th August, that I prefer the cheque for £2.12.6 to the volumes at present.

With kind regards

Yours truly

SRC

Pardon haste. This is Saturday, a Minister's dies novi

~ ~

Sept 6th 1893

FCM, Penicuik

Dear Mr Unwin,

I shall see that Mr Watt offers the book to you in due time, if I can manage it. I regret that I did not get your letter in time. I shall certainly advise you in future of my movements when I am to be from home for so long a period. I hope when I can get time to write a story which is in my head to offer it to you for Pseudonym. The Lilac Sunbonnet is about 120,000 words, but someday I shall write a thirty thousander. I have the story in my head, and we shall see then.

You say 'I have much pleasure in enclosing a cheque for £2.12s.6d' but I expect the clerk omitted to enclose for was no enclosure whatever in the letter.

We had a splendid holiday in Galloway, and return as much refreshed as we hope you do from America. Will you give our remembrance and goodwill to Mrs Unwin, whose kindness we have not forgotten.

With kind regards

Very truly yours

SRC

~ ~

FCM, Penicuik

15th Sept 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

Haste ye fast and get through with the 3rd Edition of the 'Stickit' Robert Louis Stevenson has send me a beautiful prefatory poem from Samoa for the 4th Edition which should give us a lift as well as be a great enhancement to the book.

What do you say to an illustrated edition? I could get the pictures very cheap from MacGeorge who illustrated my other books 'Dulce Cor etc' and reproduction is not as dear as it was.

500 would go easily.

Think of it and tell me what you think, me might see a cheap edition as well.

Ever yours

SRC

~ ~

FCM, Penicuik

Sep 19th 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

If all the copies in stock of the 3rd edition and not bound, we might get the illustrations done and bind as with Stevenson's poem and the plates, unless you wanted a specially got up book, which might be done as L.P.

I know quite well that you cannot put in [] of notices but if you cared to put in a few selected ones – say in the Atheneum and Spectator, specially the former, I would gladly

divide the cost with you.

It will be a good while before Pseudonym is ready, I fear; it will need time. It is a delicate subject. Please look at the Pall Mall Maga; the next month or two for 'A Cry Across the Black Water' and see if you think it will do. It is new try [sic] for me.

Astor pays well, I find.

Let me say again that I feel your treatment of me has been generous on the matter of the 2nd Edn. Please make out an advert for the Atheneneum and I shall be glad

Faithfully yours

SRC

~ ~

FCM Penicuik

Sept 20th (or maybe 26th) 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

I have the enclosed characteristic note from MacGeorge who happily is impecunious or it would have been a long time before we got the drawings out of him. I mentioned two guineas a wash drawing and three for figure subjects to him, of course subject to your approval; but he would throw in a good number of smaller sketches for tail pieces etc in the text. I said the job would be worth £40 to him, at least, so he is prepared to devote his autumn to the work for that and he will get some drawings from his friends as well. He does very beautiful work.

Do you think you could get the loan of some of Mr Pennell's Edinburgh blocks from the Edinburgh article which appeared in the Century. They would illustrate Cleg Kelly splendidly, specially one of the Bridges on a wet night with reflections of the lamps on wet pavements? You might try, being the British publisher. What do you think?

MacGeorge took the Concom Double (drawing and Painting) at Antwerp and is a very rising and brilliant young fellow. His present address is W.S.MacGeorge (artist) High St, Kirkcudbright. N.B.

He says he would go at once to the places I indicate.

With Kind regards

Ever truly yours

SRC

~ ~

FCM, Penicuik

22nd September

Dear Mr Unwin,

I thank you for your exceedingly kind letter to me which I received this morning. It is quite satisfactory. Indeed it is generous and helpful as well as encouraging to have your good will and good word.

I hate business and know no more about it than a cat; therefore I have to get an agent to do business for me. As Mr Wylie introduced my work to you, I thought it fair that he

should make his own terms and so on; but Mr A.P. Watt will act for me on future books. I feel that my business is to write and when I have a clear mind and a long day I can get through a good deal.

Of course Mr Wylie has for a long time been connected with me through the Christian Leader for which I have some years been main contributor. Among this other payments to me, it is of course well understood that he pays me 6d a day on all copies he gets from you at the special price.

