S. R. CROCKETT:
THE RISE AND FALL OF A POPULAR SCOTTISH WRITER

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I am indebted to the informants mentioned in the Acknowledgments, to the sources listed in the Bibliography, and to the valuable guidance of my Supervisor, Professor John MacQueen; otherwise this thesis, on a subject suggested by myself, is entirely my own work.

Islay M. Donaldson
I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry, 'Tis all barren... 

Laurence Sterne: *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, In the Street, Calais
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ABSTRACT

Samuel Rutherford Crockett, born in 1859 into a Cameronian family on a small Galloway farm, won a bursary to Edinburgh University, where he supplemented his income by miscellaneous journalism and developed facility in writing. After travelling on the Continent as a tutor, he returned to New College and entered the ministry of the Free Church of Scotland in 1886. His first books, published while he was minister at Penicuik, Midlothian, were so immediately successful that in 1895 he resigned his charge to make writing his full-time career.

In *The Stickit Minister* and *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, Crockett's rural scene superficially resembled those of Barrie and Ian Maclaren, and inevitably he was placed in the so-called "Kailyard" school, despite his fresh, unsentimental and sardonic outlook. *The Raiders*, a historical romance, elicited over-enthusiastic comparison with Scott and Stevenson. To these two main fields, in two decades and over sixty books, he added stories of Edinburgh slums, railways workers, miners and contemporary industrialism, Ayrshire as well as Galloway traditions, and historical romances set in Europe, constantly varying his styles and themes.

Crockett's strength lay in his ability to describe the landscapes against which his stories were set, conveying sensation, movement and atmosphere with zest and energy. His plots were less successful; with tradition or a contemporary tale as framework, he could bring incidents and characters vividly to life, but tended to crude sensationalism. This, combined with temperamental carelessness, the financial necessity for at least three books every year, and his initial connection with the religious press, reduced his reputation. Over-work and ill-health contributed to his death in 1914 when he was fifty-four.

Over-estimated at first, Crockett is now misrepresented and neglected. His honesty, his engaging humour, his skill in description and detail, and his humanity, all emerge from this examination of his work.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must first thank Mr James Vitty, Librarian of the Linenhall Library, Belfast, who more than two decades ago gave me a copy of the Eighth Illustrated Edition of *The Stickit Minister* with Crockett's signature and set me off collecting and re-reading him -- he little thought what he was starting!

My grateful thanks are due to members of S. R. Crockett's family -- to his younger daughter, Mrs Margaret Douglas Newman of Altrincham, who answered my questions and wished me well; to his great-nephew Professor John Crocket Smyth of Johnstone, Renfrewshire, who allowed me to use diaries and letters in his possession and has been a fund of family tradition; to Miss Joan H. Crockett of Edinburgh who showed me family photographs and let me use letters from Crockett to her father, his cousin; to Mrs Mary McKerrow of Edinburgh and Miss Pearl McDowall of Kirkton, Dumfries, who explained the details of his great-aunt Christian Crocket's descendants and filled in the Kirkmahoe background; to Miss Anne Todd of Dumfries whose mother described meeting Crockett in her childhood at Drurabreck (the home of her aunt Mrs John Crocket) and who took me to see Miss Nan McKnight of Dunscore and put me in touch with Mrs Nan O'Brien of Derry, to both of whom I owe thanks.

I am grateful also to the late Mr James Milroy of Edinburgh whose memories of Crockett at Penicuik were so vivid that I could picture the household at the Manse and at Bank House; to Mrs Ruth Sandilands of Edinburgh, whose father the Rev. William Thomson was Crockett's neighbour at Auchencairn, for his reminiscences and the two letters written to him by Crockett from France in his last years; to Mrs Edith Paterson
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A special word of gratitude must be to the compiler of what I have called the Penicuik Cuttings, the late Mr R. E. Black of Penicuik. Over many years Mr Black collected, in more than one hundred and forty volumes, cuttings relating to all aspects of life in Penicuik and district which are a mine of information for local historians. Mr E. J. Cowan of the Department of Scottish History, Edinburgh University, told me of their existence, and Mr William W. Black of Silverburn, Penicuik, the compiler's son, generously allowed me to borrow over a long period the three volumes which particularly relate to Crockett. Without them I would have been lost for a picture of Crockett as a young minister, and they were an invaluable guide to his later life by showing me where to search further. To all of these I am deeply indebted.

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I gratefully acknowledge once more the understanding, encouragement and inspired suggestions of Professor John MacQueen of the School of Scottish Studies. Although a man from the Shire, he has been throughout most tolerant of my interest in a man from the Stewartry, and his wisdom in restraining my rash enthusiasm has been both kindly and necessary. Without his guidance, there might have been whole volumes in folio and never a conclusion.

Lastly, my thanks are due to my husband for his putting up with Crockett in the *menage à trois* in which we have lived for the past few years, and for listening. He forbade me to mention him in connection with the footnote or two which he was instrumental in providing but forgot to exclude himself from larger acknowledgement. He must forgive me if I take advantage of the limitation on the interdict.
NOTE: The footnotes in Chapters 8 and 9, The Raiders 1 and 2, have been reduced to chapter and page numbers only because of their multiplicity; in the other chapters book titles are also included.

CORRIGENDA -- Peeblesshire News

Page 57, footnote 1; page 58, footnote 1; page 632

The newspaper cutting cited (photocopy in possession of I.M. Donaldson) was sent by a Manchester correspondent who indicated that it came from the Peeblesshire News. Eventual access to the file has shown that this is not so, and internal evidence suggests that the newspaper may have been from the area of Manchester, Ruth Crockett's place of origin.

The reference, therefore, should read

"Death of Mrs Ruth Mary Crockett", November 1932, in cutting from newspaper (?Manchester area), photocopy in possession of I. M. Donaldson."
CHAPTER 1

Galloway

In the incomplete Lochrutton Parish Register Volume I there is recorded the marriage of John Crocket and Ann Milligan on December 11th 1777. Three of the children of this marriage in a quiet Stewartry of Kirkcudbright parish four miles from Dumfries were to play parts in the imaginative development of the man who lies in Balmaghie Graveyard, farther west in the Stewartry, near Castle Douglas, his life summed up in four lines, almost hidden in grass and clover, at the foot of one of the Crocket tombstones:

Also SAMUEL RUTHERFORD CROCKETT
Minister of the Gospel and Novelist, born at Duchrae in this parish on 24th September 1859,
Died at Tarascon, France, on 16th April 1914.

The two parts of his life—"Minister of the Gospel" and "Novelist"—had in their time roused such controversy that when he died suddenly just before the outbreak of the first World War, in that distant world of simple but strongly held opinions, some members even of his own family of cousins and connections questioned a little his right to lie with his sober Cameronian forebears.¹

William Crocket, one of the sons of John and Ann who married in 1777, married in his turn Mary Dickson, born like himself in Lochrutton, and moved to the small farm of Park in the neighbouring parish of Kirkpatrick Irongray to set up his home; his sons John and Samuel were born there in 1824 and 1826. By 1828 they had moved to another small

¹Crocket family tradition, attested to by Professor John Crocket Smyth of Johnstone, Renfrewshire, great-nephew of S.R. Crockett.
farm, Bush, where the remainder of their children were born—Ann or Annie, Christina, Janet, William, Robert and Mary.

Robert Crocket, a younger son of John and Ann, also set up his household in Kirkpatrick Irongray at the farm of Killylour; his wife was Janet Clark, and their family, ten years younger than William's but born like them in Irongray, were John, David, Robert, William and Mary.

A third child of John and Ann, an older sister of William and Robert called Christina or Christian, married John Hyslop of Lochruttongate, later called Southpark, and remained in her parents' parish; she comes into the story indirectly, through her children and grandchildren. We may leave her aside for the moment, noting that she was more prosperous perhaps than her brothers, since the entry of her daughter's birth in 1818 in the Lochrutton Parish Register describes her husband as a "Proprietor".

At some time between 1841 and 1851, both William and Robert moved with their families from Irongray to farms in the parish of Balmaghie. William became tenant of Little Duchrae on the road between Castle Douglas and New Galloway, where according to the 1851 Census he was farming 108 acres jointly with his eldest son John who had married the daughter of the farmer at Mains of Duchrae, farther to the east on a back road near Balmaghie Church, and was living there with his wife and young family. William's other children were variously employed—Samuel apprenticed to a joiner, the girls out at service, William and Robert helping on the
farm at Little Duchrae. His brother Robert moved to a larger farm, Drumbreck, described in the 1841 Census as "a detached and distant farm of the Duchrae Estate" and amounting to 143 acres; it is near Laurieston village, in less fashionable times known as Clachanpluck. In the 1851 Census he and his wife are settled there with another son, James, 10 months old and born in Balmaghie, which suggests that their move had been a recent one. They were to have one more child, Jessie or Jannet Crocket, and she too was born in the same parish of Balmaghie. The two families had thus moved to the same estate with the same landlord; they were within easy reach of one another and in regular contact, taking a keen interest in one another's affairs.

Samuel Crocket, whom readers were to know as Samuel Rutherford Crockett, was born at Little Duchrae on 24th September 1859 to Annie Crocket, daughter of William and Mary, who described herself on her son's birth certificate as a dairymaid. The identity of the father has not come down to us, though he was clearly no stranger to the Crockets; Annie's brother, Crockett's Uncle Samuel, wrote feelingly from Rochester, Minnesota, U.S.A. when he heard of her circumstances:

I was very sorry to read the account you sent about Anne, all of you must be as kind to her as you possibly can, for he that thinketh he standeth, must take good heed lest he fall, he must be a miserable wretch to act as he has done, but vengence (sic) is mine I will repay saith the Lord, if no earthly tribunal will punish him for his conduct. I am glad that he did not marry her, I never thought highly of
him and the longer the less.\textsuperscript{1}

This simple genuine Christian understanding reflects the attitude of this austere Cameronian family towards an occurrence which was common in nineteenth century Galloway and explains why Crockett himself was little affected by the fact of his illegitimacy; sympathy for the wronged sister far outweighed any desire that she should for the sake of mere respectability marry a man who was considered unworthy.

Brotherly affection is shown again when Samuel wrote later in the same year that

\begin{quote}
you must tell Anne to fetch over her little Sam and let us see him and I will give him a new suit of clothes. It is so far off I cannot send him anything he will be running all over by this time I expect.\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

Young Sam was brought up at Little Duchrae by his mother, his grandfather and his grandmother, his uncles and his aunts, the only child on the farm, much beloved and much loving. His Uncle Samuel later returned to Scotland, to settle at Glenlochar, near Laurieston, and rejoin the family circle with his wife and children; he became a well-respected local joiner and undertaker and was followed in this trade by his son William, born in Minnesota, Crockett's favourite cousin.

Growing up on the farm at Little Duchrae, surrounded by aunts and uncles born either at Irongray or at Balmaghie,

\textsuperscript{1}Letter from Samuel Crocket to John Crocket, Mains of Duchrae, February 14th 1860, lent by Professor J.C. Smyth, Johnstone, Renfrewshire, great-grandson of John Crocket.

\textsuperscript{2}Letter from Samuel Crocket to John Crocket, Mains of Duchrae, October 19th 1860, lent by Professor J.C. Smyth, Johnstone, Renfrewshire, great-grandson of John Crocket.
listening to and watching his elders and their ways and absorbing their values, it was inevitable that young Sam was shaped by Covenanting tales and principles—especially tales. All the Crockets were Presbyterians, either of the Free Church or like William his grandfather belonging to the Cameronian sect, extreme and ardent remnants of the followers of Richard Cameron, known also as the Society men or the Hill men, who in 1688 had rejected the Revolution Settlement because it had not imposed Presbyterian rule and doctrine throughout the United Kingdom. They held austerely to the Covenant, which the Settlement had not respected or even taken very seriously, and did not recognise the authority of the state; up until 1863 anyone who took the Oath of Allegiance or exercised a vote was excommunicated, and even after that such conduct was discouraged.

Irongray is at the heart of Covenanting history. One of its ministers was John Welsh, grandson of John Knox, who marched with the rebels who gathered at Irongray before the Pentland Rising of 1666, exhorting them to enthusiasm before the battle at Rullion Green, where they were slaughtered by Royalist troops. The Communion Stones of Irongray high on the moors above still remain to testify to the conventicle held there in 1678 when 3,000 communicants, in peril of their lives, partook of the Lord's Supper at the hands of John Welsh and other courageous ministers, observed from afar by dragoons but prudently left in peace because of their numbers. The memory of this was so strong in the countryside that in 1870, when Crockett was eleven years old, a
granite obelisk was erected "by voluntary subscription" to record the occasion; it is unlikely that he did not know of this commemoration, and his older relatives, although by then living in Balmaghie, may well have been among the subscribers. Moreover, in the parish of Irongray stands the residence of the notorious persecutor, Grierson of Lagg, and the churchyard has its own martyrs, hanged by order of Grierson and Captain Bruce from a tree near Irongray Church and buried with one of those epitaphs which Scott describes in the first chapter of Old Mortality as "announcing, in scriptural language, the promised blessings of futurity to be the lot of the slain" while at the same time they "anathematized the murderers with corresponding violence". Few Galloway graveyards lack one or two stones recording some such memory of the Killing Time.

The removal from Irongray to Balmaghie took the Crockets farther into Covenanting country; that Parish too has its martyr graves—the flat through-stones of the two David Hallidays who "by Lag most wickedly were shot" and the small stone of George Short "who was pursued and taken and instantly shot to death under cloud of night in the paroch of Tongueland by Grier of Lag and the Earle of Anandale because of his adherence to Scotland's Reformation Covenants National and Solemn League 1685".

Moreover, at the beginning of the eighteenth century Balmaghie was the most rebel among rebel parishes; here the Rev. John Macmillan, with the help and encouragement of his parishioners, exercised his technically illegal ministry for
twenty-four years. A strong Cameronian, he had accepted ordination from the established Church of Scotland in the hope that from within it he might work for the restoration of the old Presbyterian polity, but found himself unable to accept the oath of allegiance to Queen Anne, an uncovenanted ruler, and the Erastian supremacy which she represented. He ceased to attend meetings of the Presbytery and published a list of twelve "Grievances" which led to his deposition in 1703. This he refused to recognise and continued to occupy his manse and preach in his church despite all efforts of the Presbytery and the sheriff to oust him—despite even the ordination in Kirkudbright, at a safe distance, of his successor, who was greeted with a riot when he tried to take possession of his parish. It was only in 1727 that he voluntarily laid down his charge and accepted the call of the Society men to minister to the areas of central and south Scotland where the "suffering remnant" were most strong, becoming the first ordained minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

These beliefs and events were presented to young Samuel heroically, not as dry history but as fiery and unquenchable examples of courage felt in the pulses of men, stirring their hearts and sharpening their minds, compelling them to clear and if necessary stubborn action. He writes of them with relish in Raiderland.

The parish of Balmaghie is the Cor Cordium of Galloway. It is the central parish—the citadel of Gallovidian prejudices. It was the proud sanctuary of the reivers of the low country before the Reformation. Then it
became the headquarters of the High Westland Whigs in the stirring times that sent Davie Crookback to watch the king's forces on the English border. From its Clachanpluck every single man marched away to Rullion Green, very few returning from the dowsing they got on Pentland side from grim long-bearded Dalyell. It was the parish that for many years defied, indiscriminately, law courts and Church courts, and kept Macmillan, the first minister of the Cameronian Societies, in enjoyment of kirk, glebe and manse in spite of the invasion of the emissaries of Court of Session and the fulminations of the Erastian Presbytery of Kirkcudbright.\(^1\)

These things were the substance of his childish imagination. Solitary as many only children, he played by himself with his dog or with occasional visiting cousins at Covenanters and Dragoons as later generations played at Cowboys and Indians, surrounded by the scenes which had known their reality.

Two other elements ensured that he would look back on these childhood days at Little Duchrae with vivid nostalgia—the kindliness of the household in which he was brought up, the one child among adults, and the natural beauty of the Galloway landscape to which he responded eagerly with every sense sharply alive to sounds, scents, colours, textures and movements. The people at Little Duchrae were austere, simple and Cameronian but by no means stern. To the small boy their piety represented security and a firm code of values: the Shorter Catechism tempered with understanding and humour.

Crockett's earliest outdoor memory is of lying as a baby in the woods near Duchrae and feeling sense-impressions

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vividly even at that age.

The earliest scent I can remember is that of fresh pine chips, among which my mother laid me while she and her brothers gathered "kindling" among the yet unfallen giants. Too young to walk, I had to be carried pick-a-back to the wood. But I can remember with a strange clearness the broad spread of the moor beneath over which we had come, the warmth of the shawl in which I was wrapped, the dreamy scent of the newly cut fir-chips in which they had left me nested—above all, I recall a certain bit of blue sky that looked down at me with so friendly a wink, as a white racing cloud passed high overhead.

His earliest indoor memory is equally clear and sensuous.

It was a warm harvest day—early September, most likely—all the family out at the oats, following the slow sweep of the scythe or the crisper crop of the reaping-hook. Silence in the little kitchen of the Duchraet!" only my grandmother padding softly about in her list slippers (or hoshems), baking farles of cake on the "girdle," the round plate of iron described by Froissart. The door and windows were open, and without there spread that silence in comparison with which the hush of a kirkyard is almost company—the silence of a Scottish farmyard in the first burst of harvest.

His grandfather William Crockett with his peasant dignity was the head of the household, strong and patriarchal.

Through the little end window he could see his grandfather moving up and down outside, leaning on his staff—his tall, stooping figure very clear against the background of oaks. As he went he looked upward, often in self-communion, and sometimes groaned aloud in the instancy of his unspoken prayer. His brow rose like the wall of a fortress. A stray white lock on his bare head stirred in the crisp air. The boy was about to omit his prayers in his eagerness for porridge, but the sight of his grandfather induced him to change his mind.

1Raiderland, pp 20-21
2Raiderland, p. 21
Thus gently was the authority of example placed before Crockett's childish eyes, and example was buttressed by the reading of the Word of God with due solemnity: the ceremony known as the "Taking of the Book", described in words and cadences which are appropriately Carlylean.

The "Buik" was the key to the life, simple, austere, clear-eyed, forth-looking, yet not unjoyous, of that Cameronian household--in some wise also the key to Scotland and to its history for three hundred years.

