

TIMELINE October 1894

Bank House

Oct 3 1894

Dear Mr Laurie,

I shall if I can give you a hand with the advertising if I only know how. I think however you select with great taste the suitable extracts.

I would advertise 2nd Edn 15 thousand or 20 thousand or whatever it is whenever it comes out. An advt in the Scotsman front page and if possible in the Glasgow Herald would do great good - but the Scotsman is exceedingly important. They gave Hall Caine a leader after advertising like that!! They boomed him tremendously.

Here are the two phrases which have come to my eye already and which might be used along with the announcement about the first edition of 10,000 exhausted. Nothing could be better than this for our purpose.

'A charming love story, bright, tender and vicacious, marked by distinction of treatment and steeped in the sweetness and freshness of the open air' Daily News

The other notice is from the Star but is I see of Sir Ucthred. 'Nor was a warm welcome likely to be lacking seeing how widely the Sassanach had surrendered himself to the charm of 'The Stickit Minister' and 'The Raiders' Star

Glad to hear about the repeats.

3 doz Raiders not arrived, bu you might send 2 doz more if many firsts yet remain. Thanks for care. Don't think Maxwell's man was at right places, but he might go back. Photo's not arrived yet

Ever yours

SRC

October 5th saw a 'Table Talk' review in 'The Literary World' about the recent publication (October 2nd) of *The Lilac Sunbonnet*.

'The Literary World', Oct 5th 1894.

Table Talk

Mr Crockett's new novel, 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' published on Tuesday by Mr Fisher Unwin, while lacking the war-like stir and movement of 'The Raiders' possesses a charm all its own. It is a love idyll, 'drowned in Scotland' as Mr Louis Stevenson said of some of the author's former work, and redolent specially in that Galloway soil which he is making classic ground. The 'humanities' of the book are set in the midst of such pictures of scenery as will make tourists wonder at their folly in spending money in Switzerland and Norway while Galloway is at their doors. To have turned out within a brief interval two works so essentially distinct and yet so entirely successful in their kind as 'The Raiders' and 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' is proof that we have in Mr Crockett a writer of wide range of power.

The following day saw The Glasgow Herald weigh in. Their charge of plagiarism is ridiculous (though it comes after similar ones regarding Mad Sir Uchtred) but perhaps shows not only the publishing 'wars' that were going on, but that attempts at taking Crockett's work too seriously illustrate an incomplete view of the emerging genre of 'historic fiction.'

The Glasgow Herald 6th October 1894

*Literature
Novels and Stories*

'The Lilac Sunbonnet' by S.R.Crockett.

Mr Crockett's books follow hard and fast upon each other. In the volume before us the author is as true to Galloway as Mr Hardy is to Wessex, and the beauties of that lovely country, which is all too unknown to even many Scotsmen, find in him a sympathetic and delightful chronicler. But more is required for a good story than charming descriptions of scenery, and we doubt whether 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' will add much to the reputation Mr Crockett deservedly won by 'The Raiders.' No doubt it is cast in a very different mould, for while that was a story of adventure, this is purely a love-tale of the meetings and partings of a youth (whose presumed destiny, but for love, it is to enter the narrow bounds of the Marrow Kirk, a body so select as apparently to contain but two faithful ministers 0 to wit, the father of young Ralph Peden and the lone clergyman of the manse of Dullarg) and of his love, the delightful Winsome or Winifred Charteris. In all that relates to their affairs the narrative is idyllic. As the semi-paralytic grandmother of Winsome peruses with fascination the volumes of the Great Unknown as they appear, the date of the story must have been somewhere before 1827, when Sir Walter Scott declared his authorship of the Waverly Novels, and as one of the sheep is called Zachary Macaulay (being blackfaced) in honour of the slave emancipation which took place in 1809, we must conceive that the period cannot be earlier than 1810. It is a convenient enough period, not too far off to demand much archaic knowledge, not too modern to be prosaic. Truth to tell, however, so far as most of the personages of the story are concerned, the date might be any time - with one notable exception. Mr Crockett's peasants are sometimes amusing; very often they are terribly tiresome, but once they are decidedly piquant, and that is where they plagiarise. The chapter 'The Cuif before the Session' is a veritable curiosity in literature, for it is to all appearance lifted without