I shall try to make the story 25,000 words. I have one in my mind which as a Clergyman I could hardly put my name to. When written it may do for the P. I shall keep it in mind. It is Italian and Scottish, and, I think, will be the thing.

The note of mine which you enclose re the royalty was written somewhat hastily on the advice of a London friend of mine who knows the bookmarket and who thought I should get more than 10d for future editions. I had not the agreement by me, which however now that I have referred to it, is clear enough.

I thank you for sending me the royalty cheque before the date of settlement mentioned on the paper. Still more for the generous way in which you send me the additional sum of Ten Guineas and for your promise to do in like manner if the editions go off as they have done.

Don't you think it would be as well to advertise on or two of the notices and little cuttings from them as Wylie does in Scotland. Not that I mean to teach my grandmother to suck eggs, but I have been missing the Stickit out of your lists lately, and he has not done so badly that he needs to hide his head. (Galloway – guid conceit o' himsel').

Well, I think that is all, except that I would like my two copies of the 3rd Edition when convenient. Kindly let me know how that goes. There is a story of mine (7000 words) in the Pall Mall Magazine for next month – or perhaps Nov 'A Cry Across the Black Water' I hope you will like it if you see it.

With kind regards and thanks for your generous treatment

SRC

~ ~

FCM Penicuik

Sept 22nd 1893

Dear Mr Fisher Unwin,

I am glad you think well of the illustrated Edition and that you will go on with it. I have written today to Mr MacGeorge who did the plates in 'Dulce Cor' which you saw, and which were reproduced by Amand Durand of Paris. He is a landscape man, but is also clever at figure. He is a native of Galloway and is always working there. He is, I believe, now in Kirkcudbright and could soon do the drawings. I could not tell you of course whether he prefers line or wash, but I should think the latter. He did recently some beautiful drawings in that medium which were reproduced by the Meisenback process and came out very well.

I shall tell you when I hear from him and give you his address. He would go into the thing with spirit, and make it a success. It would assuredly go well in Scotland and indeed all over the world wherever the Scot dwelt. With regard to the advertising of course you know your own business far better than I and you will do what is right. It was a friend of mine, a prominent editor in London, who did not think that literary people knew what a success – from a literary point of view as far as good reviewing went that is, the book had been. He advised me to put such a note of it in the Atheneum. I am sorry if I ought not to have offered to divide the advertising. I am not up in the etiquette of the question. My father in law, who publishes with Longmans, did as I proposed with the notice of the third edition (Silver Library) of his ‘County Pleasures’ and also with a new illustrated book on Arran that they are now issuing for him. My friend thought that with a few such notices we ought to have sold 8000 copies. But all comes in time. With regard to my future work, you are very kind. This is what I think. Of course I am not a rich man at all. My parish is a poor one, and all that I get from it, I put back again. I have lived by literature of the journalistic order for a long time now and done pretty well. The Christian Leader – Wylie’s paper, is worth over £250 a year to me. Nicolls work and work for theological papers say £150 more. Now I want to get out of the drudgery of this if I can. Mr Watt hears of my book, reads it, comes and sees me and takes over all my affairs. I have been getting little for my fiction. He arranges that the serial rights of a story shall be worth to begin with – nearly three hundred pounds. I had not got a centime for those of the last! He gets me £20 for serial rights of short stories where I have been getting thirty shillings. He trebles my income in six months, and puts me on a different footing altogether. I am able to write more fiction and do less drudgery work. I can keep now both a literary and a church association and give my wife a better establishment. Of course the success of ‘Stickit’ among literary men and with the public has had much to do with this; but you can see that the forty pounds or so that I have got for the ‘Stickit’ directly hardly counts for more than an item. I must therefore give Mr Watt a free hand, because he has done a very great deal for me and takes a great interest in my work – placing it to such advantage as I could not have done myself. If you had had a magazine of your own it would have been different, but you see, serial publication at first, is so much more valuable. I had to give Mr Wylie the serial rights of the ‘Lilac Sunbonnet’ because I had (verbally) promised him my next book and though it was far more important than I had expected, I stuck to my word and took his £60 – though I had an offer of £200 cash down for it. Now you see my position. I cannot do other than give a free hand to Mr Watt. Because I want a free hand myself to write what I like, and because book rights, though most important from a literary point of view, are little compared with the serial rights that Mr Watt can arrange. But at the same time I am not ungrateful, and I shall certainly offer you before long, possibly in six or eight weeks, what I think the best thing I have ever done, which if not suitable as a Pseudonym, may possibly make, with some tales that I have by me, a

new series of the 'Stickit'. Further than that I could not forecast my future in fairness to myself. I could never mortgage my work in the way of promising to publish it all one way, which would be like shutting oneself out of the market. But I do say that with the heartiest goodwill, I hope to continue to have business and other intercourse with you for many years to come.