The family gathered without spoken summons or stroke of bell. No one was absent, or could be absent for any purpose whatsoever. The great Bible, clad rough-coated in the hairy hide of a calf, was brought down from the press and laid at the table-end. The head of the house sat down before it and bowed himself. In all the world there was a silence that could be felt...

Then the Buik being over, the red farm cart rattled sedately away down the loaning on its nine-mile journey, passing on its way Kirks Free and Kirks Established, to deposit its passengers at the Cameronian Kirk on the Hill, where their ancestors had listened to the preached Word throughout their generations, ever since the foundations thereof were laid stone upon his stone.

The red cart was reserved for the aged and the women. Also sometimes it carried a certain boy, more or less willing to endure hardness, but, at any rate, not consulted in the matter. The men folk, uncles long-legged and strapping, with mayhap a friend or two, cut through by the Water o' Dee, passing Balmaghie Kirk, and so reached the Kirk on the Hill an hour before the red cart rattled up the street--so prompt to its time that the dwellers in streets averse from the two clock set their watches by it.

More often, however, the boy remained gratefully behind, and after a careful survey of the premises, he usually went behind the barn to relieve his mind in a rough-and-tumble with the collie dogs, which, wearing like himself accurately Sunday faces, had been present at the worship, but now the red cart once out of the way, were very willing to relapse into such mundane scufflings, grippings and scourings of the countryside as to prove them no right Cameroonians of the blue.  

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1Raiderland, pp 30-32
Crockett remembers too the hardness of life at Little Duchrae, typical of all Galloway farms—his uncles and himself sleeping in the loft above the room and kitchen and rising early to see to the sheep, sometimes having to brush off their coverlets the snow that during the night had sifted down through the unceiled roof; helping as a boy of five to make the bands for a whole field of sheaves of wheat; most of all the struggle with the waters of the Dee which ran near the farm and in the autumn often threatened to flood the meadow where the precious hay was lying.

though I was only a very little boy at the time, I can remember how often I was startled from my bed with a wild cry, in Scots, that the Dee was out and about; a wild cry to arms against disaster and ruin. How we all tumbled from our beds, and in the hastiest attire we rushed out into the night, under the light of the stars, or by flickering torches, the old men, the women, the males, and even such children as I was, each to wrest from the waters some portion of their spoils; for our hay meant the rent of the farm, the bread for the winter, the daily loaf-mass for many days to come. And into the water we went and snatched all the hay that could be saved, and plunged and groaned and struggled in our fight for our bread against the disastrous waters. I can still see my uncles, breast-high in the black flood, holding armfuls of rescued hay above the water, whilst my old grandfather, standing in the doorway of the farm-house, pointed with his stick into the night and guarded the salvage, in shrill Scots. And so we plunged, and struggled, and saved, till after long hours of work we withdrew, dripping and triumphant, whilst the defeated Dee rolled on placidly, under the pale light of the stars.3

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1S.R. Crockett: Bog-Myrtle and Peat, p. 184
2R.H. Sherard: "S.R. Crockett at Home", The Idler VII (July 1895) p. 799. This article is hereafter referred to as "S.R.C. at Home".
3"S.R.C. at Home", pp 800-801
Here again, even in the struggle, one can feel a sense of enjoyment in Crockett's words, a delight in fierce physical activity and the very wildness of the scene. His childhood was filled with happiness; even in its hardships he found pleasure, and his Cameronian upbringing is shown in bright pictures, far brighter than those Carlyle gives us of his childhood or than those we feel lie behind Stevenson's middle-class Calvinistic background. Crockett stresses the cheerfulness that was always present in the midst of the austerity, even as we have seen on the Sabbath.

Sunday was by no means a day of privation or discouragement for the boy. For not only was his path strewn with "let ups" from too much gravity by sympathetic seniors, but he even discovered "let ups" for himself, in everything that ran or swam or flew, in heaven or earth or the waters under.¹

But then such was Crockett's mercurial, optimistic temperament that he would always be filling his days with what one could call "let ups", which may not have contributed to his greatness as a writer but certainly endowed him with a most lovable personality.

Thus we can see very early in Crockett's life, when he was still a child strongly influenced by Cameronian grandparents of the most austere beliefs and yet indulged affectionately by those grandparents and his aunts and uncles, the beginning of a tension that was to last all his days. On the one hand he revered the heroes of the Covenant and absorbed tales of their courage and devotion until his imagination thrilled with pride; on the other, his temperament enjoyed life with un-Cameronian relish and the vividness

¹Raiderland, p. 29
of his sensuous response to beauty, colour and movement made it difficult for him to enter into anything like the Puritanism of his forebears. This basic dichotomy asserted itself more strongly the older he grew and can be seen in everything he wrote; even when he is striving most earnestly to write of the martyrs, his individual humour underlies his distinctive style and his heroes share his incorrigibly dual nature.

At the age of five, having already been taught his letters and a little reading by his mother, Crockett went for the first time to school at Laurieston, three and a half miles from Little Duchrae, walking there and back morning and afternoon accompanied frequently by his dog Royal. He attended the Free Church school, presided over by a Highland dominie, Duncan Robertson, under the management of the Free Church. His natural ability enabled him to do well, especially since the education provided was based chiefly on the Bible and the Shorter Catechism and caused him no great exertion. Possibly the greatest contribution that Laurieston made to his development was the discovery that he could hold his own with other boys and join successfully in the schoolboy battles with the pupils of the parish school at Laurieston, known from its master's name as McVitie's.

Within a few days after his entry to the school he was challenged to a fight. Crockett was tall, lean, and lanky for his age, but he knew nothing of the art of "fisticuffs." He could not realise what was meant by the challenge. He had never seen a fight in his life. The nearest approach to anything of the sort had been a "collieshangie" among the dogs at the sheep reas on
the hills. Still, he felt that his honour was at stake; and after preliminaries had been gone through, the combat proceeded. But a description of the terrific hubbub that rose among the excited, youthful spectators, must be left to the imagination of the reader. Suffice it to say that, somehow or other, more by good luck than good fighting, the rough-spun-looking boy, from the Duchrae moors, came out of the melee the victor, and from that day he established himself a first favourite with the scholars.¹

Crockett remained at the Laurieston Free Church School until 1867, when his grandfather retired from farming and moved with his remaining family to 24 Cotton street, Castle Douglas. It was probably at this date that his Uncle John gave up the life of a farmer; at any rate, whether now or later, he too moved from Duchrae and entered upon the new career of City Missionary in Liverpool, a city in which many Galloway families settled. His two sons William and James were therefore partly educated in Liverpool, though both returned in their later life to Scotland; William shared Sam's life as a student at Edinburgh University and after training as a teacher at Moray House Training College ultimately became headmaster of Sciennes School, Edinburgh, while James entered the ministry and was called to be Free Church minister at Gifford, near Haddington.

The move to Castle Douglas—the Cairn Edward of his books—meant a busier more bustling scene for young Sam. Life centred on the Cross where farmers met on market day to exchange news and drive hard bargains. His horizons extended in two directions; the remote and alluring past

came to life for him in the harsh square 14th century
Threave Castle built by Archibald the Grim, Earl of Douglas,
on an island in the River Dee within a few miles of the town,
and the exciting novel present was to be seen in the railway
station with trains passing or stopping; the Castle Douglas
and Dumfries Railway company had opened the line in 1859,
the year of his birth.¹ His uncles, William and Robert,
both became porters at Castle Douglas station, so that his
knowledge of railway lore and customs became personal and
first-hand. The tempestuous stories of the Black Douglases
and the noise and white smoke of the trains were both to
appear in his books in later years.

The little house in Cotton Street which somehow con¬
trived to contain the Crocket family still stands today,
though changed by time; so also does the school which he
attended, only a few steps up Cotton Street, now used as
warehouses. He writes of both with nostalgic affection.
The years which he spent in Castle Douglas were short---from
1867 until 1876---but long in the impression which they made
upon him.

Little town, once built at the foot of a hill and ever
since running a race up it—I do not know whether you
are very proud of me, but at any rate I am proud of
you.

To me you are still "the toon"---my town. I came
to you as a boy, and found in you the best of school-
masters, the best of schoolmates, the snelliest,
sharpest-tongued, kindliest-hearted folk in the world.

¹ "The Introduction of the Railway into Galloway
Fifty Years Ago". The Gallovidian Vol. XI (No 44, Winter
1909 Dalbeattie) pp 215-221
If ever I have written concerning you that which seemed to make for mirth, the laughter was noways unkindly.¹

The schoolmaster was John Cowper, after whom the school was named—Cowper's School—of whom, according to Crockett, his boys were apt to say in later years "Well, I never learned much after I left John Cowper's!" He was an excellent classical and mathematical scholar, and later became lecturer in English at the Free Church Normal College in Edinburgh, now known as Moray House. He could be stern and severe when necessary; but Crockett pays him a worthy tribute.

Perhaps I have something of the feeling for him that Carlyle had for his father, but John Cowper still seems to me to have been the man most fitted to influence boys and young men of any whom I have met with on the earth.²

Crockett's school friends were few in number—he was never gregarious but basically solitary—but the relationships formed were tenacious and lasting. Among his closest friends was W.S. MacGeorge, later to become an Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy and to stimulate Crockett's interest in art; we have it on the authority of M. McL. Harper that he even tried his hand at watercolours and that one of his studies of Crichope Linn, near Thornhill in Dumfriesshire, hung in his uncle's house at Auchencairn and showed some talent for this type of artistic work.³

¹Raiderland, p. 122
²Raiderland, p. 131
³Crockett and Grey Galloway, p. 54
Another was Andrew C. Penman, the founder of a firm of automobile engineers long known in Dumfries by that name and still in existence though changed in title.

A.C. Penman writes vividly about his schoolfellow and is quoted at length by M. McL. Harper.

The first time I ever saw Crockett was one summer morning about forty years ago, when a long thin lad, with a cherub face, and a Glengarry bonnet came sauntering up to where we were playing, as usual, in the open space in front of "Tweed's Smiddy" in Cotton Street. We all wore clogs in those days, but his had double brass clasps. No doubt his trousers originally covered both clasps, but after a Sunday or two one of the clasps began to appear, and by the time they came to be worn for every-day wear at school, the second clasp was showing, and long before they were worn out, a lengthening expanse of greenish stocking stretched between the clog and the trousers.\(^1\) Crockett's exceptional tallness began to appear thus early, together with his physical energy, his delight in stories, and his personal authority, exerted instinctively, over those with whom he came into contact: he swept everyone along with the force of his own enthusiasms. In Penman's comments on the boy we see glimpses of all these qualities.

Being his nearest neighbour I became his most intimate companion, and soon found that although he looked soft he had a marvellous long reach and a style of fighting, like an infuriated wind-mill, which was most disconcerting. This, and the fact that he had wonderful stores of information about such interesting subjects as 'Knights Errant' and 'Red Indians' and that he was a perfect genius at devising new games for wet days, soon enslaved me as his follower and admirer.

We read 'Penny dreadfuls' in those days, and three of us clubbed together to buy the 'Boys of England,' but bye and bye Crockett discovered the

\(^1\)Crockett and Grey Galloway, p. 45
'Waverley Novels,' and by his command the 'Penny dreadfuls' were collected into a bonfire and burned. He was always a propagandist, and a little bit of a tyrant in matters of literary opinion. If we did not admire his latest hero, and would not be amenable to reason, we got punched till we rendered a lip service at least.

Our holidays were spent roaming the countryside, and if any 'dare devil work' was on hand he was the ringleader. He was absolutely fearless. I have seen him go up the chimney of Threave Castle (not 'the black lum,' but the upper chimney), right up to the top of the walls, walk round them and get down straddle-legged on the hanging stone, while we stood below and held our breath...

... The great day at Threave Castle was the Saturday, when we could gather fifteen or twenty boys for a battle royal. We pooled our money to buy biscuits or gingerbread (this was a species of black Gingerbread with a white crust, of which you get a marvellous amount for a penny). Those who had no pocket money made raids on their mothers' pantries, and we prepared to make a whole day of it. We chose sides, one side holding the castle, while the other side besieged it, and we captured and recaptured the old castle with perhaps not so much bloodshed, but with certainly far more noise than was ever made by the 'Black Douglases,' Mr Crockett has told all this in a slightly glorified form in "Sir Toady Lyon." Every boy in the story was at either 'Cowper's' or 'Johnstone's' school, and to contemporaries the names are only a thin disguise.1

This habit of incorporating his own experiences and his own friends and relatives in his fiction is perennial in Crockett; he went back over his own life—especially his early life in Galloway—for characters and incidents which he could use as material.

The move to Castle Douglas did not mean for Crockett the breaking of contact with Balmaghie. He was a regular visitor at weekends to his Uncle Samuel at Glenlochar.

Summer holidays were often spent at Drumbreck where after the deaths of Robert and Janet Crockett in the early 1860s

1Crockett and Grey Galloway, pp 46-48
the farm had been run by his second cousins John and Robert, their two eldest sons. In his early teens, this cousin Robert Crocket was an especially strong influence. He had spent some time in Canada and was a great reader and collector of books and could well have instilled in Samuel his passion for book-buying. Twenty years older than the boy, he was able to lead and develop his literary taste; the two discussed endlessly their favourite authors—Shakespeare, Tennyson, Milton, Macaulay, Dante in Cary’s translation and Carlyle. Robert had a fine collection of Carlyle and they studied him with an enthusiastic sense of kinship with this older sage from Annandale in the next county. It was Robert also who presented Crockett with his first copy of Shakespeare, which had to be smuggled home secretly, as plays and novels were forbidden in a Cameronian household. But at Drumbreck Samuel was a privileged visitor, not expected to take part in the work of the farm, and he read widely and omnivorously for hour after hour, sitting on a comfortable perch in a tree, forgetting mealtimes, devouring Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal, Hogg’s Instructor, Chambers’ English Literature,

the last pored over to the point of illegibility and accounted a most marvellous treasure.\footnote{Raiderland, p. 34.}

Robert Crocket died when he was thirty-eight and Sam only eighteen; he is often declared to be the prototype of the Stickit Minister of Crockett’s short story because of a misleading statement in the Christian Leader. Crockett
mentions this in a letter to his cousin William Crockett, son of the Liverpool City Missionary, but with typical casualness lets it pass without contradiction.

The Leader man was out [at Penicuik] on Saturday forenoon and has made two cols. of stuff out of half an hour's talk. I was very busy and had another man out seeing me. I had no idea he was coming... I gave him a note I once wrote about Robert Crockett of Drumbreck whom he calls my uncle, but I did not draw the S.M. from him. However everybody knows what an interview is and I shall not bother to correct.¹

Reading at home in Castle Douglas was carried on with equal eagerness as at Drumbreck but more precaution. The family books were the Bible, the Pilgrim's Progress, books about the Covenanters like Simpson's Traditions of the Covenanters and Wodrow's History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland. More secular items required subterfuge.

I used to get my books from the Mechanics' Institute, and was always careful to take two books at a time. One was a biography or a history, and that was to show at home. The other was a novel, and that was smuggled into the house, under my waistcoat. It was mostly Marryat at that time, and I used to buy them all, and hide them under my bed. My mother knew of it, but said nothing.²

Once again we notice the two-fold pull in his nature. And Crockett showed this also in his delight in action. As he grew older he ranged more widely for his schoolboy holidays. One glorious fortnight he spent at Roughfirth (Kippford) on the Solway shore with Andrew Pennman and other youngsters.

¹Letter from S.R. Crockett to William Crockett, January 22nd 1894, lent by Professor J.C. Smyth. He further acquiesced in this identification in an interview as reported by R.H. Sherard in July 1895: "S.R.C. at Home", p. 807, and in Raiderland, p. 32

²"S.R.C. at Home", p. 806
running wild as the boys do on Isle Rathan in *The Raiders*; at other times when he was able to he visited the farm of a distant relative near Colvend and spent "a considerable part of every summer there". By the time his school days were ended, he knew intimately every cove and hill, every beach and island and peat moss, of the south eastern parishes of the Stewartry, and had explored them almost as thoroughly as he had Balmaghie, Parton and Crossmichael farther north.

After he had passed through Cowper's School, he stayed on with John Cowper as a pupil teacher for a short time, and then, coached by his master, sat for the Bursary offered by the Edinburgh Galloway Association. The examination took place in September 1876, and in *Kit Kennedy* Crockett gives a vivid picture of what it was like. He was fortunate enough to win it, and in October 1876 set off, the annual £20 his main support, to scale greater educational heights at Edinburgh University.

This was the end of his Galloway boyhood. Thereafter, although he returned to Castle Douglas and Balmaghie

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1 *Raiderland*, p. 110. Crockett tells us that he is using a disguised name, Robert Armstrong of Bourtree Buss farm, for this distant relative. Examination of the 1871 Census for Colvend and the *Memorials of Lochrutton* reveals that he was Robert Hyslop of Borland farm (1871 Census, Colvend, Enumeration Book 2, p. 4), the father by his first wife Janet Craig of Agnes Hyslop, Uncle Samuel Crockett's first wife — distant indeed! The wife described in *Raiderland* "a tall, gaunt, woman, apparently clothed in old corn sacks" — was the second Mrs Hyslop.

frequently, it was always as a visitor, on vacations. This break was made deeper by the series of deaths which one by one relentlessly removed the people who had made his youth so rich and happy. His grandfather had died the year before the Bursary, in 1875. His cousin Robert of Drumbreck died in 1877; his mother and his aunt Janet both in 1879; his grandmother in 1884; his Aunt Mary in 1892. Uncle Robert and Uncle Willie retired and moved to Auchencairn, where Uncle Robert died in 1902. Uncle Samuel of Glenlochar died in 1901 and his son William in 1902. New friends, new interests, grew up elsewhere to replace the old, and when Crockett, writing a preface for the Rev. H.M.B. Reid’s book about Balmaghie Church and its history, *The Kirk Above Dee Water* in 1895,\(^1\) says that

I am not often there, save when the beat of the passing bell calls another to the long and quiet rest, he is using only a very little exaggeration.

The degree to which the past is distanced for him, although still thought of with deep affection, is made clear in the letter he wrote to Mrs John Crocket of Drumbreck after her husband his cousin John’s death in 1898. He is in St Andrews on holiday when he hears the news and regrets that he has not received it in time to be present at the funeral, then continues

The necessities of the world have taken us far asunder, but if you have read my books you will know that I have never ceased to think lovingly and warmly of John

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\(^1\)H.M.B. Reid: *The Kirk above Dee Water*, (Castle Douglas 1895) p. xiv.
and you, and of my first and dearest friend Robert Crockett, the brother whom he has gone to rejoin.¹

There is no estrangement—S. R. Crockett the novelist and man of letters later composed the two plain and simple quatrains which appear on his cousin's "In Memoriam" card—but a sad regretful acknowledgement of how far he had travelled in time and circumstances from his Galloway kinsfolk. They will know that he remembers them "if they have read his books", but he himself now lives in a different world.