acknowledgement from - of all books in the world 'Jockey and Maggy's Courtship, Part III' a chapbook of Dugald Graham, the skellat bellman of Glasgow, of which from a unique copy in the possession of a Glasgow gentleman, a reprint appears in Graham's work (Glasgow 1883 Vol ii). In the chapbook Jockey, a lout of a country lad, is called before the session on a charge of a nature which involves appearance on the cutty stool and his mother accompanies him, and with her flying tongue makes things warm for minister and session. In Mr Crockett's story, Alexander Mowdiewort, the gravedigger, is called to account for miscalling the minister. This is a concession to modern propriety which was certainly necessary. But the mother of Alexander (who, since he is a man of considerable age, and a widower to boot, scarcely seems to require her), like Jockey's mother, comes with him. The minister in both cases is called Mess John, and the dialogue in 'The Lilac Sun Bonnet' is obviously suggested by the chapman: sometimes it is more eg:

CHAPBOOK:

Mither, I hae been three or four times through the Bible and the New Testament, and I never saw a repending stool in't a; then war could the first o them come frae, the Apostles had nane of them. But adaft history book tells me, that the first o' them was used about Rome amang the Papists, and ay whan ony o them turn'd Whigs, they were put on a four neuked thing, like a yarn winnie blades, an I gave a' their gouls sindry till they turned Papists again; and then for anger they put them on a black stane or stool, in the mids o' the kirk, and the seck goan about them... but that was the original of your repeating stools.

Mr Crockett

Mother, I've been through the Testaments mair nor yince, the New Testament mair nor twice - an' I never saw naething about stools o' repentence in the hoose o' God. But my son Saunders was readin' to me the ither nicht in a fule history buik, an' there it said that amang the Papists they used to hae fowk that didna do as they did an' believe as they believed. Sae wi' a lang white serk on, an' a canle I their hands, they set them up for the rabble fowk to clod and set lunt to them - an that's the origin o' yer stool o' repentence.

Is this kind of appropriation quite worthy of Mr Crockett? He may be quite sure that the day for such 'literary borrowing' to use the mildest term - is quite gone by. Besides, the intrusive chapter is in every way an anachronism. If Mr Crockett cannot make his own peasants humorous, he might at least leave the rough humour of the chapbook and of the ancient bellman of Glasgow alone; such as it is, it is not improved by Mr Crockett's cobbling. Graham died in 1779. We do not see how Lady Elizabeth Greetorix's son could be 'The Honorable Andrew'. Mr Crockett is surely becoming careless in his great haste to the printing press.

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Crockett's feelings about this are made clear in a letter of the 12th to Mr Laurie. It shows he understood the 'game' which was being played in literary circles. Later in the year as the plagiarism accusations continue, he responds twice in the press and others come to his defence.

Bank House

Oct 12

Dear Mr Laurie

I am glad you think I did well to draw the teeth of the Herald. You would see the 'nasty one' in the Chronicle. It is nastily intended and written by William Archer I should judge, but there are quotable

passages, quite as much as you could quote from the best and most favourable reviews. I think I should advise an advt giving part at least of my Herald selection for several days in The Chronicle.

Lang says very truly that it is my time when the common reviewers say 'Got to, this chap is coming on too fast, let us join together and put a spoke in his wheel.' But out of a multitude there will be quite enough for our purposes.

I sent half the PlayActress yesterday and will send the other in a day or two. I should like to see a revise. Glad to know that repeats are booming in, and that Mudies want more - also that the West End man thinks the sale ripping. If Mr Unwin will just keep the extracts from good reviews before the public I think we may have even a pheonmenal sale. Besides, a slating of a col and 3/4 in the Chronicle is a distinction - unfair though it be. They praise Le Galliane, Gale, and Love's squad o Nesters who never sold a thou of a book in all their lives. Advertise 18 thousand and the half collumn of extracts and draw their teeth.