I have been very frank with you, and of course you will treat this as a private letter, not to be filed with the letters in the office. I have told you more than I have done to any other, that you may know my position exactly.

I shall let you hear for me as soon as I have arranged with MacGeorge.

With kind regards, Very truly yours

22nd Sept

PS Though a type letter, yet being typed with my own hand it is just as private as another in script.

SRC

~ ~

FCM, Penicuik

Sept 29th 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

Thank you for your kind note. I don't have any of MacGeorge's recent drawings. He is yet a young man and has immensely improved during these last year. The 'Dulce Cor' drawings which he did in 1884 and 1885 for me were done when he was at Paris – a lad of twenty – and the wash drawings for a little poem of mine in 'Bards of Galloway' was done in 1888. He is five years older and better now; but that I think is very charming and reproduces beautifully and better I think than anything in 'With old Vogue Folk'. But he will send you a specimen drawing and then you can arrange with him. He would be heart and soul for the work and give more than he was paid for to make a fine book. Please accept a copy of 'Dulce Cor.' It is out of print but I have half a dozen and kindly send back 'Bards of Galloway' I have only one.

Re Pennell's drawings, I think there would be no difficulty about their 'doing' with MacG's work. His would be quite up to the best. I would favour printing most of the illustrations in the text. It makes a book so much prettier.

Ah that we could get the press work done in America as at the De Vince press.

The Cornish book is charming and the first plate beautifully reproduced, but I like the wash effect in 'From Two Windows' in Bards of Galloway. That book was issued at 10/6.

With kind regards

Yours ever truly

SRC

PS I send books today. I should like the Stickit, Royal 8vo like the Bards. What say you?

And at the end of the month we have a letter from Crockett to Watt which offers some contextualisation, if not clarity, of things financial.

SRM had been involved with A.P.Watt from May 1893 but the agreement was formalised in September 1893 as follows:

FCM, Penicuik.

Sept 30th

Dear Sirs,

I hereby appoint you my agents in all literary matters and in all financial matters relating to my writings. I therefore will place henceforth all my writings, without exception, in your hands for sale, and will not make any arrangement relating to my writings or anything to be written by me except through you as my agents. All applications for writings by me made to me shall be referred to you as my agents. Your remuneration for acting as my agents shall be 10 per cent on all moneys realised at any time from all sales of my writings made during the currency of this agreement. This agreement to remain in force for a period of ten years, dating from 1st October 1893 to the 1st of October 1903, and to be terminable thereafter by either of us giving one year's notification of a desire to bring it to an end.

I am

Yours very sincerely

S.R.Crockett

From the above I should like to except the sale of the serial rights only of such journalistic work as I may write for 'The Christian leader' together with my writings in the Weekly lesson in 'The Sunday School' which, as you know is reported from my Sunday morning Children's sermon

OCTOBER 1893 Highlights

Most of Crockett's correspondence this month is with T.Fisher Unwin. He spent the month in Penicuik.

This month there is lots of talk about *The Stickit Minister*, with Crockett pushing hard for an Illustrated edition. He champions the work of his friend William MacGeorge and he is trying to deal with the fact that both Wylie and Unwin are unhappy with him taking Watt as agent. Wylie believes he has some ownership of Crockett's work (presumably because many of the Stickit pieces were previously published in The Christian Leader. As publisher, Unwin finds himself at odds with Watt (the agent). But then Unwin has an uncomfortable relationship with many people. He also doesn't like Nicoll.

FCM Penicuik

Oct 2nd

Dear Mr Unwin,

I thought it truest and best I write very frankly as to one who could understand. I am glad you took it so, and thank you for your delicate courtesy and good feeling. Perhaps I said more than I ought, but impulse to put myself right with you and tell my difficulty made me write.