¹Letter from S.R. Crockett to Mrs. Jeanie Crocket, June 19th 1898, lent by Mrs Agnes O’Brien, Londonderry, Northern Ireland.
CHAPTER 2
Edinburgh and Penicuik

Crockett arrived in Edinburgh for the first time in October 1876, a country lad of seventeen, hanging out of the window as the train from Carstairs neared the city to see all that he could of this new realm opened to him.

Smuts flew in his eyes. Weird illuminations from paraffin shale mines challenged his sidelong regard. But he saw them not. He was looking for Wallace, and Bruce, and John Knox, and Queen Mary, and Claverhouse (though him he hated) riding out at the West Bow with all his troopers behind him.

His cousin William Crocket, son of the City Missionary, met and took charge of him by right of seniority and of being already a student in the Faculty of Arts at the University. He escorted him to the lodgings they were to share and helped him upstairs with his heavy wooden country-joiner-made (perhaps Uncle-Samuel-made?) box into the attic room of the tall grey house in St Leonards on the South Side of Edinburgh, looking out on Salisbury Crags and across the valley to the western shoulder of Arthur's Seat. The long lines of bright lights bewildered Sam and made him feel giddy, and his cousin had to warn him not to speak to policemen or remark "It's a fine night" to random passers-by; this was the city, though

It had been far otherwise in Galloway. 2

William Crockett's neat laconic diaries record his care of this raw young cousin during these October days and his

1S. R. Crockett: My Two Edinburghs: Searchlights through the Mists of Thirty Years, (London 1909) p. 8. This book is hereafter referred to as My Two Edinburghs.

2My Two Edinburghs, p. 10.
conscientious sightseeing tours to satisfy Sam's thirst for history and romance.

Met Sam at Princes Street Station. After tea arranged books &c. We had a walk as far as the University. . . . Sam and I went thro' the castle. Were in Queen Mary's room. Visited Milligan in George St. He drew his £10. Took him thro' the Museum in the evening. Read Enoch Arden & other poems of Tennyson. . . Today we walked round the Queen's Park & visited Holyrood. We did not go out in the evening. . . Today Sam and I visited Portobello & came up in the tram. . . . The University session was opened by a speech from Sir H. Grant in Free Assembly Hall. There was great uproar. S. writes long love-letters to a certain C.1

Clearly Samuel was not heart-whole when he came up from Castle Douglas; one scents some cousinly amusement in William's observation (when William himself became emotionally involved, his diaries always record the fact and the occasions in German script to foil inquisitive eyes, manifesting a shrewd canniness which Samuel never showed) but of "C." there is no further mention or memorial.

Crockett's bursary of £20 a year was little enough for a student to live on even in those days, and £11 of this had to go in fees. He shared his attic room with his cousin and afterwards with his Castle Douglas friend MacGeorge the artist.

. . . we each paid three shillings and sixpence a week for rent, including coal and gas. For breakfast and supper we used to have oatmeal porridge; our dinner never exceeded sixpence each. When I was saving up to buy a book, I would content myself with a penny roll and a glass of milk.2

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1 Entries in William Crockett's Diary, October 1876
Professor J.C. Smyth possesses his grandfather's Diaries for most of his life, and kindly allowed me to examine and quote from them.

2 "S.R.C. at Home", pp 808-809.
During his first year as a student Crockett supplemented his income by coaching. He had three pupils, one near St Mary's Cathedral beyond the West End, another at Leith Links and a third at Norton Place. He walked all the way between them, thus making £1 a month in the evenings, then returned home to do his own studying for the next day's classes. After the first year, coaching gave way to a less physically strenuous source of income.

In the second and following years I did journalistic work, my first contributions, paragraphic reports, soon being printed in The Edinburgh Daily Review. . . I did not work very hard at my studies but read vastly, reading anything and everything; a constant visitor to the University Library. I do not think that there ever was so omnivorous a reader. I read ravenously, but without judgment. . . I was so busy, forced as I was to work very hard at journalism, writing on anything and everything, and sending articles everywhere. At that time I contributed with some regularity to Lloyd's and The Daily Chronicle. I was also writing verse in those days, contributing to the magazines and to the local papers.

He even tried art criticism.

I began as Art critic for the Daily Chronicle. But when I got to know a little more about art, I gave it up.  

W. S. Macgeorge may well have been behind this venture; he certainly introduced him to College of Art students and the company of artists in Edinburgh. But if he soon abandoned this form of journalism, it was not so with other forms; freelance writing, carried on at the same time as his

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1"S.R.C. at Home", pp 808-809.

2'Heston' and 'Theodore Mayne': "Sons of the South: S.R. Crockett", The Gallovidian Vol. II (No 6 Summer 1900 Dalbeattie) p; 45
University classes, was what he lived on throughout his student life, and it left him with little time to make new friends or indulge in merely social activity. As we have seen, however, Crockett was not dependent on company for his happiness and was contented with solitary activities. He attended meetings of the Dumfries and Galloway Society and saw J.M. Barrie during his first year, but did not know him. 1

His book-collecting was a prime interest in spite of his limited resources; he spent his Saturdays searching the second-hand bookshops for hidden treasure, and often found it.

All the forenoon I poked from Wynd to Port, and from Bridge to Raw, with a shilling to spend on a book, a pamphlet, or a rare print... The memories of these "traipsings" -- my landlady's word -- were more to me than the University and its library -- more than professors and their classes, better than the fellowship of man... After practising the book-chase for years in Edinburgh, I hold even the Quays by the Seine in light esteem, and as for London -- there never was anything worth carrying home. 2

We must take this nostalgic recollection with a grain of salt; it is unlikely that his First Folio Shakespeare, his


2 My Two Edinburghs, pp 13-14.
Elzevir editions of Terence and Caesar, his fifteenth century Thomas Aquinas or his copies of Sinclair's Satan's Invisible World Discovered (1685) and Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584) were picked up for a few pence or even a few shillings in a miscellaneous box of bargains. One of the concomitants of an enthusiastic temperament is a perceptual tendency to exaggerate.

His vacations during these University years were spent chiefly at Drumbreck, reading and writing "omnivorously" still -- "omnivorously" was obviously a characteristic and favourite word.¹

Here I used to read and write omnivorously. I sketched out plays and wrote a Marie Stuart -- every Scotch fellow does that. My idea was that Darnley was really a woman. My favourite author at this time was Dumas, and I was constantly reading him in translation.²

In summer 1878, Crockett spent six months in London, keeping himself by his writing and exploring the possibility of finding a full-time and permanent career in journalism. To a man of his wide and enthusiastic interests, such an occupation must have seemed most attractive, and although his London sojourn came to nothing and he returned to Edinburgh to complete his M.A. course in the autumn, it had given him the opportunity to explore the capital and note some of the scenes he was to use in later novels -- theatres, drama schools, typewriting offices and strange and eccentric

¹"S.R.C. at Home", p. 809.
²"S.R.C. at Home", pp 809-810.
religious groups such as form part of the background of 

Ione March,¹ for example. His Arts course ended in the 
summer of 1879, but he never formally graduated because 
somehow he had aroused the interest of Dr. Jowett of Balliol, 
possibly because of their shared evangelical upbringing, 
and through Jowett's influence he became travelling tutor to 
a young American from Chicago who was carrying out a 
nineteenth-century version of the Grand Tour, armed with 
letters of introduction from J.R. Lowell, to the European 
great.

We travelled all over Europe, and, knapsack on back, 
tramped a long way in Northern Italy. We were 
travelling for nearly two years — visited Siberia, 
and sailed from Archangel to Novaia Zembia. Whilst 
so travelling I wrote poetry, but chiefly, and most 
copiously, notes and descriptions. ²

In this way he observed the habits and customs of many 
different peoples, taking notes indefatigably of anything 
he found of interest and supplementing notes with photographs 
taken and developed by himself. Many of the places which 
were to form the settings for his European historical novels 
probably made their first impression upon him during this 
long tour. And he must have proved a satisfactory and 
pleasant companion to his charge, because

Shortly after my return to England I obtained another 
tutorship, and this time went to Switzerland, and

¹S.R. Crockett: Ione March (London 1899).
²"S.R.C. at Home", p. 810.
afterwards to Heidelberg. Altogether, we were abroad for a year, and during that year I wrote many verses. Perhaps one third of my book of poems, *Dulce Cor*, was written during that year.1

In Switzerland he found mountaineering in the Alps a sport much to his taste and brought back from it still more photographs. These two extended journeys created the delight in travel which remained always with him. They sharpened his curiosity about varying ways of life which is reflected in the wide range of books on anthropology, geology and the lives and folklore of primitive peoples which he built up in his library; the eye constantly on the outlook for "copy" learned to recognise instantly what was to be of use for articles or lectures; and his immense physical energy found delight in the effort of walking tours and climbing expeditions — all of which must have been pleasantly accompanied by the knowledge that he was following the example of that earlier wanderer, Robert Louis Stevenson, one of the living authors whom he most admired.

But travelling tutorships, although valuable as an extension of one's experience of the world, do not go on for ever and are not stepping-stones to a definite and progressive future. At the end of his three satisfying but inconclusive years, Crockett returned to Edinburgh not any farther forward as far as a settled career was concerned. He attended science classes, studied geology, worked in Professor Tait's laboratory, and assisted in the arrangement of the museum at New College, Edinburgh, the

1 "*S.R.C. at Home*, pp 810-811."
Free Church divinity college set up after the Disruption in 1843. He was active, but undecided about his ultimate aim in life.

My intention, at that time, was to try for my B.S.C. (sic) degree, but I eventually drifted back into writing. It was an aimless two years, spent in reading, teaching, writing, and, in the summer time, in wandering about Galloway. And I always continued my journalism, more for amusement, as I made plenty of money by tuition.¹

The feeling of aimlessness which he remembers during these years must have been accentuated by the fact that through his journalism he had made the acquaintance of Mr George Milner of Manchester and, more relevantly, of Mr Milner's third daughter, Ruth. Mr Milner was a Manchester mill-owner who lived with his family at Moston House, a rambling old mansion then in the countryside near Manchester among fields and wooded valleys. He was a leading philanthropist in the area, with a particular interest in Sunday Schools, prosperous, kindly, and with wide knowledge both of literature and of natural history; he was the author of several books, including Country Pleasures and Studies of Nature on the Coast of Arran, and co-author with John H. Nodal of A Glossary of the Lancashire Dialect. For many years he was President of the Manchester Literary Club.

In the course of miscellaneous writing and reviewing, Crockett it seems wrote sympathetically of one or other of Mr Milner's publications, and this led to an invitation from

¹"S.R.C. at Home", p. 811.
the older man to visit him in his home. Dulce Cor.

Crockett's first published work, has already been mentioned; it is a book of poems written at different times under the pseudonym "Ford Beréton" and published in 1886 by Kegan Paul, Trench and Co,1 taking its title from Sweetheart Abbey on the borders of Galloway, near Dumfries, and illustrated by sepia drawings done for Crockett by his friend W.S. Macgeorge, established by this time in his own studio in Castle Douglas. From the rather Tennysonian measures of the poems it contains, we can extract references to the growth of the relationship between Crockett and Ruth Milner, whose portrait as "The Lady Beatrice" forms its frontispiece.

Upon receiving Mr Milner's invitation, Crockett travelled by train down to Manchester one cold and bitter December. The journey is recorded in "Memory Harvest", a poem dated 1883.

From out the dark one gloaming shineth bright,
When in Fate's door Love placed his golden key —
A dull December day with spurs of hail,
And fine frost garniture on bush and tree.
O'er a white land had raved the southern mail,
And now through early night
The city lights flash past, and all my youth
Stirs in my heart to greet one in the hall —
A grey-eyed maid, as comely, sweet, and tall,
As in Judean fields the gleaner Ruth.2

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1 Dulce Cor being the poems of Ford Beréton (London 1886) was fated to go only into one edition, and that to become rare, since much of it was destroyed by fire during the burning down of the printing-house where it was stored. (See 'Heston' and 'Theodore Mayne': "Sons of the South: S.R. Crockett", The Gallovidian, Vol. II, no 6, p. 41.) It will hereafter be referred to as Dulce Cor.

2 Dulce Cor, p. 2.
The acquaintance made soon deepened, and the young reviewer became an accepted family friend. The poem is so flowery and exclamatory that it is hard to gather from it an exact chronicle of events, but Crockett and his Ruth met again in June—

A day of sunny showers, filled with the scent
Of leaves, sun-smitten ere the dews were dry;

... through the gladness in the eyes of each
We read, that perfect joy hath power to teach
Even sadder things than plenitude of ills.¹

He was invited by the Milners to spend a holiday with them on the island of Arran during August—

A bounteous month of joy that August was,
Filled with low voice of seas, and lower voice
Of love, and warm with love's intensest heart!²

Their love was declared, and the happy pair wandered hand in hand through the glens and by the streams and waterfalls of Arran; they went to church with the Milner family but their minds were not on the sermon.

And ah! the sacred morns that crowned the week—
The path betwixt the mountains and the sea,
The Sannox water and the wooden bridge,
The little church, the narrow seats—and we
That through the open window saw the ridge
Of Fergus, and the peak
Of utmost Cior Mohr—nor held it wrong
When vexed with platitude and stirless air,
To watch the mist wreaths clothe the rock-scarps bare,
And in the pauses hear the blackbird's song.³

The happiness of their acknowledged love was sharpened

¹Dulce Cor, p. 3.
²Dulce Cor, p. 3.
³Dulce Cor, pp 4-5.
by partings, and Crockett turned to the prospect of their marriage — a distant one because of his unstable financial position, yet one which he looked forward to hopefully.

And if this beauty fitly doth enshrine
A maid's pure troth, how fitly that of wife!
O subtle essence, meaning ultimate
Of Love's dear mystery, life's inner life!
We feel thy power, and eagerly await
Till thou arise and shine
O sun of final union, on our bliss.
Shine quickly -- give our hearts a welcome rest,
For loneliness is lonely at the best,
And partner'd poverty more sweet than this!

With this hope in his heart, his room in Edinburgh would be haunted by the memory of Ruth, her music, her light touch on his shoulder, her shadow cast on his book; they had trust in God and in themselves --

... knowing He will not let
Slip from His hand two lives, that He hath brought
Together by strange ways -- doth not forget
To finish well the web Himself hath wrought!?

The poetry is Victorian and faded, but the idea has a curious similarity to that given to Alizon by Christopher Fry in *The Lady's Not For Burning*:

Our father
God moved many lives to show you to me.
I think that is the way it must have happened.
It was complicated, but very kind.

There is genuine emotion, fresh and sure, under Crockett's elaborate old-fashioned tapestry-work; he is very certain

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1 *Dulce Cor*, p. 6.

2 *Dulce Cor*, p. 7.

of the happiness that would be theirs one day;

... though the waters roll
Firm stands our bridge of faith -- it spans across
This empty interspace --
Its further arch springs from a land of peace
That lieth towards the morning; in that land
A home for thee and me doth surely stand,
Around whose hearth-fire shall our souls find ease.¹

Scattered through Dulce Cor are poems of parting and
sundered lovers, a longing for the "union mystical" of
loving hearts,² homesickness for the domestic scenes in
which he imagines Ruth to be while he is in the High Alps:

And with my heart-fire all unmade,
   My home life yet to be,
I sadly watch the sunset fade
   On purple Italy.³

He still delights in the beauty and novelty of foreign places,
but he is no longer his own man -

Yet scarce can my hungry heart pardon
   The mountains for being so fair;
I had leifer behold a garden,
   And a maiden that resteth there ... ⁴

and again

How much more fair when her sweet eyes
   Lake Leman's peace shall see,
And all the pleasant land that lies
'Twixt France and Italy.⁵

¹Dulce Cor, p. 11.
²Dulce Cor, p. 90.
³Dulce Cor, p. 133.
⁴Dulce Cor, p. 129.
⁵Dulce Cor, p. 83.
As with all activities in which he engaged, when Crockett fell in love he did so with thoroughness.

In all probability, therefore, when he decided to make his future life that of a Free Church minister and entered New College, Edinburgh, as a divinity student at the age of twenty-two in session 1881-2, he was at least partly motivated by his need for a settled profession; he was making enough from his coaching and his writing to enable him to live and travel comfortably even while he was a student, as we can tell from the localities in which many of his poems are written and the dates affixed to them, but to procure the "hearth-fire" so much in his thoughts, he had to make secure and respectable arrangements to receive a wife.

In any case, although his reading, his book-collecting, his varied interests in travel, photography, science and art, and indeed the whole tenour of his absorption in journalism and freelance writing suggest that he had moved far beyond the simple Cameronian beliefs of his family, and although most of that family had been removed by death so that Ruth was never to know his homespun background, Crockett retained enough of his upbringing to be able to enter sincerely on this new vocation. He was well aware of the duality in his nature; writing in 1891 about Dr Whyte of Free St George's Church, he could remember even after fifteen years the examination of conscience one sermon had called up:

"Yes! yes!" comes the acknowledgment winched like tooth-drawing from an unwilling heart, fiercely fighting for the lust of the eye and the pride of life,
"that is my very self, I know it, but I cannot -- I will not -- give it all up; what right has he -- --"

As the congregation disperses that young man walks away with a sharp chill in all his veins and a feeling as though the air he breathed had suddenly turned to some rarer medium. Dimly he heard the people saying about him that the preacher had been very severe that day; but he only knew that never had he been dealt with in this way before, and his soul quailed at being alone with itself. Yet he took the bare side of Arthur's Seat that night, and the sheets of his lodging-house bed (first floor from the sky) knew him not till the great battle had been fought out, and the lad knew that for good or ill, he could never be the same man who had entered with the easy insolence of youth that left-hand gallery of St. George's Church in Edinburgh town.1

He was in his allegiance a Cameronian, a descendent of the Covenanters; we can feel his emotion as he describes the union between the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Free Church which took place in 1876. Though in all probability he did not see it, he can conjure up the drama of the

simple slender procession of ministers and elders who filed along George IV. Bridge to the Free Assembly Hall, the tears that spring from many an eye as the representatives of the church of Richard Cameron and Alexander Peden came in two by two, to take their seats side by side with the ministers of the younger though greater church. . . We of the scanty Cameronian flock were proud of our moderator that day. 2

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1 Unsigned article, "Dr Alexander Whyte as I know him", The Christian Leader, (Christmas Number 1891, Glasgow) p. 17. From "Pen Portraits of Eminent Divines", by S.R. Crockett, a collection of articles from The Christian Leader pasted into a book in typical Crockett manner, probably by Crockett himself, and kept in the Ewart Public Library, Dumfries. GKB6(8CRO)

2 Unsigned article, "Dr W.H. Goold", The Christian Leader "Pen Portraits of Eminent Divines, No. 140". From the same book of cuttings. GKB6(8CRO)
Yet even in that sense of drama there is a sophistication which set him apart; he was a man whom "the lust of the eye and the pride of life" were always to attract. By 1881 much had happened to the young student who in 1877 had examined his conscience on Arthur's Seat, and the man who enrolled himself at New College was exceptional among the others of his year.