Ever

SRC

I enclose extract from D.C. slating. It reads admirably. What could you wish for more?

On the same day he wrote to his friend:

To John Macmillan

Bank House Oct 12th

My dear Friend,

I have had a lonely evening and your letter of this morning lying at my elbow cheered me and made me think of the dear little house in the glen and its well-beloved inmates.

I am glad you liked the Lilac and that you were reading it in the new form for the second time. I shall never forget the first reading and the pleasure it was to have my own words read out by your voice.

I never heard a story of mine read in my life before by anyone, and you gave me a new pleasure.

You will not be surprised to learn that the Lilac S. has been well abused by envious Cockney Scribblers. They have said all they can against it, but they cannot help it pleasing or selling. The Glasgow Herald had an article to prove that I had taken a few words from an old pamphlet I had never seen or heard of. But it is all no use. 18,000 of the Lilac were sold to date and it is going as fast as ever.

I am looking forward to your visit with very great delight and we hope that you will make up your mind to come and see us next month, before the winter quite sets in. All you have to do is to take the train at N.S. and arrive at Princes St. Station. Then if you take a cab to the Waverly you will get the 5pm train for

Penicuik, and we would meet you at the station with great joy in our hearts. But if I possibly could, I should come down and guide you across town myself.

In any case, it would be a pride and a joy to see you. Andrew Lang comes tomorrow, the Barrie's next week, but none should have a gladder an' a prouder welcome than Marion and John MacMillan, our dear friends of the quiet and beautiful Glen. And for myself, I would rejoice to see you more than if the Queen were to come and say she was my Auntie!!!

I am delighted to hear you like the literature (book). You are delighting me every page that you read of it.

With my best love to you,

I am ever your friend, with all affection SRC

I wonder if John could knock off and bring with him a little bit of the Clashdaan rock showing the burn the lightning made in the middle.

Referring to 'The Cockney Scribblers' also perhaps illustrates Crockett's awareness of the literary 'game' that was being played out at the time. On the same day The Literary World 'reported' the review from the Glasgow Herald.

The Literary World October 12th

A reviewer of 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' in The Glasgow Herald of Saturday is eager to fasten on Mr Crockett a charge of appropriation. The chapter 'The Cuif before the Session' is, according to this writer, 'a veritable curiosity in literature, for it is to all appearances lifted without acknowledgement from - of all books in the world 'Jockey and Maggy's Courtship, Part III' a chapbook of Dugald Graham, the skellat bellman of Glasgow.' The reviewer proceeds to show points of resemblance between the two stories, and quotes in parallel columns a passage from each showing the extent of Mr Crockett's indebtedness. The review closes with the remark that 'Mr Crockett is surely becoming careless in his great haste to the printing press.'

One thing is certain, Crockett's writing is ruffling feathers. On the 13th the 'Publishers Circular' offered another less than flattering review, which, read critically with the distance of hindsight, suggests much. I have to say, if this was an accurate reflection of 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' I wouldn't want to read it! But note also the final swinge: *is not free from cheap smartness and vulgarity. Southern readers, too, will find considerable difficulty in battling with the dialect.*

I think we can start to see where 'Kailyard' critique is coming from.

The Publishers' Circular Oct 13th 1894

From Mr T Fisher Unwin 'The Lilac Sunbonnet'