As you say the book has not long been published and one cannot judge of final results. I trust to hear that MacGeorge's work suits you for the Illustrated Edition. You would receive the two books with specimens of it

Again thanking you

I am, Dear Mr Unwin,

Very truly yours

SRC

Oct 3rd

Dear Mr Unwin,

I send you a monochrome watercolour for reproduction by MacGeorge. It comes out beautifully. His main things are at Manchester and the Aquareillistes in Paris, so that this is just a hast [sic] sketch, but with the oil sketch in Bards of Galloway, it will give an idea of his great ability and the broad beauty of his work. He has gone to 'my country' to work up something. He will make a great name, I think, if only he has a chance. I would be glad to take a share of his remuneration if you wished me to do so. I am so anxious that he should do it. He thinks he could do much better than Vogue folk. Let him try? I send his rough artist's scrawl. It will let you see better than anything what he thinks.

What follows is an escalation of the dispute between Unwin and Watt. Crockett unwittingly treads on toes. Watt steps in to remind Crockett that it is his role as agent to 'place' work. Crockett learns a lesson about 'ownership' of one's own writing.

Penicuik Oct 16

Dear Mr Unwin

There is no great hurry with Sweetheart Travellers. [1] There is a good deal more to be done with it. I think you saw only the first two papers of it before and saw that you would be glad of her when she grew up. I think we shall bide a wee.

I hope to have something much better for you shortly. There is a story which is having a great run in the Leader. I think it would suit you.[2]

CF the frontispeiece. He will be well-known as soon as the book appears. He only needs a chance.

Truly yours
SRC

(from Watt to Crockett)

Oct 16th

My dear Crockett,

I heard casually the other day that some work of yours is being offered to Mr Fisher Unwin for publication in book form. Taking into consideration the arrangement existing between us, I cannot suppose this is done with your consent. In any case, I must ask you to write to Mr Unwin at once, referring him to me as the only person authorised, or indeed who can, now treat regarding the sale of your writings.

Trusting to hear that you have put this matter right, I am yours very sincerely APW

Penicuik

Oct 21st

Dear Mr Unwin,

Mr Watt will call up on you in a day or two with my new story of 'The Playactress' which is about 33,000 words in length. Mr Wylie spoke to you of it, and that is entirely my fault, and it is in no sense the fault of Mr Wylie. I handed back the Sweetheart Travellers papers to show to you without duly considering the stringency of my agreement with Mr Watt. Will you kindly pardon the misapprehension into which I have inadvertently led Mr Wylie and yourself? I received the enclosed letter from Mr Watt... who reminds me that for ten yeas all my work except SERIAL RIGHTS of work in Leader is in his hands. This is quite true, though I did not realise that I had no power to arrange for the book rights of what had already appeared in Leader. You will therefore make my broad back bear all the blame. I hope you will like The PlayActress. George Alexander is going to revise it before it is issued in book form, and it is very likely that we may have it played at the St James' Theatre before very long.[3] Mr Alexander says that he would much like to play the Great Preacher

With regards

Yours very truly

SRC

(Crockett's letter to Wylie)

My dear Wylie,

I have your letter and I am glad to see that you are having a good time and I hope making good bags. I am glad you saw Unwin and submitted to him the books. I fear, however, that the financial terms for these, must be arranged through Mr Watt. He was

here two days after you and reminded me of the terms of our agreement, which I had overlooked, that all my work must pass through his hands.

Next we see that 'The Raiders' is still referred to as 'Rogues Island' (as opposed to the Rogues' Island published posthumously which is the semi-autobiographical story of Crockett's summer on Rough Island) Also that Unwin has not yet committed to it.

Penicuik

Oct 20th

Dear Mr Unwin

My wife was I hope explicit. 'The Raiders' is that 'Rogues Island' of which I spoke to you. That name reminiscent of Treasure Island for the common reviewer. I believe it is my magnum opus and I want it out soon, because I believe it to be a reputation-making book. I have studied the history and legend of Galloway for long and for two years I have worked at it. I would like before it went through the press to go over it again thoroughly to make the style tenser and tenser.