Crockett the divinity student embodied a fundamental contradiction. He was a direct honest man who would not knowingly and deliberately have embarked on a career which he did not think himself able to carry out with candour, but at the same time he had a relish for the good things of this world, an enjoyment of gadgets like cameras and typewriters and fountain pens, a knowledge of his own powers and an ambition to use them which, when he thought of them, must have troubled his intention to become a minister. The tension had always been present; he had felt it agonisingly after Dr Whyte's challenging sermon; but his nature was extrovert, finding relief in action and outward activity, and he was too busy, too energetic a personality to torment himself with solemn self-examination such as had afflicted the heroes of C.M. Yonge and was to afflict those of Mrs Humphrey Ward. It was typical of Crockett that his studies at New College were carried out at the same time as not only his journalistic activity and occasional continental journeyings but also vigorous, active and effective missionary work among the grimmest slums of Edinburgh.

The ignorance and vice prevalent in industrial slums
had prompted the Free Church to make Home Missions one of its chief concerns after the Disruption, and Edinburgh was foremost in the field: "The districts chosen for aggressive work were among the poorest in the city, — Fountainbridge, the Cowgate, the Canongate, and the Pleasance".¹ This kind of work appealed to Crockett's humanity and sympathy; he threw himself into it in the evenings courageously and unselfconsciously — perhaps his feeling of his own shortcomings may have been an advantage. He was able to identify with the unfortunates who inhabited the back alleys and stinking closes and feel no trace of condescension. Poverty was no stranger to him. He could understand the poor and win their confidence — the confidence of alert and suspicious urchins like the original of Cleg Kelly, of whom he was later to write. He never stood on his dignity. He sat in small kitchens and talked on humble terms with anyone and everyone, appreciating their struggling virtues, entering into their difficulties, laughing with them at their ingenious and sometimes illegal devices, without being shocked at small iniquities or distributing pious tracts, which he abhorred. And so it is easy to realise that he was too busy — working at writing, at his studies, at missionary activities — to have time to worry minutely and selfishly about his own soul.

It is an interesting sidelight on his development that during his years at New College he changed the form of his

name. He had been born plain Samuel Crockett; the single or double 't' in the surname seems to be of no great import as different branches of the family adopted one or the other as they chose, and in the censuses the Little Duchrae family vary between the two. He signed the New College Enrolment Book in 1881 as "Samuel Crockett" of Kircudbright, with a Presbyterial Certificate from that Presbytery and a Ministerial Certificate from the Rev. George Laurie of Castle Douglas, which qualifications were renewed in each year of his course. In 1882 he is still "Samuel Crockett" but in 1883 he is a tentative "Samuel R. Crockett". In 1884 he did not sign at all -- possibly because of absence abroad; he was in Switzerland during the winter of that year according to the dating of poems in Dulce Cor¹ -- but in 1885, his final year, he is "S. Rutherford Crockett". Even such a small thing as this suggests that during these years he had felt a growth of confidence, a movement towards literary as opposed to mere journalistic authorship. "Samuel Rutherford Crockett" has a fine man-of-letters ring. The middle name points back to his admiration for Samuel Rutherford, (1600?-1661), the revered theologian, controversialist and writer of letters, at one time minister of Anwoth in Galloway, but the name as a whole brings him into line both with Robert Louis Stevenson and with William Robertson Nicoll of the British Weekly, patron of

"Ian Maclaren" and his tales of rural life in Drumtochty.

Moreover, during his years at New College, the descendants of Christian Crocket, the elder sister of his grandfather and great-uncle, come into the pattern. Christian's daughter Margaret Hyslop of Lochruttongate had married Edward Smith of Netherholm in the parish of Kirkmahoe, Dumfriesshire, a prosperous farmer of 216 acres, living in what amounted to a mansion in comparison to the farmhouses of Little Duchrae and even Drumbreck, employing four servants indoors, seven labourers and a boy; they kept their own carriage and a coachman to drive it for them. Although they were members of the Established Church, the young Free Church student was made welcome and spent parts of his summer holidays at Netherholm during the early 1880s, enjoying the green meadows and lush countryside of Nithsdale. Dumfries he liked -- in spite of what he dubbed "the raw beef sandstone of its villas"¹ -- and it was near the green braes of Cluden and Cargen, Irongray from where his family had come and Sweetheart Abbey after which he was to name his book of verse.

The meadows of Netherholm and Carnsalloch, deep-bosomed in woods, Quarrelwood, steeped in memories of the Covenant men and the meetings of the Cameronian societies, the far-spying uplands of Kirkmahoe -- these all come back to the nature-lover laden with the scent of clover and wild thyme. All the summer long the bees are booming among the blossoms, drowsy with the luxury of sweetness, and one can never forget the peculiarly dreamlike atmosphere that overhangs the valley of the Nith, and which has been most perfectly expressed in art by the brush of James Paterson of Moniaive.

¹Raiderland, p. 3.
But for all that, Dumfries is but the gateway of better things — rougher, more rugged things. By the grit and rasp of her Silurian beaches, with the boulders of "auld granny granite girm in' wi' her grey teeth," Galloway beckons us, holds us, attaches even the stranger within her gates till he loves her with the intemperate zeal of the pervert. Dumfries is a green country, but we seek the Grey Land.¹

It may be fanciful to detect in this passage the two sides of his nature tugging lightly at one another, the gentler beauties of Dumfriesshire which his senses obviously felt contrasting with the bare austere crags and mosses of the Stewartry, but the tension is consciously there, though in a book on Galloway it is naturally resolved in favour of Galloway.

Socially the company which he kept in Dumfriesshire was more varied and widely cultured than his Galloway kin. The Smiths had eleven children, some older, some younger than Crockett. One son was a doctor in Dumfries, living in professional Castle Street and visiting his patients by carriage. Another was a bank manager. One daughter had married first a schoolmaster, then after his death the local Registrar. They had an assured and respected place in the community. In 1885 another link with Kirkmahoe was formed; his Aunt Jessie (or Jannet: the names were apparently interchangeable in those days), the youngest of the Drumbreck family, a schoolteacher, married the Free Church minister of Kirkmahoe, and as a young minister Crockett was occasionally to preach there for the Rev. William McDowall, his relative by marriage. A daughter of

¹Raiderland, pp. 4-5.
Mr. McDowall by a second marriage remembers one local tradition about Crockett:

I know SRC and Smith were seeing Mrs Crawford (née Smith) home to Gallaberry along the back road in front of Carzield when a "ghost" appeared. SRC and Smith took Mrs Crawford home and on the way back waylaid the "ghost" and thrashed it. The ghost was dressed in white sheets. The next day a quarryman in the village could not go to his work in Locharbriggs Quarry, and ever since that road has been known as "the bogey loaning".1

Another sharp memory gives us a picture of Crockett in the early years of his ministry: a grand-daughter of the Smiths of Netherholm, aged 97, remembers when SRC preached in 'The Auld Kirk' in Kirkmahoe 90 years ago to a big congregation. I remember him a fine smart man (spoke good English). Had dinner at the manse, tea at my home in Kirkmahoe... he was a smart looking man in his holiday rig-out, full of humour and "Sweetheart Travellers" were SRC and his little daughter when they travelled in Dumfriesshire. I think she was the joy of his life. He was a student when he started writing and welcomed by all but was cowed by his wife and never regained his personality... His books must have sold well he was not poor.2

But we are going ahead too fast.

* * *

In 1886 Crockett completed his course at New College and marked the occasion by a poem dedicated to his fellow-students, Valete Fratres, "by the author of Dulce Cor".3

It cost only 3d but according to the publisher's grandson

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1Miss Pearl McDowall, Meadowpark, Kirkton, Dumfries, in a letter to her nephew Mr William Crocket McDowall, Petworth, Sussex, who contributed the paragraph, 11/11/73.

2Miss Mary E. Dinwiddie, London, in letter, 28/9/73.

3Valete Fratres by the author of Dulce Cor; (Edinburgh, 1886).
did not find many buyers. It expresses in its farewell to the collegiate halls,

Of pleasant prisoners,
a sense of exultation that he and his contemporaries are now free to go their own ways,

For sure the clatter of the mill, the grinding stones,
Were too much with us, and their grist is small,
What wonder now, when through the jarring teeth
Of exercise and homily, we've gained
Respite of quiet earth, we draw our breath
In ease and unbound heart a little space,
Before we try the winnowing fan of toil
And sieve of popularity, flying
Afar upon the winds, or waiting with
The good seed for the sowing in good soil.1

Crockett did not fly very far upon the winds; he went to the Free Abbey Church, Dunfermline, as assistant minister.

In the meantime, the members of the Free Church in Penicuik were having some trouble in choosing a new minister.

When the Rev. H.A. Stewart resigned the charge of the Free Church in 1885, there were over forty applications for the vacancy, many of whom preached to the congregation. Considerable diversity of opinion as to the merits of the various candidates existed for a time, but at the last moment the name of Mr Samuel Rutherford Crockett, who was not one of the candidates, was put forward and at a congregational meeting, held on 11th October 1886, it was evident that the preponderance of feeling was in his favour. Mr Crockett had only been licensed a few months, and was acting as temporary assistant to the Rev. Mr Shiach of the Free Abbey Church, Dunfermline. He had the most favourable recommendation not only from prominent office-bearers of the congregation but also from such eminent leaders of the church as Dr Rainy and Dr Whyte.2

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1 Valeta Fratres, p. 5.

2 Midlothian Journal, April 24th, 1914, in Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., pp. 54-55.
Dr Rainy was the Principal of New College, one of the leading Free Churchmen in Scotland. Dr Whyte was minister of Free St George's, later to be appointed Principal of New College in 1909. The two men had led the two sides in the dispute which had split the Free Church Assemblies in the late 1870s and early 1880s concerning the orthodoxy of Professor W. Robertson Smith, whose articles for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* had shown highly advanced views on the literal truth of parts of the Bible. That two such differing yet eminent church leaders should have sponsored Crockett shows that the impression made by his theological studies and his pastoral work must have been outstanding.

The call to Penicuik was unanimous; in November 1886 he was ordained minister of the Free Church and on the next Sunday preached his first sermon there, on the text, "Who is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me". (*Exodus* Chapter 32, v. 26) This theme impressed the congregation deeply; in these "my first words as your minister" Crockett declared that "the disease of which the Church of Christ is sick is indifference. Indifference is more abhorred by God than open enmity".¹ This declaration is characteristic of him. Both as a minister and as a writer, Crockett may have had weaknesses but indifference was never one of them; what his hand found to do, he did with all his might. And, as one would have expected, his establishment in the Free Church Manse in West Street, Penicuik, was followed within

¹*Penicuik Cuttings, Vol. 57, The Free Church, p. 8, 3/12/1886. This Collection is hereafter referred to as *Penicuik Cuttings: F.C.*
a few months by his achievement of the hearth-fire for which he had yearned. On March 10th 1887 he was married to Ruth Mary Milner at the Parish Church of Harpurhey in the county of Lancaster, and the couple went to the Continent for their "marriage tour" of six or seven weeks, during which he was no doubt able to introduce Ruth to some of the places in which he had wished for her presence on earlier visits.

Penicuik at this time (or at any rate in 1884 when the Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland was published) was a burgh of barony and a police burgh standing on the left bank of the North Esk river ten miles south of Edinburgh with a rapidly expanding population which in 1881 was 3793.

The place wears a well-built airy appearance, superior to that of most towns of its size; contains some good shops and spacious well-to-do dwellings; and has a post office, with money order, savings' bank, insurance and telegraph departments, a branch of the Clydesdale Bank, 2 hotels, a gas company, a drinking fountain (1864), angling, bowling, cricket and curling clubs, horticultural and ornithological societies, a reading club (1841), Liberal and Conservative associations, hiring fairs on the third Friday of March and the first Friday of October, etc. . . The Free Church, built in 1862-63 at a cost of £2050, is a Gothic structure, with a large four-light window, 600 sittings, and an unfinished spire. Designed by Mr. F. T. Pilkington, it is not so unlike his Barclay Church at Edinburgh.1

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1Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 11, 18/3/1887 and 6/5/1887.

2ed Groome, Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, V, (Edinburgh 1884), p. 174. Pilkington is commended by John Betjeman as "a Gothic Revival architect of real merit, in Edinburgh" (First and Last Loves, (Grey Arrow edition, London 1960) p. 121) but the Free Church at Penicuik, now the South Church, still lacks its spire. The Barclay Church at Edinburgh, now the Barclay-Bruntsfield Church, is also unfinished; there are many rough uncarved stone capitals on its pillars and at least one half-angel.
Penicuik's principal industry was paper-making; there were no fewer than three papermills, all owned and operated by Alexander Cowan and Sons and employing about 600 workers. There were also two saw-mills and an iron foundry but by far the most important source of employment after paper-making was the mining of coal, shale and ironstone. The development of first ironstone, then coal mines at Mauricewood one mile north-east of the town had led to the increase in Penicuik's population in the years before 1884. Crockett therefore found there the type of industrialisation in the wake of which the Free Church thought missions so necessary. At the same time, Penicuik's situation was attractive; it was near enough to Edinburgh to let him keep in touch with what was going on there, and yet, with Auchencoth Moss high up to the south-east and the Pentland Hills beloved of Stevenson to the north-east, he was still in countryside not unlike his native Galloway.

He settled down happily and enthusiastically in his new charge. In addition to the normal ministerial duties and regular pastoral visiting, he instituted a course of Tuesday evening lectures in Valleyfield School in which he took his hearers through the first dozen books of the Old Testament, commenting both on their content as religious history and on their style as literature.

One read the finest English in the Bible, the worst in the newspaper. He (Mr Crockett) knew that for he used to write it himself reported the local newspaper of what he said in the first of
the series.\footnote{Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 9, 24/12/1886.} His marriage and honeymoon interrupted the course, but it started up again as soon as he was back.

This type of lecture course was no novelty to Penicuik, though possibly an innovation in the Free Church. "Popular Lectures", usually in the Town Hall, had been part of every winter since their institution in 1852, with a wide variety of speakers on a wide range of topics; on one occasion in 1885, for example, Oscar Wilde had addressed a large audience on the subject of "Dress". Following this secular example, however, which indeed was very much in line with the Free Church's emphasis on general education, Crockett instituted a series of "Free Church Weekly Lectures" on Friday evenings in the winter of 1887, beginning with himself as speaker on the subject of "Alpine Mountaineering". The lecture was poorly attended, notes the newspaper account, because of the inclement weather and "the somewhat hazy idea" the congregation had of the subject-matter -- a comment which suggests the novelty of this departure in Free Church circles -- but Crockett was undeterred; he described the Alps, gave a vivid account of his own experiences to illustrate the skill and danger of mountaineering (though "he did not think that the dangers of mountaineering were anything in proportion to the results of football playing") and discoursed on glaciers, crevasses and the use and nature of ice-axes. At the end he revealed that he himself had "an axe to grind"; he wanted to raise money for the Bible
Class Library and the proceeds of the lecture were to go to this cause.¹

The second Friday evening lecture was on "Weather", and Mr W.K. Dickson of Mauricewood, one of the assistants in the Ben Nevis Observatory, was brought in to deal with this topic, Crockett being in the chair. The science of meteorology and the value of barometers and thermometers were explained simply, and the building and work of the Observatory described; the audience were told how telegrams were sent to London every evening recording the state of the atmosphere and warning of approaching storms or changes likely in the weather.² The third in the series was on "The Scenery of Scotland" and Crockett himself was the speaker, approaching the subject from the geological point of view; he covered the topography and geology of most of Great Britain and dealt with fjords, glaciers, the Laurentian rocks, Siberian strata, Old Red Sandstone, coal measures and other allied matters.³ And so this Popular Science course continued, his New College friend J.A. Thomson, now lecturer in Zoology at Edinburgh University, coming out in March 1888 to talk about "Shifts for a Living among the Lower Animals"; and Crockett, in the chair again, relating "a number of his experiences of zoology while in Mr Thomson's company in Edinburgh".⁴ One can just imagine him, an early forerunner

¹ and ²Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 10a, 2/12/1887.
³Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 10a, 23/12/1887.
of the W.E.A., busily compiling his programme for each winter, seizing on such of his friends and acquaintances as could be persuaded to provide a topic and a talk, and, if no suitable person were found, taking the job on himself in his eagerness to share his own enthusiasms and arouse the curiosity and interest of his flock.

By February 1889, the Christian Leader was able to report approvingly on this lively Free Church phenomenon, six feet three inches tall, poet, traveller, raconteur, with thick auburn hair and apparently limitless energy.