Galloway is the scene of Mr Crockett's new romance, but the story itself contrasts with 'The Raiders' very strongly. Instead of the rapid action, the fighting, and the plenitude of incident which we had in the earlier romance, we have rather a tedious love story. Ralph Peden is a young student of divinity who is sent by his father from the distractions of Edinburgh that he may pursue his studies with Alan Walsh at the Marrow Kirk manse at Dullarg. It was while reading his books in the open air on the hillside above Loch Grannoch that Ralph first saw the lilac sunbonnet and the sweet maid over whose shoulders it was hanging. The owner of the lilac sunbonnet is Winsome Charteris, a girl on whom devolve the chief duties of management of the farm of Craig Ronald. Her grandfather is helpless with paralysis, and her grandmother, also past working, chiefly passes her time in reading the novels of the then 'Great Unknown' Sir Walter Scott. When Ralph first spied Winsome she is engaged with one of her maids Meg, in blanket-washing, and when he sees her sit down and take off her stockings, thoughtless of his books, he flees. Winsome afterwards finds his books, and returns them to him the next day, with the exception of his notebook, which she keeps, for in it she finds he has written: 'Of all colours I do love lilac; I wonder maids do not all wear gear of that hue.' Winsome's parents have known Ralph's parents, and the love between the two young people grows apace. Captain Greatorix is Ralph's rival, while Winsome has a wouldbe supplanter in the person of Jess, who has fallen in love with Ralph, and who considers him as hers by right, for she was the first person he spoke to in Dullarg. Despite Jess, however, and despite Captain Greatorix, Ralph and Winsome finally come together, and the last we see of the lilac sunbonnet is over the face of Mistress Five year old Winifred Peden. The characters are fairly well presented, but the story as a whole drags, and is not free from cheap smartness and vulgarity. Southern readers, too, will find considerable difficulty in battling with the dialect.

Crockett is aware of all this as is shown in a letter to Unwin:

Bank House

Oct 16th

My Dear Unwin

Welcome back! Rejoiced to hear of your good health. Also that the Lilac goes and catches on apace. Nicoll thinks there is a set made by a clique against us and it. So does Andrew Lang who is with us here at Bank House. He has been for a week and is delightful. The Barries come next week.

But it doesn't matter after a little - indeed it does not matter now. I sent the advt of which I spoke to Mr Laurie to the Scotsman of Monday and Wednesday but shall not again take the responsibility upon me unless there be urgent cause.

They want an insertion for the Weekly Sot; but I did not reply to this.

Will write about other things - am glad you like 'The PlayActress' Hope it will go.

Ever yours

SRC

William Robertson Nicoll (in his guise of Claudius Clear) went out to bat for Crockett to redress the balance somewhat in the British Weekly of October 18th.

The British Weekly October 18th 1894

The Correspondence of Claudius Clear

The Lilac Sunbonnet

To the Editor of the British Weekly

Sir, I had not thought of writing a criticism of Mr Crockett's new book 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' and, for that matter, this letter will be a talk rather than a criticism. There is apparently a dead set being made against the story in certain quarters, and though Mr Crockett can stand injustice, it is possible he may not like it any more than the rest of us.

There is an impression apparently that he is writing too much. But, as a matter of fact, this book was written before the publication of 'The Raiders,' and so were 'Mad Sir Uchtred' and 'The Play Actress'. They have all received the best revision the author could give them, and are the result of a long application. And even if it were otherwise, is it any business of ours? The only question for us readers is whether a writer is giving them good work. Provided he does not collaborate with any Lloyd Osborn, provided he does not write to fill the money-bags that pay the labourers that work on the house the author built, provided he passes nothing that does not satisfy his conscience, the more he gives us the better.

There is something delightful to us who are growing old in the prodigality and industry of the young novelists. As a rule they are not only healthy, but athletic. They play every kind of game, from golf to lawn tennis. Their habits are outrageously good. They rise in the morning at any hour between three and eight, with a leaning to the earlier period. I have reason to believe that no author under thirty will be in bed tomorrow after eight o'clock, and any man who lies in bed till eight will find it difficult to do a book oftener than once in two months. Then these youths are very orderly in their habits. When they take down a book from their shelves, they put it back again in the same place. They always have blotting-paper within reach. They know where letters are. They never go out without a pencil, and I have known one or two instances in which they kept silver pencils going for years. Though I do not expect to be believed, I will not be kept from telling that one of them knows how to manage an inexhaustible pen. (that is not the name but it will do.) They have large books in which they paste useful cuttings. And they can work typewriters. A portion of every day is devoted by them to regular exercise and the first-hand observation of nature. They can name every bird by its song, and if they close their eyes in a woo when the wind is blowing, they can tell each tree by the noise of its leaves. At least they say so, and I have never been in a position to contradict them. These things being considered, it is not surprising that their fertility is very great. It may soon be the best thing for an ordinary reader to attach himself for life to some able-bodied young author whose work he likes. In this way his time will be fully occupied.