*The plot and story are as good as at present I can make them. I have tried for a book of adventure which would be one of character also. I have studied every detail yet tried to subordinate to a general picture. If I have succeeded you will know. **It is at any rate a kind of Iliad of the traditions of Galloway in the first quarter of the 18th century – a perfectly untouched time.***

If you were not anxious about a short title the title I should prefer would be 'John Faa. Outlaw, Lord and Earl of Little Egypt. Which also is accurate and characteristic, but I fear too long

'The Earl of Little Egypt.

'The Lord of Little Egypt'

'The Outlaw' would be best but of course somebody will have annexed that.

The main question is however if you care for the book. I think it is in fact of all I have written immeasurably the best. Remember it needs cleaning up and the M.S. is so dirty that it is hard to read as my stuff always is, but it would come out all right.

Mr Watt has 'The Playactress' about 33,600 words and if you like this adventure book, that The Sweetheart are to be placed with you to issue at your convenience. Of course I would like the Galloway book out as soon as possible.

You will see that I do not forget my old friends, nor will I.

Ever truly yours

And a week later again to Unwin, giving an idea of how far ahead, and how much work, Crockett had going on at the same time. Remember he was still working as minister at this point in time.

Penicuik Oct 27th

I am obliged for your kind letter of yesterday's date. I am exceedingly glad of your good opinion of The Raiders – that is of course only a provisional title. It has cost me a great deal of work and so far as I am able to judge the best and strongest work I have ever done is in it. I should have been glad of course if you could have seen your way (if you accept it) to publish in the end of November, but the spring would do quite well. [4]If, however, you could not issue the Raiders till the spring and Mr Watt put the Playactress in your hands, I should like it out at once [5]– and for this reason – it would keep up a continuity of production, and then there would be the Raiders in the spring and in the autumn would be clear for The Lilac Sunbonnet which is a large book of about 106,000 words,[6] and is a study of love and adventure, the love being as predominant as the adventure is in the Raiders. The Second Stickit [7]could come then also without any difficulty, and there would be more papers to select from, specially the 'A Cry Across the Dark Water' which is to appear in the Pall Mall Magazine. Though of course I have no power to commit Mr Watt, who has a perfectly free hand, I have no doubt whatever that, other things being equal, you would have as in this present case first chance at the Lilac.

I should like to be able to correct freely in future books, and I want to expunge the corrections clause in the agreements – for as you yourself said, it is a pity to spoil the ship for the hapworth of tar. I should not make any changes wantonly, you may be sure. Then I would like 24 of each first edition of any book and say a dozen of every future edition (and by the by I could do with a dozen of the Stickit now, all sorts of people and institutions write me for copies). There are I think no corrections that I want to make in the Stickit – I shall however, have a look, but kindly intimate to me when you reprint. I shall be glad to hear about the Illustrated edition, when you hear from Mr Pennell. MacGeorge could do pen drawings but he is best in oil black and white as in the vol of Bards of Galloway I sent you.

I shall write to Mr Watt about offering these volumes now, but in the case of the second volume of the Stickit he has not the MS, nor would I care to make up the MS till I got out a number of my best papers which are now going to magazines as in the case of The Cry Across the Black Water.

Faithfully yours

SRC

And finally, still trying to broker harmony between Unwin and Watt. Crockett was in a difficult position. Watt effectively had a mortgage on his future work and Unwin wanted him to deal direct. If the work didn't get published, Crockett would still be in debt to Watt.

Oct 28th 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

The ten year's agreement with Watt is not as terrible a thing as one would think. I only bind myself to pass all my work for that period through his hands; but he does not buy me up in the way of paying a fixed sum.

Of course I instructed him to offer you 'The Playactress' and the volume of Country papers; but it is likely that he may call upon you in a few days with a still more important offer.

You can depend on me doing my best, for you have proven yourself generous in your acknowledgement of the success of The Stickit.

With kind regards

Yours faithfully

SRC

PS I think 'The Playactress' is suitable for Pseudonym. I wrote it with that idea. Its success in the Leader has been remarkable. I should be quite satisfied if you issued it under the Pseudonym of 'The Galloway Herd.' [8]

We also have a telegram from this month to Unwin from Crockett. It's not dated but presumably comes some time mid- month.

TELEGRAM ON BACK OF OCT 93

Penicuik 11.10am

To Century London. Watt offered Raiders by instruction if you like that he will also offer Playactress and Sweetheart. Raiders best I ever wrote worked on two years manuscript needs copying and correcting.