Having an ardent and genial temperament he has the faculty of making and keeping friends, especially in literary circles, and the special favour and honour is his of having as a regular correspondent his gifted and versatile countryman Robert Louis Stevenson. . . At Penicuik, . . he has been instrumental in infusing new life into the various departments of congregational activity, and has added over 100 members to the roll. This winter's syllabus shows an extraordinary amount of work, especially among young men and women. Besides a senior Bible Class with a membership of 127 and a junior class with 91 members, there are classes meeting weekly for the study of English literature, geology, and English history, all conducted by himself. One criticism of the syllabus made by a Free Church minister was that there was "little of the Gospel in it", but it would be a pity to suppose that Mr Crockett is lacking in evangelical fervour. Mission work is being vigorously carried on, especially in the outlying districts of the town among the mining population; and the mission schools as well as the congregational Sabbath school secure a share of his attention and help. A good preacher, he is like nearly all who have the poetic instinct a little unequal in the pulpit, but his powers in that direction are undoubtedly developing.¹

Crockett's preaching style was indeed unconventional. He talked eagerly, holding on to his lapels with both hands;

¹Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 2, 22/2/1889.
he liked to stride up and down as he preached and found the pulpit constricting, so he not only dispensed with his gown as an impediment to his freedom of movement but had the whole pulpit removed from the church and replaced by a platform which gave him the open space he liked.¹

It may be well here to clear up a point on which many passing articles have created a false impression, and even his biographer Malcolm McL. Harper² and Andrew Lang's biographer Roger Lancelyn Green have been wrong.³ Stevenson is often said to have visited Crockett in Penicuik, but this is not so. It is unlikely that they ever met anywhere, since Stevenson left for New York in August 1887 and was never to return from abroad. Their friendship was created purely through letters and their common literary interests. At some time during 1887 Crockett must have sent Stevenson a copy of Dulce Cor, and written him a letter saying so and using the elegantly looped signature he had devised for himself. In the spring of 1888, Stevenson wrote from Saranac Lake acknowledging the letter but lamenting that the book had not arrived.

DEAR MINISTER OF THE FREE KIRK AT PENICUIK, -- for O, man I cannæ read your name! -- that I have been so long in answering your delightful letter sits on my conscience badly. The fact is I let my correspondence accumulate until I am going to leave a place; and then I pitch in, overhaul the pile, and my cries of penitence might be heard a mile about. Yesterday I

¹Midlothian Journal, 24th April 1914. Penicuik Cuttings, S.R.C. p. 55
²Crockett and Grey Galloway, p. 86.
despatched thirty-five belated letters: conceive the state of my conscience, above all as the Sins of Omission (see boyhood's guide, the Shorter Catechism) are in my view the only serious ones; I call it my view, but it cannot have escaped you that it was also Christ's. However, all that is not to the purpose, which is to thank you for the sincere pleasure afforded by your charming letter. I get a good few such; how few that please me at all, you would be surprised to learn -- or have a singularly just idea of the dulness of our race; how few that please me as yours did, I can tell you in one word -- None. I am no great kirkgoer, for many reasons -- and the sermon's one of them, and the first prayer another, but the chief and effectual reason is the stuffiness. I am no great kirkgoer, says I, but when I read your letter of yours, I thought I would like to sit under ye. And then I saw ye were to send me a bit buik, and says I, I'll wait for the bit buik, and then I'll mebbe can read the man's name, and anyway I'll can kill twa birds wi' ae stone. And, man, the buik was n'er heard tell o'!1

One wishes that Crockett's letter had survived, so that one could read what he had said to elicit such a frank reply and flattering compliment from Stevenson; some of the personality of the young minister must have been transmitted, even though Stevenson could not let the printed address on the writing-paper pass -- Free Church Manse, Penicuik, N.B. -- and protested half-seriously in a postscript.

Don't put "N.B." in your paper: put Scotland, and be done with it. Alas, that I should thus be stabbed in the home of my friends! The name of my native land is not North Britain, whatever may be the name of yours. R.L.S.

That the correspondence should have flourished was inevitable; the two had the same boyish enthusiasm, and to Stevenson there must have been an added attraction in that Crockett was living under the Pentlands and near Glencorse

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which he remembered so well. In a letter from Vailima on
May 17th 1893, Stevenson alludes wistfully to Glencorse
twice and makes of Crockett his famous request:

Do you know where the road crosses the burn under
Glencorse Church? Go there, and say a prayer for me: moriturus salutat. See that it's a sunny day; I
would like it to be a Sunday, but that's not possible
in the premises; and stand on the right-hand bank
just where the road goes down into the water, and shut
your eyes, and if I don't appear to you! well, it
can't be helped, and will be extremely funny.¹

One is hardly surprised to find Crockett in February 1889
lecturing on Stevenson to a large audience in Penicuik Town
Hall² and commending his "white hot eagerness which so
distinguishes his countrymen when thoroughly aroused";
from all Stevenson's qualities, some dark and grim as well
as bright, it is significant that Crockett notices and
selects for praise the one which he and Stevenson shared.³

Crockett was much in demand as a lecturer, on subjects
ranging from "Through Central Europe with a Knapsack"
delivered to the Bristo Gospel Temperance Union to "The Best
Bibles for Teachers, and how to use them" delivered to the
United Presbyterian Sabbath School Teachers' Association.⁴
Each year his Bible Class lectures continued -- in 1891 his
topic was the Bible: the Bible as Literature, the Bible as
Science, the Bible as Philosophy, and the Unity of the Bible.⁵

¹The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, ed. Colvin, Skerryvore
²Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 1, 8/2/1889.
³Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 1, 8/2/1889.
⁵Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 2, 22/2/1889.
History was not neglected; he included in his course of week night Bible lectures a consideration of "Jewish History as a Key to our Own"\(^1\) and used the discovery of the embalmed bodies of the Pharaohs to explain the light they shed on the truths of the Bible.\(^2\) A successful sermon on the late Lord Tennyson\(^3\) possibly gave him the idea of working through literary figures under the general title of "The Religion of the Poets"; he treated in this way Bunyan,\(^4\) Longfellow,\(^5\) Carlyle\(^6\) (with a few remarks on Froude's misunderstanding of the Scottish character), Burns,\(^7\) Scott,\(^8\) John Greenleaf Whittier\(^9\) (reading extracts from letters he had received from the poet), Tennyson again\(^10\) and Browning.\(^11\) In addition to these cultural extras, he continued to preside at soirees and social gatherings and deliver the normal

\(^{1}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 14, 4/22/1887.
\(^{2}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 22, 9/5/1890.
\(^{3}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 31, 14/10/1892.
\(^{4}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 32, 24/2/1893.
\(^{5}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 34, 15/9/1893.
\(^{6}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 34, 27/10/1893.
\(^{7}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 34, 6/10/1893.
\(^{8}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 35, 17/11/1893.
\(^{9}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 35, 8/12/1893.
\(^{10}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 36, 20/1/1894.
\(^{11}\)Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 37, 9/2/1894.
professional discourses on missions, gambling, temperance and evangelism, not only in his own church but farther afield — in 1889 he went to Paris for a month to assist in Presbyterian services there and occasionally he went to England to engage in mission work.

Early in 1892, Crockett (up to the moment as always) introduced a new refinement, arousing the interest of his morning congregation by telling them that something special would be present in the evening.

At six o'clock the church was crowded, about 400 persons being present. It was evident that many were there through curiosity. A large number of children were also in church, and good order and attention was kept. Lime-light illustrations, thrown on a large screen in front of the pulpit by the lantern, the subject being "The Prodigal Son", was the principal attraction. The scenes were taken from original paintings by eminent masters and were full of life and meaning. The proceedings were opened by the Singing of the 23rd psalm, in which the audience joined most heartily. After prayer, the Rev. S.R. Crockett read the parable of the "Prodigal Son," and as the subject progressed, the scenes were shown on the screen with very impressive effect. After this scripture, texts were displayed, and Mr Crockett delivered a short address on the subjects. Then the story of the present day prodigal was told and illustrated. The young man's resolution; his visit to the city; his folly in pursuing evil habits; his ultimate ruin; and his return to the fold. At this point Mr A. Malcolm sung the sentence "I will arise," and Mrs Crockett rendered "Return O Wanderer" in a very touching manner. Mr Crockett's remarks on the pictures as they followed each other were full of thought and sound in detail, his concluding address being listened to with close attention and apparently making a deep impression on his hearers. . . The collection after defraying expenses is to go towards purchasing a lantern for further work in this direction.

1 Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 18, 5/7/1889.
2 Penicuik Cuttings: E.C., p. 31, 1/4/1892.
3 Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 29, 12/2/1892.
This particular lantern had been borrowed from the Glasgow City Hall Service, and until Crockett and the Free Church got their own (which they did in due course) it was made good use of in Penicuik. There was, for example, an illustrated exhibition in the Town Hall of the Emir Pasha Relief Expedition, with explanations of the slides by the Rev. S.R. Crockett.¹ There was a talk on "The Land of the Mountain and the Flood" with slides of Scottish beauty spots and once again explanations by the Rev. S.R. Crockett.² There was "A Tour to the Holy Land" with personal anecdotes and explanations of the slides by the Rev. S.R. Crockett.³ And there was, before a crowded audience in the Town Hall, an especial triumph for Crockett -- "From Penicuik to London", with slides made from photographs he had taken himself.

The views in the first part had a strictly local interest, comprising scenes about Penicuik and views of the streets as well as a number of well-known faces, all of which were loudly applauded as they appeared on the screen. The scenes were pithily described by Mr J.J. Wilson, Penicuik's local historian, who gave a short and pointed historical sketch of the district as seen on the pictures. Mrs Crockett gave a most delightful song -- "Dae ye ken Penicuik" -- which had some capital local hits in it, and the chorus was repeated over and over again by the audience. Mr Crockett then went on with the journey to London, Mr W.G. Brown ably managing the lantern.⁴

¹Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 29, 12/2/1892.
²Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 30, 26/2/1892.
⁴Penicuik Cuttings: F.C., p. 31, 25/3/1892.
The enjoyment generated by this instinctive showmanship goes far to explain the affection which Crockett inspired in his people at Penicuik. He used all his gifts for their service, and they responded warmly to his efforts to entertain and instruct them at the same time. His wife entered into these occasions with her musical talents; her singing and playing are prominent in accounts of soirees, choir socials, and entertainments put on for the boys of the Wellington Reformatory Farm School nearby, in which they both took an interest, and her artistic taste decorated the church or the hall for congregational occasions.

Ruth Crockett, English and used to a different set of religious and social customs, found Penicuik in some ways alien at first. This comes out in her obituary in the *Peeblesshire News* in 1932.1

One of the young wife’s most startling surprises in early married life was her first Scottish Christmas -- no bells, no church service, no Christmas trees, no decorations indoors, no carols, no feasting. Christmas Day was a day like any other -- a great contrast to her English home, where the festive season had always been honoured in truly mediaeval style. . . .

She was, however, a woman of character, and as their family were born -- Ruth Mary Rutherford Crockett in 1888, Philip Hugh Barbour Milner Crockett in 1891, George Milner Crockett in 1893 and Margaret Douglas Crockett in 1896 -- she made sure that as they grew up their Christmases were not bare of ceremonial customs such as she was accustomed to.

She organised an English Christmas there for them every year, complete with holly boughs, a huge tree

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1*Peeblesshire News*, November 27th 1932.
brought from the woods of the (Penicuik) estate, and every accompanying rite which memory could suggest.1 Possibly because of her English strangeness and innovation, she was never as close to the hearts of the Free Church people as was her husband; they respected and admired her, but recognised a difference in class and tradition. Her husband they took to their hearts for his kindness, his warm-hearted readiness to treat them as equals and his generous understanding of their everyday joys and sorrows. This implies no criticism of Ruth Crockett; it was merely the consequence of her having been brought up as one of the English middle class while S.R.C., as she often called him, was in his origin a Galloway peasant. He must also have been a somewhat intractable husband, for all his charm; his many engagements, his perpetual and sometimes expensive book-buying, his astronomical telescopes, his cameras and dark-room, his writing, his lavish generosity — money meant little to him and he would empty his pockets for anyone who seemed in need2 — and, one would conjecture, his unpunctuality must all have made him to say the least exasperating at times.

They were, nevertheless, an attractive and pleasant couple and worked well together as a minister and his wife. Two instances may be given of the loyalty and affection that they together inspired, those of the Milroys and the Ritchies.

1Peebleshire News, November 27th 1932.

2Statement by the late Mr James Milroy, Edinburgh, whose father and brother were in turn Crockett's gardeners and who himself remembered Crockett with admiration and affection.
Three generations of Milroys worked for them as gardeners and devoted friends, and when they later moved to Peebles in 1906 accompanied them there as a matter of course. The eldest Mr Alexander Milroy, a forester in the employment of Lord President Inglis, was an elder of the Penicuik Free Church and when he retired, on Crockett's invitation, became his gardener and general factotum. In due course his son Alexander Milroy took his place; and when later Crockett's interest in photography diverted the gardener's attention to developing and printing in the dark-room, his son, a third Alexander Milroy, took over the duties of gardener. The late Mr James Milroy, brother of this third Alexander, remembered vividly the long enjoyable sessions with the photographs Crockett had taken on one or other of his journeys -- sessions in the dark-room that could start at four in the afternoon and last until nine o'clock, long after Crockett had been repeatedly and vainly called for family dinner in the evening. It was the same with stamp-collecting, another of his hobbies, and with astronomy; and as the number of his books grew, Mr Milroy remembered that it took him and his brother six weeks to dust the vast collection. With the Ritchies the story was the same; three or four Ritchie girls in turn worked for the Crocketts as cooks and nannies, and Miss Elizabeth Ritchie (Ellie.) was with them for 43 years, her service continuing after Crockett's death until Mrs Crockett died in 1932. A Penicuik riddle ran as follows: Who is the wealthiest man in Penicuik? Mr Crockett, because he has all the Ritchies.
Unbroken and affectionate relationships like this testify to the loyalty the Crocketts inspired.

Perhaps the strongest instance of Crockett's identification with his town and its people was his reaction to the Mauricewood pit disaster in September 1889. The Mauricewood mine, owned by the Shotts Iron Company, stood on land belonging to Sir John Clerk of Penicuik and gave employment mainly to families living in the Fieldsend and Shottstown districts of the town, where the Free Church missions were especially active.

On Thursday 5th September 1889, fire broke out near the bottom of the Mauricewood and Greenlaw pit workings. For various reasons the rescuers could not reach the fire to put it out. There was no second outlet from the workings to provide an escape passage, and to add to the horror, a door blocked open by the bodies of two men overcome by poisonous fumes allowed the ventilation fanners, instead of clearing the foul air, to distribute it to all the working faces. Sixty-three men and boys who were down the pit at the time were hopelessly cut off and in spite of desperate efforts to reach them, they all perished. Twenty-four bodies were recovered by the Saturday and buried at mass services in which all the clergy of Penicuik took part; the remainder had to be sealed down in the pit until the fire was extinguished after the "dampening down" had taken effect.

The Scotsman reporter found Crockett a good subject for interview, no doubt because he understood the needs of reporters and the value of newspaper publicity.
Meantime the work of affording temporary relief is being undertaken by the church organisations of the neighbourhood. The principal burden has fallen upon the Free Church, within whose mission district of Fieldsend most of the bereaved families reside. A small sum of insurance money will come to some of them this week, but the Free Church minister, the Rev. S.R. Crockett, who is conversant with the circumstances of most of them, says that there will be great distress by-and-by. There was one poor woman, he said, who had eight children, who had not even the last week's wages to fall back upon. Her husband and son, who were the breadwinners, had both perished in the mine. One of the worst cases was that of a woman Daly, whose husband and two sons were all dead. She is left with one daughter, and is an old woman. Next door to her is her sister-in-law, who has been bereft of her husband, and is left with eight children and none to help her. Roughly speaking, Mr Crockett says, about forty families, with about 160 children, have been deprived of one or more breadwinners, and of these families there are not more than eight which will not by-and-by need help. The Fieldsend Mission workers have been providing winding-sheets, and assisting in performing the last offices for the dead. The bearing of the people under the calamity, Mr Crockett said, did them the greatest honour, and he was sure that in no other grade of society could people, under an equal catastrophe, have been more composed.

Under the flat reporting of the journalist one can sense the concern of Crockett, his distress at the magnitude of the tragedy and at the same time his pride in the dignity with which it was being faced.

On the Sunday morning, the day after the mass funerals, references were made in all the local pulpits to the loss which the town had sustained and great sorrow and sympathy were expressed. In the Scotsman reports on the Monday, Crockett's words stand out among the others not only for their sincerity but for a note of anger -- not uncontrolled or directed at any one person but nevertheless distinctive.

The Rev. S.R. Crockett, in Penicuik Free Church, speaking from the text Romans xii 15 -- "Weep with them that

weep" -- devoted the whole of his remarks to the disaster. In the midst of the universal grief, he said, they, as a congregation, had more cause for it than any, for no other religious body had closer ties with the bereaved, and it was upon them and upon their Fieldsend mission that the heavy end of the work must fall. There were few houses in the stricken district where they did not bless the work which the mission has carried on, and even in their deepest sorrow they could catch a glimpse of a future blessing through that great calamity. The printed list of the dead which he held in his hand was the emblem of a world of desperate grief and grim suffering, but would there be not some good fruit from that bitter flower if the law, or the administration of the law, became so strict that never more, legally or illegally, would more than half a hundred men be left to die with no chance of escape, without even a Man's poor consolation of a fight for life and wife and little ones? God forbid that they prejudge or apportion blame on insufficient knowledge. There might be no blame, but the hard fact remained that these men died because there was no other way to life save that which was barred by fire and deadly vapour -- no other way to reach the air save that which a repeated accident made impossible. He would impress upon them that these terrible and extraordinary risks must cease, and that the inspection of the mines must be a much more frequent and real thing. If the Mauricewood disaster did nothing else it would at least make that certain, for he knew that that question would assuredly be brought to the front in the highest councils of the nation.¹

Here surely speaks a man who has not merely gone to comfort the bereaved in a generalised professional way but has listened to the talk in the rows of miners' houses, who knows what the fellow-miners of the dead are saying and is not afraid to speak out when he feels the occasion demands it. He is one of them and speaks for them; he shares their indignation at the carelessness of management and inspectors, and uses his pulpit to say so.

On the evening of Monday September 9th, a meeting was

held in Penicuik to discuss ways of helping the bereaved, presided over by Mr John Cowan of Beeslack, one of Crockett's kirk session. Once again Crockett strikes an individual note. Seconding the motion of sympathy proposed by the Rev. Robert Thomson of the Established Church, he calls attention to the work done by the women.