A more important objection to 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' is that it is not a book like 'The Raiders.' It is not; but then it never professed to be. 'The Raiders' is a first-rate story of adventure - so good that with all its success I doubt whether full justice has been done to it. On Saturday a brilliant young critic and novelist who is an expert both in writing and reviewing the adventure story, said in this room that no book of quite the same freshness and power as 'The Raiders' had appeared in 1894. All may not agree; but the opinion is worth recording. But 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' is a sweet, slow idyll of Scotch love-making. You must not imagine that life in Scottish parishes is full of poignant things. One may live there a lifetime and though he will hardly miss his own joys and pangs, he may never be able to tell anything worth remembering about his neighbours. Those with the clear eyes of poets are able out of ten thousand experiences to set forth a few which, once told, are remembered. No, the background is commonplace, and how happy and enviable does the commonplace sometimes appear. Mr Crockett tells a pure and fresh love story. If the love came suddenly - that is like life. If the obstacles in its course melted quickly away and came to very little - that is

like life. If it brought the crowning happiness to two true lovers - that is like life also. If it stirred some sad secrets, some unbearable memories among older people - is not, that, too, how it happens in life?

For my part, I think he has done a great thing for us all in writing a story so full of inspiring faith in womanhood. Some may think that in passages he too much resembles the Ettrick Shepherd at his worst. But I do not know. There is something so blithe, so sunny, so hopeful in these pages that they are a cordial for the times. Is the 'new woman' to be the woman of the future? Some say that all the new women write novels, and that they appear in consequence to be more numerous than they are. Others say that the old ideals we have worshipped of innocence, gentleness, unselfishness, and sweet, invincible goodness, are disappearing. Well, if they are, one can only say with Carlyle that much will go with them. They had not disappeared as long as Winsome Charteris was living. I will own to some disappointment that religion plays so poor a part in the story. There is a real danger that Mr Crockett may dwell too much on what is external and grotesque in the faith of his men and women. Better leave religion alone than use it merely for scenic effect.

Mr Crockett's imagination sees a more golden day coming for authors than they have ever dared to dream. He evidently thinks that minor poets will yet be able to live in peace on the revenues of their books. Ralph Peden owed some of his prosperity to Winsome, but not all of it, and his circumstances are very comfortable. We shall yet have announcements from Messrs. Marks and Street running in this fashion: 'The first edition (ten thousand copies) of *So-and-So, and other Poems, by a Party*, has been exhausted before publication, and a second edition, making twenty thousand, will be ready on Monday.' A criminal code for the protection of literary property will then be in force. The first provision will be that every Continental tourist returning to England shall be compelled to turn out all his pockets at Dover. If a Tauchnitz be found about him he will be severely reprimanded and sharply fined. The pillory will be revived for all critics who dare to pen an unfavourable review. The *Crimson Chapbook* may, greatly daring, go as far as this: '*So-and-So, and other Poems, by a Party*.' This book is by a new writer. We have not read more than the title page. It was unnecessary. Sufficient proof has been given that the work possesses originality and distinction.'

I am, sir, yours etc

Claudius Clear.

But note that Nicoll is not entirely comfortable with Crockett's treatment of religion in the book. Crockett was still, just, a minister at this time but the tide was turning on that score.

And as is the fickle fashion of publishing, the next day a 'puff' went out for *Men of the Moss Hags*. It's possible to consider that this in some way works to alleviate future plagiarism charges, trying to point out up front where and how Crockett derives his sources.