Atmosphere incident landscape all exact and true. Crockett

Also at the end of the month Crockett supplied this humorous little sketch:

Oct 28th FCM Penicuik

A warning to parents and Guardians

Paterfam: (warming his toes, last person seen, last MS dispatched, last proof read) 'Now, I shall read for an hour.

Sweetheart: (sweethearting) No father, tell us a story, come Baby Brother?

Baby Brother (hammering on chair with spoon) Shan't!

Sweetheart: Well then, father dear, read me a story out of a St Nicholas book.

Paterf (does it weakly) 'Once upon a time...

Sweetheart (with the guile of her relentless sex) Isn't it about time another Nicholas book was coming. It's such a time since I got the last.

Paterf (endeavours to change the subject) Go and see if your mother is asleep.

Sweetheart: You promised you would buy one from the man that has them to sell as soon as they were out - now you did!

Materfamil: (not asleep, far from it) And you said you would get me all the Pseudonymns as they came out and Oillie was the last I had – and there's the Independent library and a lot –

Pater (early grey and sinking into an untimely grave) O certainly, anything else you would like?

Curtain falls on the poor man feeling wistfully at an empty purse. He has his want to and they run in expensive directions such as Tennyson Friends and other things, but he is obliged to sit down and write to his publishers to send him Nicholas new volume and recent Pseudonyms and trust that one day in the far future he may get paid. But not yet – not yet – if he had a steeple at his meeting house he would go and fall off it in the approved manner. As he has not, well, he does as he is told.

This sketch shows a domestic picture. Crockett was 34 and the family were expecting their third child. The correspondence from this month hopefully shows a) how far advanced and how flexible all the work plans were and b) gives an insight into the difficult relationships between the various 'characters' Crockett had to deal with in real life - before he was 'famous.' Things will never get any easier, only more complex as the months and years progress.

[1] Sweetheart Travellers was not published till 1896 and not by Unwin

[2] This is The PlayActress, which was being serialised in The Christian Leader as The Great Preacher.

[3] I don't think this ever happened. But J.M.Barrie took the play away on honeymoon with him in the summer of 1894, also considering it for theatrical production – which as far as I know never happened.

[4] Note that Crockett must have felt The Raiders almost ready for publication in October 1893. There were many revisions and 'comments' from readers before it came out in March 1894.

[5] Although serialised as The Great Preacher in 1893 The Playactress didn't come out until November 1894

[6] The Lilac Sunbonnet already mentioned. It was serialised starting January

1894 and published as a novel early October 1894

[7] This is presumably Bog Myrtle and Peat (which Unwin passed on) which was published in 1895

[8] Note that 'The Galloway Herd' title was taken and a pirated version of a MS Crockett did not approve, printed in America in 1895.

NOVEMBER 1893 HIGHLIGHTS

Crockett was effectively 'grounded' at Penicuik while they waited for the birth of their their third son, George (December 5th). Through this month Crockett had other pressing issues on his mind.

A debt from 1887 was due to be repaid and he called on his new agent A.P.Watt to help him deal with the situation. Essentially he mortgaged his three works in progress to Watt as security for Watt taking over the debt from Wylie. I'm no expert in late 19th century financial management (I struggle with early 21st century versions!) but even I can work out that this financial situation would be stressful.

My dear Crockett,

Yours of the 29th received this morning. You shall have your cheque by the 8th or 9th prox – if we can arrange the terms – as I have no doubt we shall – by that date I propose as we agreed when I saw you, that the matter should be put on a proper business basis and I should think the following would be agreeable to you.

- 1. You to assign me your insurance policy for £1000 giving me favour-should you from any cause not keep it up, to pay the premiums from monies of yours which I may collect from time to time.*
- 2. you to assign also The Raiders, Playactress, The Lilac Sunbonnet as collateral security*
- 3. That you give me your acceptance for the amount of £335 plus discounting, the bill to run for 6 months and to be then accruable for each portion of it as may be unpaid at maturity.*
- 4. That you authorise me to retain one half of all amounts accruing from your work in my hands till such time as the bill is paid, but that should this not amount to £100 annually you agree to repay at least £50 each half year till the debt and interest is wiped out.*
- 5. That interest on the load should be charged at the rate of 5% per annum, and that the cost of discounting bills and legal charges for transferring security should be debited and paid by you*

My solicitor suggest that if you would refer your present holders – or their solicitors – to us he could then take over the policy and hand them the money. But if this is not convenient you might send me some information regarding policy by sending a renewal notice or a receipt for past premium.