The Rev. S.R. Crockett, in seconding, observed that Mr Thomson had told them of the gallantry of the relief party, and said that perhaps he might be allowed to advert to another heroism. The men wrought because they were British, because they were Scottish, because they were men; but there were women who wrought night and day in a work that was as hard and terrible. They showed their sympathy by waiting till the dull rumble of the death cart stopped at the door of some stricken home. They received its sad load, and were ready to do all that was necessary at such a time, and they did this day and night. Was not this equally noble with any heroism that could be shown by any men? (Applause.) God had helped and He would help them, for He was raising up friends to assist those who had been bereft of the breadwinners. Sympathy was asked for, and he was sure that all would be done that needed to be done, and that as far as human aid could go, the sufferers from the Mauricewood accident would be relieved from the imperative and pressing cares which had come upon them. These cares began the very day of the disaster; in the majority of the households there was an instant need of help on the very next day.¹

Trust Crockett's practical realism to point out that a pit accident on a Thursday left the wives without the week's wages of the men killed. He was appointed clerk of the Local Committee for gathering and distributing relief to the sufferers, working with the local doctors, especially Dr Badger, medical officer to the colliery, and his letters to the newspapers appealing for subscriptions are strong and to the point. It is typical of his human interest and

¹The Scotsman, September 10th 1889, p. 5, Column 4.
sympathy that he gave to the *Scotsman* reporter the news item that the boys of the Wellington Reformatory Farm School, without any hint or suggestion, had spontaneously collected among themselves the sum of £4.9s.6d. and contributed it to the fund.¹

The prominent part Crockett played after this disaster has been dealt with at some length because it shows the other side of his involvement with his people. He served them not only lightheartedly with his lantern lectures and his literary talks but also with a deeply felt understanding of their needs when dark days came upon them. While he was a minister of the Gospel, he was a sincere wholehearted practising minister of that Gospel, and therefore when in course of time his conscience made him face the choice between continuing to be a minister or becoming a full-time writer and he chose to be a writer, most of his congregation understood and upheld him loyally.

CHAPTER 3

The Man of Letters

It seems hard to believe that throughout all his ministerial activities from 1886 onwards, Crockett should have found time to continue with his writing, and not only continue but progress to new and more consciously literary work. Some of his energy still went into journalism, and what he earned augmented his stipend; he also branched into regular contributions to religious periodicals such as The Christian Leader, Scotland's Religious Weekly, founded and edited by the Rev. William Howie Wylie, and published in Glasgow; he supplied some of the articles in the series "Portraits of Eminent Divines", for instance. He edited and probably wrote a great deal of the material for a magazine for Sunday School teachers and other Christian workers called The Workers' Monthly, for which he managed to extract contributions from several of the Eminent Divines and from his father-in-law George Milner. This continuous flow of ephemeral writing he contrived to maintain by the same device as did Sir Walter Scott; he rose early in the morning, as he had done at Little Duchrae, and wrote quickly, directly by typewriter, between five o'clock and breakfast time at nine. He also extended his range by trying his hand at fiction.

At the same time I wrote sketches and stories which I thought might come to something, and kept these lying

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1 Unsigned articles in series "Pen Portraits of Eminent Divines" by S.R. Crockett in book of cuttings in Ewart Public Library, Dumfries. GKb6(8 CRO)
by me. It was in this way that the first half of *The Lilac Sunbonnet* was written. At that time I was also writing editorials on theological subjects for religious periodicals, and one day the editor of *The Christian Leader* wrote to me and asked me to send him an editorial which was wanted at once. I had no time to write one, and I told him so, but at the same time I sent him one of the sketches which I had in my drawer, and asked him if he could use that instead. It was the story called "A Day in the Life of the Reverend James Pitbye", which is in *The Stickit Minister*. I didn't think that the editor would use it. However, he wrote me: 'Never send me anything else.' So I continued sending him these sketches, and they met with a great deal of appreciation, and were widely copied into the papers, especially in Canada and Australia. Almost all the tales in *The Stickit Minister* appeared in this way in *The Christian Leader*. I used to get as much as a guinea apiece for them. I did not think of republishing them in a collected form till I was strongly urged to do so by Doctor Nichol, (sic) So I submitted them to Unwin, and that is how *The Stickit Minister* came to be. It was successful almost from the very first.1

The literary field into which this little book of short stories2 was sent in 1893 is an interesting one. The giants of the Victorian age had vanished — Tennyson died in 1892, Browning in 1889, George Eliot in 1880, Dickens and Thackeray even earlier. Hardy was at his peak; *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and *A Group of Noble Dames* both appeared in 1891, *The Well-Beloved* and *Jude the Obscure* were being serialised in the early 1890s, *Life’s Little Ironies* came in 1894, and then the reception accorded to *Jude* brought its author’s career as a novelist to an end with the appearance of his *Works* in 1896. Henry James was well-established on

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1"S.R.C. at Home", pp 812-814.

both sides of the Atlantic, and during the nineties was analysing the English social scene in *The Tragic Muse*, *The Spoils of Poynton*, *The Awkward Age* and *What Maisie Knew*. Meredith's last three novels, *One of Our Conquerors*, *Lord Ormont and his Araminta* and *The Amazing Marriage* also belong to the 1890s. Stevenson was at the height of his reputation during the 1880s and 1890s; the brilliant maturity promising still more in the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston* was cut short by his death in 1894, the year after *The Stickit Minister*.

In addition to these established masters, a new form of "popular author" had grown up, fostered by the proliferation of magazines devoted to short stories to cater for travellers on the rapidly expanding railway networks. Most of the abuses and injustices against which major Victorian authors had thundered were by this time alleviated; the Reform Acts had widened the franchise, trade unions were legalised, education was universal and compulsory. The sense of purpose and responsibility which had informed serious literature had gently relaxed, and the reading public wanted to be amused, entertained, thrilled and delighted by novelty. John Buchan summed up the situation in an article in the *Glasgow Herald* in 1895:

In a time when the prosperity of a country is considerable, when no great war is on hand, when no burning questions, social or religious, are stirring its heart and bringing to view hidden powers or hidden weaknesses, when no writers of surpassing greatness are among us, it is no more than natural that the heart of the people should go after strange gods, and our younger writers
vie with one another in seeking for the odd, and, when found, proclaiming its magnitude.¹

Readers would suspend disbelief willingly as long as they were "taken out of themselves" by an arresting story and characters either diverting or sensational. The age was called the "Naughty Nineties" by those who took part in it, but to us in the 1970s it seems curiously naive, innocent and credulous. There were some darker portents; Ibsen was being produced in the theatre, translations of Zola were appearing regularly, Shaw had begun his caustic commentaries with dramatic criticism and Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, but for the most part the age was one of comfortable complaisant prosperity. The last war in which Britain had been directly involved was the Crimean War; the Boer War was not yet in sight; and eager readers, starved of excitement in their gas-lit drawing-rooms, comfortably at home in their industrial Eden, demanded writers who could plunge them into events which would stir them without making them feel responsible. They wanted to be amused, not disturbed. The word "escapism" in its modern pejorative sense did not exist for them, and if it had existed would not have applied. The late Victorians enjoyed extremes, of sentimentality or of sensationalism, because both were a relief from what seemed the settled permanence of their safe lives.

F. Marion Crawford was one of their favourite and most prolific authors, sometimes in haunting fantasies about evil

scientists and hypnosis like *The Witch of Prague*, sometimes in Italianate novels about family hates and intrigues. George du Maurier contributed psychological sensationalism in *Peter Ibbetson* in which divided lovers share a blissful dream-existence during sleep, and *Trilby* in which hypnosis among the artists of Paris makes a famous singer of a tone-deaf tragic heroine. Anthony Hope swung between picturesque historical events in an imaginary Ruritania in *The Prisoner of Zenda*, "strong" tales of ruthless men like *The God in the Car*, and brilliant pictures of society life in *The Dolly Dialogues* and *The Indiscretions of the Duchess*. E.F. Benson supplied an equally sparkling picture of society with a sharper commentary in *Dodo*, the story of a charming but heartless woman. Stanley F. Weyman turned out historical romance after historical romance — *A Gentleman of France*, *Under the Red Robe*, *My Lady Rotha*, *The Man in Black*, *Shrewsbury*. H. Seton Merriman was fertile in romances set in foreign countries, Spain, Poland and Russia, Italy and the far East, finding in the strangeness of alien customs the formula with which to charm his readers. Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*, playing delicately with nameless sins and corruption, was followed by *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the epitome of polished delightful nonsense. More ponderously, Arthur Conan Doyle turned out careful historical novels, *The Refugees*, *The White Company*, *Sir Nigel*, but to his annoyance the frivolous public were much more interested in the glimpses of crime and the underworld afforded by his detective Sherlock Holmes whom he was not allowed to kill off,
no matter how much he wanted to. Hall Caine produced regular and improving best-sellers from the Isle of Man on religious and domestic themes like The Manxman and The Scapegoat. J.M. Barrie with Auld Licht Idylls and The Little Minister and Ian Maclaren with Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush and The Days of Auld Lang Syne established a fashion for the strange and unfamiliar Scottish scene which unsympathetic critics dubbed "The Kailyard School"; it is interesting in passing to note that when Buchan in his Glasgow Herald essay already quoted attacked these "idylls of humble country life" as over-rated, he did not include Crockett in the same category but kept him for a separate drubbing along with William Watson's poetry as examples of the "ultra sane" and utterly wholesome. And at the opposite extreme H. Rider Haggard exploited the romantic mystery of darkest Africa in stories ranging from King Solomon's Mines and She to realistic accounts of Zulu wars like Nada the Lily based on his own experience. Among these richly varied "popular authors" Rudyard Kipling with his tales of India and H.G. Wells whose imaginative science fiction began in 1894 with The Time Machine in Henley's New Review as a serial stand out as writers of deeper and more lasting authority whose reputations hold firm in our own more sceptical times.

On the whole, therefore, these writers of the nineties have faded through their irresponsible catering to the appetites of the new mass audience. Their plots seem contrived, their situations fantastic or overdone when we look back at them through the perspective of two world wars,
concentration camps, extermination centres, famines, political murders, genocide, brainwashing and totalitarianism brought to our attention directly by newspapers, radio and television; history can no longer seem to us such a splendid romance, nor can the quiet domestic idylls of Drumtochty or Thrums or the wild savage fantasy of She hold us with quite the same success. We have grown both sadder and more sophisticated in the years between.

But in looking back and reviewing Crockett's competitors, it is easy to understand why his simple stories of Galloway life attracted with startling suddenness the jaded palates of 1893. They were new and different, and The Stickit Minister made Crockett famous almost overnight. It was published in March and the Free Church Minister of Penicuik became a literary lion known throughout the nation and overseas, feted and honoured by literary societies. He addressed Viewforth Literary Society on "The Scottish Ministers of Olden Times" and the Edinburgh University Dumfriesshire and Galloway Society on "Home Life in Galloway in the Eighteenth Century". He was the guest of honour at a dinner given by the Edinburgh Pen and Pencil Club in the Waterloo Hotel on May 1st 1894, the toast of "Our Guest" being proposed by Professor David Masson. By that time The Stickit Minister had gone into six editions.

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1 Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 2, 10/12/1893 and 24/11/1893.
time also The Raiders had been published and established another resounding success. By August 1894, an eighth and illustrated edition of The Stickit Minister with a prefatory poem (reproduced in facsimile) by Robert Louis Stevenson was in the press.¹ Two more books came out in the same year, Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills and The Playactress, in T. Fisher Unwin's Autonym Library all set about with ornamental capitals and end-pieces to the chapters -- little more than extended short stories, but riding to success on the reputation of their longer companions. And The Lilac Sunbonnet was running as a serial in The Christian Leader; when it appeared in book form in October, its first edition of 20,000 copies was exhausted in a few days and the reviewer in the Dumfries Standard had to make do with a copy from the second edition of 10,000.²

In order to write The Raiders, moreover, Crockett had to spend some time in the remoter parts of Galloway picking up material for his setting. He had somehow contrived to get away from Penicuik in August 1893, and paid his first visit to the little farm of Glenhead of Trool and make the acquaintance of its owners, John and Marion Macmillan, to whom he had been given an introduction by John Macmillan's brother, the Rev. Anthony Macmillan of

¹ Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser, August 22nd 1894, p. 4.
² Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser, October 24th 1894, p. 6. This newspaper is hereafter referred to as Dumfries Standard.
Kirkcaldy. He had the idea of writing a novel about the old smuggling days in Galloway, and to do this he needed to explore farther into the wilder fastnesses of the uplands — the Merrick, Benyellary, Kirriereoch, the Dungeon of Buchan, Loch Enoch, Loch Macaterick. It was John Macmillan who first took him up among the crags and showed him the desolate and little trodden regions which were to become the background and to some extent the inspirers of the plot of The Raiders.

In the Macmillans, Crockett found friends after his own heart. In the volume of letters from Crockett to the Macmillans collected by E.A. Hornel and kept at Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, we find some of his warmest and most spontaneous expressions of affection:

I was sorry to leave you all as sorry as if you had been brother and sister, I never got so near to any folk in such short time. I seem to have known you all my life.2

Thereafter he visited them as often as he could get away, and writes often, sometimes in Galloway dialect, to say how much he wants to come and stay with them.

I am not going to do much when I come to you — but lie on my back and kick my heels in the air. Sometimes I shall arise for the purpose of following the mistress to the milkhouse on the look out for butter-milk -- like a sucklie calf. Sometimes I shall take

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1 Dan Kennedy, "S.R. Crockett Centenary", Ayrshire Post, April 3rd 1959, p. 15, p. 18

2 Crockett Letters, E.A. Hornel Collection, Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, June 6th 1894. (The letter is undated but its envelope bears the June 6th postmark.) This collection is hereafter referred to as Crockett Letters (Hornel).
the hill with the guidman, and some times I shall bide at hame and read the papers -- all according to the freedom of my own will as the Quastion Book says. I never put in as muckle hard work in my life as I hae dune thae last months an' I am gye well sure that I deserve a holiday... Dear sirce, but I'm wearyin' to speak a word or two of the raie Gallowa' that I get nae bit sae weel as at the Glenhead.1 Perhaps with the Macmillans he recaptured part of his youth at Little Duchrae and was among his own people again for a while. Certainly Glenhead must have been a peaceful change from his ordinary life at this time: from two letters written in December 18942 to the Macmillans we learn that he has been in Manchester speaking, has spent a week with Ruskin at Coniston (Ruskin was one of his admirers), has been in Dundee to deliver the Armitstead Trust Lecture on Scottish Humour3 and has spent a week in St Andrews with

1Crockett Letters (Hornel), August 6th 1894.
2Crockett Letters (Hornel), December 21st 1894 and (undated) December 1894.
3Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., pp 74-75, dated by internal evidence. The full title of the lecture, "Scottish National Humour in Prose and Fiction", suggests that it contains the material later published in the Contemporary Review, 67 (April 1895) pp 515-532. It appears also with slight verbal modifications in Raiderland, pp 72-74 as "The Raiders' Country... 3: What We Say There and How We Say It". Crockett seems also to have delivered it before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution in 1895 (see Footnote, Contemporary Review, 67 (April 1895) p. 527, Footnote, Raiderland, p. 88, and S.R. Crockett: "Introduct-ion", John Galt, Annals of the Parish, (Edinburgh 1895) p. xv) and at a public lecture to the Glasgow Athenaeum (see Dumfries Standard, January 23rd 1895, p. 6).
Andrew Lang. He has to go to Glasgow to deliver a lecture in January, and in the meantime try to finish _Men of the Moss Hags_, which has had to be recast and corrected; he had been working on it since May and had hoped to complete the whole story by October: "I wrote the Wigtown martyrs chapter this morning and wept as I did it". And his correspondence had to be dealt with too, as well as literary composition; one is relieved to learn that he had acquired a secretary, Mr Brown, to whom he dictated the letter to the Macmillans on June 12th, "with other 67 letters!! All people with axes to grind at my grindstone".

He had a useful phonograph too, which he used to make rough notes for stories, or to dictate letters to be typed later. Visits had to be paid, one to Dr Whyte at Aviemore (which inspired a doggerel set of verses in the _British Weekly_ by an ecstatic young lady who saw him emerging from his train: "We saw S.R. Crockett today"), and one to Sir Herbert Maxwell at Monreith House:

> One day of Glenhead and the parritch an' milk thereof is worth all the Monreiths in the world. But I suppose I'll hae to gang and see the body.

One would be naive if one believed that he was not enjoying all this bustle but there can be too much of a good thing.

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1 Crockett Letters (Hornel), 25th May 1894.
2 Crockett Letters (Hornel), October 1894.
3 Crockett Letters (Hornel), June 12th 1894.
4 Crockett Letters (Hornel), December 21st 1894.
6 Crockett Letters (Hornel), August 14th 1894.
Articles and stories poured out in quick succession.

The Standard reviewer remarked that "S.R. Crockett ... seems to be ubiquitous just now."¹ "Across the March Dyke: an Idyll of June Love"² appeared in the June number of Woman at Home, edited by Annie S. Swan. To the same journal, under the pseudonym Lancelot Strong, Crockett contributed an article on "A First Meeting with Mr. Gladstone";³ he was a Liberal in politics, like many Free Churchmen, and

the name of Mr. Gladstone had stood for righteousness in our family ever since I could remember.

Two long essays appeared in Leisure Hour during 1894, "Galloway Bygones",⁴ a talk he had given to the Edinburgh University Dumfries and Galloway Association, and "Galloway Fastnesses";⁵ both are reprinted with minor verbal

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¹Dumfries Standard, June 6th 1894, p. 6.


alterations in Raiderland. The short story "The Glistering Beaches" was in Leisure Hour's Christmas number. In 1893, he had contributed "The Apprenticeship of Robert Louis Stevenson" to the Bookman; and he followed it in 1894 with an article on "J.M. Barrie's Books" and a review of a collection of papers by Coulson Kernaghan under the title "Sorrow and Song". The September number of Sunday at Home contained an exclamatory and apocalyptic poem by Crockett called "Harvest Ended, Summer Past" which showed even more clearly than had Dulce Cor that poetry was not his forte.

It will be noticed that these periodicals in which he was being printed have one quality in common; they are aimed at solid middle-class homes where solid discernable edification with a religious flavour is what is wanted, with nothing too heavy or intellectual. Even their illustrations are

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1. Dumfries Standard, November 28th 1894.
4. S.R. Crockett: "Sorrow and Song", The Bookman, VII (November 1894), p. 54. "Sorrow and Song" was a collection of papers for the Fortnightly etc by Coulson Kernaghan, author of Captain Shannon, A Dead Man's Diary and A Book of Strange Sins. He was an optimistic scientist, according to Archibald Cromwell in Windsor Magazine, IV, (1896) pp 25-29, and lived in a house called "Thrums" in Westcliff-on-Sea, near Southend.
heavy and edifying: they lacked the secular frivolity of periodicals like the **Strand** which published Conan Doyle or the upper middle class sophistication of the **Cornhill**. Part of Crockett's difficulty came from the fact that in the first instance he sent his work to the wrong market, and never entirely escaped from it.