The Literary World October 19th

Mr Crockett's new story the '*Men of the Moss Hags*' which begins in *Good Words* for January, will run throughout the year, and will be about the same size as '*The Raiders*' perhaps a little longer. It is concerned with that most interesting period of Scottish history called '*The Killing Time*,' and especially with the adventures of those who took the field to resist the unjust demands of the King to control their consciences. The author has based his work both upon exact records and upon manuscript and traditional materials collected by himself. The story deals with the adventures of the young William Gordon of Earlstoun and his sweetheart during the times of trouble and hiding in the wilderness. The hero bears a hand in many perilous frays, and has a multitude of stirring adventures. He rides at Cameron's back at the last charge at Airds Moss. He holds up the Banner of Blue at the Sanquhar Declaration. He lies in hiding among the wild hills, and being wounded is succoured by his sweetheart. Much of the book is dominated by the striking personality of '*The Covenanter*' the father of the heroine, the tragedy of whose death

makes a lurid scene. Graham of Claverhouse, Grier of Lag, Johnstone of Westerhall are the leading characters of the persecutors; but a loyal and gallant Galloway laird, who stays at home and tries to do best for both parties is also introduced. The story will be illustrated by Mr Charles E. Brock.

Crockett writes to Unwin on the 20th on business matters - and obviously the 'Scots' dialect is something of an ongoing issue. But in general all seems good.

Bank House

20th October 1894

My dear Unwin,

I am glad you are pleased with the reviews and that you think the success of the Lilac is a very great one. I thought the Scotsman advertisement would please you and I am glad it has done so. I am also glad that you have arranged for the American edition of the PlayActress which should do well over there. There is much less Scots in it than in the others.

With kind regards

Faithfully yours

SRC

Ps What a very swell advt in the Athenaeum. Congratulate Laurie.

He writes to the Macmillans again...

Bank House

23rd Oct.

Dear Friends,

I have no time for a thousand things press – to write a long letter; but to how glad we shall be to see you. Please come just as soon as ever you can – the sooner the better.

I have to be in Edinburgh for two days Tues and Weds. Nov and 14 and I shall have to leave for the south about November 19th. So if you can come in November please come as soon in the month as you can and stay as long.

I am sure you will have a happy time with us here and though it is not like the Glen, it is lovely in its way.

Why not come off at once without waiting for November –the sooner the better.

I am getting on very fast with the story now, rising every morning about 4 and working hard, but the press will be off in a week now when I begin to correct. I hope to finish the first writing in that time.

I wrote the Wigtown martyrs chapter this morning and wept as I did it.

We are all well and looking forward to your coming greatly

Pardon brevity. It is the lambing time and I am fairly run off my feet.

With greetings and remembrances to you both.

Affectionately your friend

SRC

PS I think every night of your reading of the 'Lilac'

From which, among other things, we learn that Crockett is headed south in November. In fact he was going to spend a week with Ruskin at Brantwood. And 125 years on, I will be making the same trip. I am delivering a talk to the Literary Houses Group there on November 15th. I will be looking for the ghost of Crockett!

Note the date of writing *The Wigton Martyrs* Chapter 51. It's interesting to be able to place a particular date for writing and gives us an idea of the context he was living in while finishing this work ready for serialisation in a few weeks time. Note his 'lambing time' reference - meaning that the book is being born.

Bank House 24 Oct

Dear Unwin,

I was glad to see Austen on Sat and to hear that all the books are going so well, especially the Raiders and the Lilac. I shall have pleasure in reading the MS which you are forwarding and shall give you my very candid opinion on it. As you say, the Saturday Review was wholly satisfactory so with reservations is the St James' MS has not yet arrived.

With kind regards

Faithfully yours

SRC

PS Horrid big book by T.E.ST came in. I shall write the author a nice note in a short time. Privately I wouldn't take a hundred to read it.

SRC

Bank House

26 Oct

My Dear Unwin,

I have received the MS of which you speak and will read it in a short time

With kind regards

Faithfully yours

SRC

Accusations of plagiarism would continue through the rest of the year as *The Lilac Sunbonnet* was reviewed and, it seems, sides were taken over Crockett's place as up and coming new writer. You'll see that reviews are both good and bad, and the benefit of hindsight allows us to consider the 'angles' and cultural and literary contexts of those doing the commentary! More next month!