It was signed by FCB on Watt's behalf.

Crockett responded:

Nov 1st 1893

My dear Watt,

You are greatly generous. The agreement I have no doubt, is exceedingly right. I shall do exactly as you say, and I am quite sure you will not (as you are good enough to write) press any point to my hurt. If you wish me to sign any papers, just send them on. I do not wish the people whom I am paying to know that the debt is taken over. I should like therefore that the cheque be sent to me simply and I would pay it in to the bank and get them to send the policy to me. I would then send it at once to you or if you chose to my friend Mr Leitch (Secy of the Scottish Provident Trust, 18 King Williams' St .E.C.) who has always done my insurance business for me. I enclose the last receipt. They are of course clear up to date. I suppose this will be right. The policy dates from July 1887. I shall intimate to Mr Leitch that the policy has been transferred to you as my agent. Is that right?

Will you send me a document to sign embodying these conditions or shall I copy them from your letter of today? Now I am quite ready to do all you say is right and withal I thank you with all my heart for so readily consenting to give me a helping hand. It is at the outset and I shall never forget it all my life.

SRC

PS My wife keeps pretty well, but as you say we shall all be better when this is over. Could you send me a few copies of your little book.? I promised to send one to Stevenson.

Response came from Watt's office

Crockett

We enclose a Mortgage of Policy and Assurance and three copyrights. We have dated the paper so that we can fill up the different dates in the deed.

In your place we should draw the bill of exchange on the 5th

We have pinned to the deed particulars of our calculations whereby we arrived at £335.

We presume the Bank will charge 4 per cent for discount but we have not enquired

Our Mortgage does not go into any details such as are contained in your arrangement with regard to your right of retainer of one half of sums obtained for sales of works. We think it better not to bring this into the deed and make it lengthy.

Please arrange for the policy to be returned with the deed and draw Mr Crockett's

attention to the proper manner of executing the deed.

Our stationer has somehow come to the conclusion that Mr Crockett's second name is 'Ray' If it is not, please have the name altered where the ticks are, all through the deed and let the witness initial the alterations.

We have not yet heard from the Insurance Company as to notices of ...[]

And Crockett's response:

Nov 8th

My dear Mr Watt,

I have as you know been very anxious just now and with some cause; I must tell you that your manly and straightforward help has been a great joy to us; and we will soon settle down to the paying of it off; and so far as in the future lies in my power you shall not regret having stretched out the hand to one whom you have known such a short time. I think however that you know me and mine fairly well. So here is my hand to our continued friendship.

I think you have done admirably well with Unwin – far better than I anticipated for book rates. You must had had your business rapier unsheathed when you settled. I think the terms are specially good for the 'Playactress' which was written as a bye issue in the composition of 'The Raiders' but which took so greatly with the Scottish public that I took greater interest in it myself. I am quite prepared to recast it, tell Unwin, and write me your own ideas about it. George Alexander has promised to revise the London theatre part, and advise generally. I should decidedly prefer anonymity – though it is perfectly well known in Scotland that I wrote it - my name appearing in the paper. But it has been a success here so that won't greatly matter. Tell me what you think it needs yourself. Your judgement is as good as anyone's I know. Of course I have not put my strength into it as into the Raiders and the Lilac but there is (to my thinking) something good in it too – especially in the little girl and the Great Preacher face to face with an unexpected good on the stage.

Let me hear how you get on, and what you think right to be done with the Playactress. I will walk up to your advice with regard to that young woman to the letter. They are kettle cattle playactresses.

Ever cordially and gratefully your friend

SRC

There is a lot of interesting information in these letters. I have not been able to find out exactly what the incurred debt was originally. Work still to be done to find answers!!!

Meanwhile Crockett was also trying to sort out the royalties due to him for Stickit

Minister (getting confused between what was due from Wylie and Unwin) which was somewhat convoluted. He was also dealing with Unwin's demands regarding rewrites on The Raiders. And receiving some readers feedback (not very flattering) on his works.