Visitors took up part of the autumn of 1894: Andrew Lang came to Penicuik in October¹ and Mr and Mrs Barrie in November.² And to crown the year, the Christmas number of the **Christian Leader** contained not only two sketches by S.R. Crockett but a calendar for 1895 which featured photographs of three reverend doctors, one reverend professor and "the author of The Raiders".³

This year of adulation, novelty, on the whole flattering reviews, invitations and demands for more and more of his time posed Crockett with his inevitable problem; the engagements and contributions enumerated above are only part of those with which he had busied himself over the past two years. It has proved impossible to trace his series of sketches for the **Christian Leader** during 1894 dealing with his student life in Edinburgh,⁴ his article in the same periodical on "the Philanthropy of Bird-Nesting"⁵ a work

¹Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 3, 20/10/1894.
³Dumfries Standard, December 19th 1894, p. 6.
⁵Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 3, 12/5/1894.
called "Saucy Susie Singleton" written for *The Young Woman*, or any remnant at all of *The Workers' Monthly* which he edited and to some extent is said to have written himself. His writing, the visits and lectures which his fame entailed, his trips to Galloway in search of background material and the reading which he must somehow have found time to do in order to check his references and details were interfering with his ministry in Penicuik. He was in demand as a popular preacher; he preached occasionally for Dr Whyte in Free St George's, Edinburgh and gave some of the lectures at the evening Bible Classes. Clearly his two vocations were making impossible demands on his time and both physical and mental energy and he had to make a definite choice. It could not have been easy; he was eager and willing to give from both halves of his nature, and had done his best to divide his time between them fairly, but the end of 1894 marked the crisis.

On the first Sunday in January 1895, while the snow fell heavily on Penicuik, Crockett, having first intimated his intention to his elders, announced to a packed church, after the children had been allowed to leave and the members, friends and adherents of the congregation asked to remain, what he felt himself bound to do.

I need not enumerate the steps which have led me to this decision. I will only say that I have weighed every argument, considered every interest, solved,
as I think, every difficulty, and been constantly mindful, so far as a weak man may, of the highest interests of all -- those of the Master, whom we all serve. Most entirely do I believe that the same Lord who sent me here to preach the Gospel has revealed to me the possession of a talent which He desires and intends me to use. I did not seek this literary work -- it found me. I have only followed on, wondering often, doubting often, and yet sure that to every faithful servant there is given no tool which the Master Workman does not intend him to use.

Brethren, my resignation is accompanied with this unusual circumstance, which I think robs it of any bitterness, that if it be the Lord's will it is not to be accompanied by separation. I mean to become a humble and loyal member of the congregation to which I have tried faithfully to minister for eight years. I shall remain yours in all affection, sympathy, and the bond of one desire. Only I feel that it is in the best interests of the congregation that another teaching elder should take over the responsibility. A congregation of the size and importance of Penicuik requires a man for its minister who can give his whole time and his entire strength to the work. This I cannot do, without, as it seems to me, hiding some of the entrusted talents in the ground. Moreover, I think the matter should be faced now at the beginning of this year. So far as I know, the congregation was never in a better state. It was never, I think, larger in numbers. The young communicants at the last two communions have been exceptionally numerous. The whole people are, I believe, in good heart. It is thus that I should desire to hand my charge over to a worthy successor, whose hand, when you choose him, I shall loyally and cordially uphold. In resigning my charge, I desire to put on record that I hold, and shall teach to the wider audience, the same vital truths which I have taught to you -- the virtue, the praise, the sacrifice, and the atonement. Literature has need of believing men to hold aloft the banner of belief. I am, it is true, but a humble soldier in the army, but I trust that in the day of battle I shall not be found wanting. With regard to more immediate interests, I desire to hold myself responsible for the supply of the pulpit till such time as it shall be your wish to begin the hearing of candidates or the using of other means to fill the vacancy. I shall preach as often as I can during the necessary time of preparation, and constantly be at your service for all counsel and help. I desire at all times to continue to serve the congregation; but in the future free from wearing responsibility and anxiety, lest one part of my work should unduly encroach upon that other, for which I am responsible to you. Finally, brethren, "Pray for me," for I have a sore heart this day. I have not done all I ought. I have
been an unprofitable servant. But this thing I do say, that I have given this people my heart. I have never spoken a word among you for the sake of praise, or in order to please you. I have never, as God sees me, been silent because of the fear of man. I have declared the whole counsel of God as I have known it. No man ever had a more loving and faithful people; none ever kinder or more loyal office-bearers. But I sorrow not as one that goeth away from you. I joy rather as one that shall sit with you on the sacred Sabbath morn that has been so dear to us. My voice shall still, if God so permit, be heard among you. I shall be a willing helper of your minister. I shall sit, I trust, at one table with you at our earthly Communion. Also, brethren true and well-beloved, I pray that we shall all sit about the supper table of the Lamb, and drink anew with him when He cometh into His Kingdom. Amen.

One can imagine the stir that this moving and unprecedented announcement must have created at the dinner tables of Penicuik that Sunday, and how the news spread through the town and beyond. Comment and criticism of different shades followed. For the most part it was understanding and generous. The point was made that many members of the congregation had been expecting -- and dreading -- such a step for some time.

No complaint was ever whispered that Mr. Crockett should give so much time to literature; it was Mr. Crockett himself who felt that he could not do justice to his book-writing and his preaching and pastoral work at the same time.\footnote{1}

This being an imperfect world, there were some exceptions even in Penicuik, and "The Seven Wise Men",\footnote{2} published in

\footnote{1}{Dumfries Standard, January 9th 1895, "Local Intelligence", p. 2; see also Dumfries Standard, January 16th 1895, "Edinburgh Letter", p. 6; Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C. p. 91, p. 95; Kirkcudbright Advertiser April 23rd 1914 - Obituary; The Scotsman April 21st 1914 - Obituary, p. 6, Column 6; etc.}

\footnote{2}{Dumfries Standard, January 16th 1895, "Edinburgh Letter", p. 6.}

1907 as a supplement to the Sunday at Home, contains sketches of a congregation critical of its minister and tittle-tattling behind his back; though the story is in no way like Crockett's, some of the characters could be identified and were taken gleefully by Penicuik to be Mr Crockett getting his own back. On the whole, the wonder is that Crockett was able to do as he wished -- lay down his ministerial charge and become a mere elder, an ordinary member of the congregation, on good terms with his former parishioners and -- even more remarkable -- with his successor, the Rev. Robert T. Jack, throughout his stay in Penicuik and beyond it. The late Mr Milroy testified that "Mr Jack was never out of Mr Crockett's house; he was always in and out consulting and discussing", and others who remember bear this out.

Doubts about the wisdom of Crockett's decision there certainly were. His patron Dr W. Robertson Nicoll expressed a guarded approval when he wrote to Dr Marcus Dods a few days after it was announced, but felt gravely troubled about Crockett's future:

Crockett did right to resign, whatever happens. When he felt his main interest elsewhere, it was not for his soul's health to keep a pastorate. What he will do and where he will turn "being let go" is a serious problem; but I hope for the best.1

This must have been a commonly felt reaction among his professional and ministerial brethren. His personal flock

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might be understanding, since they had come under the spell of his personality, but many Free Church members in other congregations, in Galloway as well as elsewhere, regarded his resignation as a betrayal of trust. To the older members, works of fiction were still suspect as works of the devil, and a minister who gave up his sacred calling in order to produce fiction, no matter how edifying it might be in theory, was defecting to the Enemy. It was because he realised quite clearly that this would be levelled against him as condemnation that Crockett had taken such care in the wording of his announcement: "... the same Lord who sent me here to preach the Gospel has revealed to me the possession of a talent which He desires and intends me to use ..." It may be that he deceived himself in thus invoking a divine purpose pointing him forward to writing as his true calling, and as the years went by and he was forced by commercial circumstances to produce stranger and wilder plots in order to sell his work there was a bitter truth in what the doubters said of which he must have been aware. Even before he made his decision, some members of his own family had harsh words to say to one another about him; his Aunt Marion Crocket, wife of the City Missionary, wrote to her son in caustic terms:

... that was a very foolish thing of Sam's I am sure neither Penman nor MacGeorge will like to see it at this date and I think he very seldom dined on herring. I wonder he does not think some peopel (sic) knows him better than to believe the things he says. Aunty Aggie said how the C.D. people talked about his queer things in the C. Leader, but you and me must
hold our tongues (sic) and make him no worse than he is. ... 1.

The reaction of this old lady, and others like her, when the "enfant terrible chose to devote the greater part of his energy to what they no doubt regarded as more and more "queer things in the C. Leader" can be imagined.

Yet there is honesty enough in Crockett for us to take him at his own word and accept his statement of his own position as for him true and honourable. He may be guilty of misjudging but not of deliberate deception; he genuinely believed that he could serve God as well by writing and reaching a wider public by his writing as he could by preaching in a pulpit. He did not altogether abandon the pulpit; frequently the Midlothian Journal reports that the Rev. S.R. Crockett took services -- sometimes communion services -- after he had ceased to be a full-time minister.

It was a difficult choice which he had to make; the duality of his temperament forced it upon him -- the very enthusiasm with which he threw himself into projects made it impossible for him to be at the same time a conscientious minister and a full-time writer. He saw that clearly and faced the position according to his conscience.

In due course Crockett and his family left the Free Church Manse in West Street and moved to Bank House, Penicuik, a large house on Penicuik estate which they leased from the Clerk family; it stands in its own grounds, beside the

1 Undated letter from Mrs Marion Crockett to William Crockett, probably in 1894-95, lent by Professor J.C. Smyth.
River Esk and quite near the Free Church and was admirably suited for the residence of a literary man. Many of the incidents described in the first of Crockett's books for children have Bank House as an unnamed setting and describe walks on the Penicuik estate, the family interest in birds and flowers, the dogs, donkey and other pets with which they surrounded themselves, Mrs Crockett remaining a benign but firm figure in the background, "The Lady with the Workbasket". It was at Bank House that Crockett was able to indulge his interest in astronomy; at the top of the house he added a small but elaborate Observatory with a revolving dome controlled by winding gears which he could turn to whatever aspect of the sky he wished to contemplate through his astronomical telescope; as part of this structure he incorporated a bed, so that he could pursue his investigations late at night and sleep there if necessary afterwards without disturbing the rest of the household. A further luxury was a library built on to the house in sections rather like a pre-fab to contain his books, which in 1895 when he went to Bank House numbered eleven thousand.¹

His writing continued without break. Cleg Kelly, having made his first appearance in two short stories in The Stickit Minister based on Crockett's experiences in the Edinburgh slums, was first of all continued in a religious periodical The Sunday School,² then appeared, remodelled

¹Crockett and Grey Galloway, p. 115.
and revised with a sensational ending set in Galloway, in the prestigious Cornhill magazine in 1895 before being published as a full-length book in 1896. Crockett had artistic doubts about serialisation but stifled them by thinking of its financial rewards; "serial publication is rather wearisome, I always think" he wrote to the Macmillans at Glenhead, "but it is what makes the siller come in to the author, so it is not to be despised". Men of the Moss Hags (first of all called The Killing Time but retitled before reaching print) ran in Good Words as a serial during 1895 and appeared as a book in the same year. Lads' Love was serialised in Lady's Realm in 1895 also although it did not come out as a book until 1897. The Grey Man, in which he turned to Ayrshire history and tradition for his setting, ran as a serial in the Graphic and the Glasgow

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2Crockett Letters (Homel), January 1st 1894.

3Crockett Letters (Homel), April 27th 1894; August 6th 1894; Dumfries Standard, October 23rd 1894, p. 6.

4Dumfries Standard, November 28th 1895, p. 6.

Weekly Mail before being published in 1896. The Red Axe, published in 1898, likewise appeared first as a serial in the Graphic and the Glasgow Weekly Mail; in this work Crockett abandons Galloway history and embarks on a wild and gruesome tale of horror and conspiracy in an imaginary German ducal state, its hero the son of the hereditary executioner of the Wolfsberg, taking a leaf out of The Prisoner of Zenda. His Christmas books for children began in 1895 with Sweetheart Travellers, its simple homely incidents based on journeys on a tricycle through Penicuik, Galloway and Wales with his little daughter Maisie before him in a basket fixed to the handlebars; it was followed in 1897 by Sir Toady Lion in which his sons dominate the picture, experiencing some of the boyhood adventures Crockett remembered himself from Castle Douglas and Threave, just a little improved to make them more exciting. In 1905 came Sir Toady Crusoe, the family a little older and adventuring along the Solway coast, and in 1912 Sweethearts at Home, a gentler more revealing study of the older Crockett and the family at Peebles.

Short stories and articles flowed from his pen during these busy years, most of them later reprinted in collections like Bog-Myrtle and Peat in 1895, Love Idylls in 1901 and

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1 Advertisement for Glasgow Weekly Mail, Publishers’ Column, British Weekly, XIX, (December 26th 1895) p. 163.

The Stickit Minister's Wooing in 1900. An oddly haunting tragic romance set in a fashionable spa in Imperial Germany, "The Exercise Book of Field-Marshal Prince Ilantz" appeared in Woman at Home in 1895, along with Lancelot Strong/S.R. Crockett's "A First Meeting with Mr. J. M. Barrie". 1 "Love Among the Beech Leaves" appeared in the Pall Mall Magazine in the same year, 2 as did "The Smugglers of the Clone", contributed to The Idler 3 and later published by Chatto and Windus in 1896 as one of five Tales of Our Coast, the other four being by Gilbert Parker, Arthur Quiller-Couch, Harold Frederic and Clark Russell. 4 In 1896 Woman at Home featured a very Stevensonian sketch by Crockett which he does not seem to have reprinted elsewhere: "The Impartial Hand. A Leaf from the Diary of a Walking Tour" 5 and "The Count and Little Gertrud" appeared in the Windsor Magazine during the first half of 1896. 6 "Vernon the Traitor"

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4 Dumfries Standard, September 11th 1895, p. 6. See also March 6th 1895, p. 6.


began in a new monthly magazine Osborne in 1896.\(^1\) It is easy to see why when new magazines heralded their appearance upon the bookstalls for the first time, they thought of including Crockett's name among their promised contributors; Pearson's featured him as an attraction along with Kipling, Stanley Weyman, Sir Walter Besant and Ian Maclaren\(^2\) and Chapman's Magazine of Fiction produced him along with an even longer and more distinguished list including Hardy, Gissing, E.F. Benson, Grant Allen, E.W. Hornung, Henry James and Israel Zangwill.\(^3\) He had clearly for the time being taken his place among the names which drew the public and sold popular fiction.

In more serious vein, Crockett was also in demand as a writer of prefaces, introductions and forewords. His introductions to the Blackwood edition of some of John Gait's novels published during 1895-1896 are among the most interesting of these, and the corrections, interlinings and emendations to the drafts in the Hornel Collection at Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, show that no matter how quickly he boasted of writing his works of fiction, he took his style in this type of writing very slowly and carefully. He provided a nostalgic "Word of Introduction" to the

\(^1\)Dumfries Standard, October 31st 1896, p. 6.

\(^2\)Dumfries Standard, November 27th 1895, p. 6.

Rev. H.M.B. Reid's history of Balmaghie Church, *The Kirk Above Dee Water* in 1895\(^1\) and another to a collection of Carlyle's *Essays* in 1897.\(^2\) Dr Hay Fleming's edition of some of Patrick Walker's biographical pamphlets, *Six Saints of the Covenant*\(^3\) received a similar foreword, and so did Dr Trotter's *Galloway Gossip*.\(^4\) In these we see, in a curiously elderly style, Crockett's vision of himself as a Man of Letters solemnly giving his blessing to other sober historians.

The *Idler* article "S.R. Crockett at Home", an invaluable source of information from Crockett's own lips, gives a picture of Bank House and its master.

It is a comfortable, prosperous house, and, from the very moment that the threshold is crossed, it shows itself a bookman's house. Books in the hall, in serried ranks, and under the shelves are many portraits of familiar bookmen.

As for the study, which may be directly entered from the hall, it is all books. Books from the floor to the ceiling, with space only for a door, a fireplace, and the windows. Against the smaller window which overlooks Penicuick, (sic) with its towering chimneys, is set Crockett's writing-table. In the bow of the larger window, from which one sees the Esk and its timbered yonside, is a table. But here also there is invasion of books. The drawer of the table is full of maps, old and elaborate maps of Scotland, whilst

\(^{1}\) H. M. B. Reid: *The Kirk Above Dee Water*, (Castle Douglas 1895) pp x-xiv.


\(^{4}\) R. de Bruce Trotter ("Saxon"): *Galloway Gossip, or the Southern Albanich 80 Years Ago* (Dumfries 1901) pp 1-4.
underneath it stand in large folio volumes the records of State Trials of Scotland. Away in a corner is a small typewriting machine.\\footnote{1}

An even more vivid -- perhaps because not flattering -- impression of Crockett is given in a report of his address to the Glasgow Athenaeum on "Scottish National Humour in Fiction" in January 1895 -- the lecture he had mentioned to the Macmillans.

Mr Crockett is not an ideal lecturer. He has a fine presence, a tall, well-proportioned form, a massive head crowned with wavy brown-black hair, and a ruddy complexion partly clothed with reddish-fair whiskers and moustache. His manner is perfectly self-possessed, and his voice is powerful and resonant; but is strongly marked with a somewhat harsh, unsympathetic Galloway accent, which amounts at times almost to a decided lisp.\\footnote{2}

However, whether his accent was unsympathetic or not, the newly-released minister was feted and made much of in London, which city he was now free to visit more often than before. He wrote to the Macmillans in February 1895 from Morley's Hotel in Trafalgar Square, saying as he so often said wistfully to these Galloway friends that he had been thinking of them and their quiet farmhouse; he himself is in the midst of dinners and receptions.

The reception at the Authors' Club is on Monday (tomorrow) night. That at the Vagabonds' was on Friday and the Savage Club last night. So I am more than half through. I am glad, but I am into the roar and rush of work, seeing publishers and editors all day long, just as I told you I should have to do.

But believe that my heart is always nearer to the quiet house in the beloved glen -- the glen of my

\\footnote{1}{S.R. Crockett at Home}, pp 797-798.
happiness and quiet.\textsuperscript{1}

Later in 1895 he took his wife for a two-month visit to Italy.\textsuperscript{2} He stayed for two weeks as a guest of Lord Rosebery at Dalmeny in December 1895 and then was entertained with Mrs Crockett at Taymouth Castle by the Marquis of Breadalbane.\textsuperscript{3} He became a keen golfer and played often at St Andrews; in 1896 he visited Holland for five or six weeks, after a week in London with Barrie,\textsuperscript{4} and then is reported by the British Weekly to be resting and golfing at St Andrews after finishing \emph{Lochinvar}\textsuperscript{5} (the second-rate continuation of \emph{Men of the Moss Hags} for the beginning of which he had presumably been gathering atmosphere in Holland) and starting a new story in a completely new vein.\textsuperscript{5}

His own words in a letter to a friend convey the boyish enjoyment with which his life was filled at this hopeful time. He is writing from St Andrews, where he has been playing with Tom Morris and Willie Auchterlonie, formidable and well-known opponents.

\begin{quote}
I've beat Tom Morris! Two up.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Afternoon. Tom beat me four up! The barometer falls.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
I'll read your cousin's book if in words of one syllable -- all I'm capable of at present.
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{1}Crockett Letters (Hornel), February 10th 1895.
\textsuperscript{2}Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 4, 21/6/1895 and 22/6/1895.
\textsuperscript{3}Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 4, 7/12/1895.
\textsuperscript{4}Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 5, 7/3/1896.
\textsuperscript{5}Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 5, 8/9/1896.
\end{flushright}
They are printing another 10,000 of Grey Man, making 45,000 in all before publication.

The Glasgow Herald is believed to be coming out in a mourning border as thick as that and Marie Corelli is a permanent green.

But MY ambitions are to do the High Hole in 4 and to make Willie Aughteronie (sic) give me six strokes.1

Yet for all the gaiety of this ebullient scribble, one feels behind it the feverish pace at which he was living; writing fast until exhausted, then playing hard in search of relaxation. At heart he is tired and anxious, keeping his spirits up by the size of his editions, yet uneasily aware that the Glasgow Herald has had harsh things to say of his work. What is in his mind is probably the criticism made by John Buchan the year before -- John Buchan who had been glad to cycle from Peebles to Penicuik quite recently with a letter of introduction from an elderly minister "to call on S.R. Crockett the novelist".2

Buchan in "Nonconformity in Literature" had attacked various topical literary genres -- the Decadents, the writers who concentrate on the seamy side of life, the authors of humble country idylls, and finally, in a class by themselves, William Watson the poet and S.R. Crockett the prose writer, both of them purveyors of 'the "Ultra sane" and utterly wholesome', both of them "men of real

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1Letter from Crockett to Mr Dan Mowat, October 2nd 1896, lent by Mrs Elizabeth Mowatt, Bridge of Allan.

2Anna Buchan: Unforgettable, Unforgotten (London 1945), p. 188.
original talent, whose faults spring more from wrong-headedness than incapacity".

Mr Crockett hates the sickly and the grimey with a perfect hatred. He is all for the wind and the sunshine, hills and heather, lilac and adventure, kisses and fresh-churned butter. He is clamorous over their beauties; he is all for the great common things of the world — faith and love, heroism and patience. But it seems to us that in this also there is a danger; mere talking about fine things does not make fine literature, and Mr Crockett at his worst is only a boisterous talker. No man, however high his spirits and rich the life within him, can hope to be a great writer save by the restraint, the pains, the hard and bitter drudgery of his art.

Crockett and Buchan in fact were incompatible; Buchan, making his way up through publishing and writing into politics patiently and successfully, a polished young man, a classical scholar, was temperamentally bound to question the merits of Crockett who by his own admission wrote quickly in bursts of sincere but uncontrolled liveliness. Buchan was a shrewd critic and showed neither charity nor mercy; his article goes on coldly

It is nonconformity of the worst sort to shift the burden of law from your shoulders, and go whistling along with your hands in your pockets, for the whistling which seemed so clear in the morning will at noonday be little better than screeching.¹

To read this cruel criticism so early in his career, in the very year in which he had risked all by giving up the security of his Free Church stipend for the uncertain rewards of a writer, must have deeply wounded a man like Crockett, so impulsive, so generous, so careless and unclassical.

However, wound or no wound, the writing must go on; it was now his sole source of income, and books came out at the rate of three or even four a year — they had to, to maintain Bank House in its due state of gentility. He must keep himself before the publishers and place each book as well and as soon as possible. Annie S. Swan makes a significant comment when describing Baytree Lodge in London where W. Robertson Nicoll lived and held literary court:

We met Sir James Barrie frequently, also Ian Maclaren and that stormy petrel Crockett, who was always dashing up from Penicuik to London on some pretext or other . . . He was a queer mixture, with something most lovable about him.\(^1\)

There is an almost patronising quality about her attitude which is a revelation of his status in even the Robertson Nicoll hierarchy.

The Grey Man in 1896 was followed by the disappointing Lochinvar in 1897, Lads' Love; an Idyll of the Lands of Heather also in 1897, the new and lively venture for children Sir Toady Lion for the Christmas of that year and The Standard Bearer, an imaginative reconstruction of the career of the Rev. John Macmillan of Balmaghie, still in 1897. The Red Axe, his first exploration of middle Europe and bloodstained horror, appeared in 1898, followed by three entirely different experiments in 1899; in The Black Douglas he is back in Galloway but in the fifteenth-century

Galloway of Threave, the Black Douglases and Gilles de Retz. In *Ione March* (serialised before publication in *Woman at Home* as *The Woman of Fortune*) he is describing a young American woman earning her living as a typist in contemporary London, and in *Kit Kennedy: Country Boy* he is back in the Galloway of his childhood, writing what the publisher's blurb called "Mr. Crockett's *David Copperfield*", with overtones of melodrama to provide a sustaining plot. It too was serialised, in the *People's Friend*, as were several other books which followed -- *Cinderella* in 1901, *Flower o' the Corn*, set in France among the Camisards and the campaigns of Marlborough, in 1902, and *Vida, or the Iron Lord of Kirktown* in 1907, with vivid scenes of a pit disaster taken from his memories of Mauricewood. And so it went on, year after year. He had clearly not opted out of the ministry for the sake of an

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2. *Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C.*, p. 38, 1/4/1907. Many of the incidents, characters and comments in the chapters dealing with the mine disaster were already present in vestigial form in a short story written by Crockett in 1894. "In the Matter of Incubus and Company", *Vox Clamantium: The Gospel of the People. By Writers, Preachers and Workers. Brought Together by Andrew Reid.* (London 1894), pp. 47-77. The book described itself as "a group of studies mainly on the Relation of Christian Doctrine and Practice to Social Questions of the Day" and contributors included Lewis Morris, Hall Caine, Richard le Gallienne, Henry Arthur Jones, Grant Allen and several Reverends and Reverend Professors. Crockett was described as (Author of *The Stickit Minister* and *The Raiders*).
easy life. The countries in which he had travelled and was still from time to time travelling were pressed into service to provide new and interesting backgrounds — The Silver Skull in 1900 had for its setting eighteenth century Italy and the brigands of Apulia. The Firebrand in 1901 was set amidst the Carlist intrigues and ambuscades in Spain, The White Plumes of Navarre in 1906 dealt with the wars of the Huguenots in France. Yet wherever his story was set and whatever the decor, the hero, if not actually a Scot like Rollo Blair of Blair Castle in Fife who rollicks through The Firebrand or Captain Maurice Raith who dominates Flower o' the Corn, is still sufficiently like a Galloway lad in his tastes, his reactions and his temperament for the reader to recognise him as Crockett in a different costume and under different skies. And in between the foreign adventures came the steady flow of Galloway tales — The Dark o' the Moon in 1902, an inverted continuation of The Raiders in which Hector Faa kidnaps Patrick Heron's son in order to marry him by force to his daughter Joyce Faa; Maid Margaret of Galloway, a continuation of The Black Douglas, in 1905; The Cherry Ribband also in 1905, having first run as a serial in the British Weekly under the title Peden the Prophet.

The necessity of providing novelty, of pillaging every experience and every familiar place and every appropriately religion-torn period of history for material was taking its toll, both in mental and physical energy. A compulsive desire to find fresh areas in which to write was coupled
with a weary need to make as much use as possible of the old ones in which he had first been successful. In 1904 there appeared a curious compilation which he called Raiderland: All about Grey Galloway which gathers up the essays, sketches, articles he had written for Leisure Hour, The Gallovidian, and elsewhere and adds additional chapters about Balmaghie, Auchencairn, Loch Ken, the Raiders' Bridge, the Glenkens and all the areas of which he had made use in his Galloway novels; these additional chapters are partly autobiographical but significantly include long extracts from the relevant novels, thus acting as a kind of general advertisement for all Crockett's Galloway writing and whipping up interest in his work by providing titles, publishers' names and samples. It is half a guide-book to Galloway, half a guide-book to Crockett's already published work, made more attractive by fifty drawings by Joseph Pennell, a black-and-white illustrator of some repute. A publication of this type is surely an indication that an author, though established and well-known, is in need of some additional publicity to boost his sales. Negotiations for the publication of this book as recorded in the photostat contracts most kindly supplied by Messrs Hodder and Stoughton, its publishers, were extremely protracted, beginning apparently in January 1901 and not finally concluded until May 1905 with agreements about the overseas and American editions. Ominously, a letter from Crockett's agent to W. Robertson Nicoll in April 1905 contains the information that the delay in finally establishing publication terms was "owing partly I
expect to the fact that he has been unwell and out of the reach of letters".

Crockett's height, his energy, his endless enthusiasm, and his delight in travelling suggested to everyone that he was a strong healthy man with no sign of physical weakness at all. As early as 1895, however, newspaper reports record that he has been ill in London, confined to his room in Morley's Hotel and able to be up for only an hour each day.¹ The next year the Athenæum stated that he was in an impaired state of health brought on by overwork.² This latter report was denied, but it suggests that the nervous strain under which he was living even in those early years was beginning to tell even upon a man so apparently tireless. His journeys abroad, possible once he was no longer tied to Penicuik Free Church, though described as walking tours in Pomerania³ or more vaguely "travelling in Spain"⁴ begin to sound more and more like journeys in search of health and sunshine.

A contemporary states that Mr S.R. Crockett, after a visit to Spain in search of health and local colour, is now in Italy, where he is likely to spend the winter.⁵

³Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 5, 30/4/1897.
⁴Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 10, 26/7/1901.
⁵Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 10a, 22/12/1900.
Mr S.R. Crockett, who has not been well lately, has now completely recovered, and on Tuesday left Penicuik for St Andrews for some weeks' golfing.¹

The picture one forms is that of a man who writes with compulsive energy and then needs to rest with increasing reaction:

According to a contemporary, Mr S.R. Crockett has completed a new volume, and purposes taking a four months' rest, during a part of which time he will renew his acquaintance with Spain.²

A contemporary says that Mr S.R. Crockett is now resting, doing nothing, as he says, "but lying listening to the Esk water down in the valley." In a recent number of Tit Bits, a writer gave figures showing that Mr Crockett had published more works of fiction within a given number of years than had done any other writer of the new school of novelists.³

According to W. Robertson Nicoll's obituary in the British Weekly, Crockett at one point was threatened with tuberculosis:⁴

Early in his literary career he was threatened with one of the gravest of maladies, but happily the shadow passed. But in fact, the shadow, of whatever malady it consisted, seems never entirely to have passed, and from 1900 on he like Stevenson before him had to spend long periods abroad for the sake of his health; up until 1901 he had felt able to remain an elder and serve his old congregation in that

¹Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 10a, 31/3/1900.
²Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 9a, 26/1/1900.
³Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 9a, 8/4/1899.
⁴"Correspondence of Claudius Clear" (W. Robertson Nicoll), British Weekly, LVI (April 30th 1914) p. 121.
capacity, but in that year he resigned his office since he was so seldom at home to fulfil its duties. The full-time career of a man of letters, combined with increasing ill-health, was gradually severing Crockett's active connection with the Free Church of his early ministry.

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1Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 55, 24/4/1914: (Obituary, Midlothian Journal.)
In 1906 another link with Penicuik was severed; the lease of Bank House came to an end, and the Crocketts had to decide whether to move elsewhere in Penicuik or to go farther afield. The decision was made in favour of Peebles, an old-established grey town in a valley among the hills twelve miles from Penicuik in the neighbouring county, with tweed-making as its main industry but rapidly becoming fashionable as a pleasant place for summer visitors. Torwood, a large house high up above the town on the Cademuir road to the Manor Valley, became the Crockett’s new home -- even larger than Bank House, as it had been originally built as a boarding annexe for pupils of Peebles High School.

Crockett’s departure excited much interest, according to Malcolm McI. Harper:

Upon leaving Penicuik for Torwood, Peebles, the number of volumes in his library was estimated at from thirty five to forty thousand, and they were conveyed by steam traction, to the wonder and delight of the neighbouring population.¹

The sectional library structure was taken down and removed along with the books and other household effects and in due course re-erected. It has now gone from Torwood, but may still be seen, doing duty as a dwelling-house today, a few miles along the road from Peebles to Innerleithen.²

¹Crockett and Grey Galloway, p. 115.

²Information given by Mrs Galbraith, the present owner of Torwood, and checked by personal inspection.
By this time Crockett's heyday was over. Reviewers were either cursory in their mention of each new book, or positively hostile. The local paper reported of The Cherry Ribband in 1905:

This book reflects Mr Crockett's well-known style and manner and will be welcomed by many readers.¹

A brief review of Maid Margaret in The Scottish Review criticised it for coarseness, and concluded:

One is inclined to say that, if people like this sort of book, this is the sort of book they will like.²

This must have been all the more hurtful since The Scottish Review was the new name of the old Christian Leader, taken over in 1905 by Nelson's and transitionally named The Scottish Review and Christian Leader.

But worse was to come. An unsigned review of Kid McGhie in 1906 was entitled "The Decline of Mr. S.R. Crockett", and left no doubt as to where The Scottish Review stood.

Mr. Crockett has done good work in his day, and he has had his vogue. While he dwelt among his Galloway hills he trod a sure literary path with a firm step. When he wandered abroad amongst German petty states he lost his way. He has since returned to Scotland; but neither in his recent romance of the Bass Rock [The Cherry Ribband] nor in the work under review is he the Crockett of old. The freshness and spontaneity of his earlier years seem to have vanished. In Kid McGhie there is everywhere a palpable sense of strain and effort. The story is a nightmare, and in

¹Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 16, 28/10/1905.
the telling of it Mr. Crockett labours almost pathetically to be his old self. The plot is forced, the writing is forced, the humour is forced, and more than once Mr. Crockett is guilty of vulgarities which are simply inexcusable. The characters are all, or nearly all, puppets, and the strings with which they are jerked to and fro are obvious to the most casual observer.

There follows an unsympathetic summary of the plot,

to show the nature of the material on which he elects to work. He has ransacked the Newgate Calendar for episodes, and the whole thing seems to be designed for the syndicates that purvey wildly sensational serials at cheap rate for the weekly newspapers. Mr. Crockett has been "pot boiling" with a vengeance. While there is yet time we beseech him to come out of these criminal and sordid surroundings, and turn once more to the clean ways of honest living, where themes congenial and in plenty await his pen. Out of such a dark and tangled skein of criminality his essentially country muse can make nothing. He has evidently laboured hard——almost frantically——at his task; but he has given us little that is worthy to be set by the side of his earlier and healthier work. Only one character in the whole book seems clothed with flesh and blood, and that is Mr. Molesay, the city missionary, the "good Samaritan" of the Cowgate. He is a noble character, big-hearted, broad-minded, an apostle of poverty, and a martyr of unrequited affection. Mr. Molesay is undeniably good; but the rest is leather and prunella of a sadly inferior quality. Let us hope that Kid McGhie is Mr. Crockett's nadir.1

If it were not for the fact that Buchan did not join Nelson's as editor and reader until the beginning of 1907 and did not become editor of The Scottish Review until April of that year,2 one would suspect his hand in this review, even although its general tenor seems to be advising Crockett to return to the "earlier and healthier work" which Buchan had criticised in his Glasgow Herald article already

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1"The Decline of Mr. S. R. Crockett": The Scottish Review, II (May 24th 1906), p. 571.

mentioned. The critic in any case is unfair; Crockett had no need to ransack the Newgate Calendar for scenes of crime and squalor; he had seen plenty at first hand both in the Cowgate and the Pleasance. A review of this sort must have presented Crockett with bewildering problems; on the one hand, critics complained that he was too much given to country idealism, while on the other, when he turned to urban realism as in this case, he was urged to return to simpler more idealistic themes. Whatever he did, it seemed, was wrong. Kid McGhie is not a good book, but it did not deserve this furious slating.

However, Crockett plodded on, as he had to plod, exploring fresh areas of experience, compulsively seeking novelty to interest his public. The White Plumes of Navarre in 1906 was followed in 1907 by Vida, or the Iron Lord of Kirktown in which he returned from French religious history to present-day mining and engineering, taking the mine disaster from his experience of Mauricewood in 1899, and Little Esson, a novel about artists and their love affairs with characters whose nicknames and personalities suggest that he had blended elements from du Maurier's successful Trilby (1895) with his personal experience of artists made through his friend William MacGeorge; the Galloway background reinforces this feeling. Then, also in 1907, he produced a novel about two youngsters caught up in the excitement of stamp-collecting, Me and Myn, set in East Dene, one of the imaginary northern English seaport towns he was to use from time to time in settings. To add
verisimilitude and novelty, he told the story in the first person, through the persona of a young English lad whose language, to suit his breezy and colloquial personality, is English slang of the most fleeting and contemporary kind.

This called down upon his head the fluent wrath of the reviewer in *The Academy*. "Stamps and Stickiness" was the name of the article, and it set about him with wholehearted thoroughness.

Mr. S.R. Crockett is really an amazing creature. That he could have actually sat down day after day and built up a story of a hundred thousand words odd out of the subject of stamp-collecting is a noteworthy achievement. It shows abounding vitality, unflagging perseverance and splendid self-confidence. All these qualities we readily concede to Mr. Crockett. But nature as we know does not readily part with all her good gifts to one man. Having endowed Mr. Crockett so plentifully with mental and we should imagine also with physical exuberance, she denied him the mind and soul of the artist. He may go on pouring forth words in endless profusion for the rest of his life but neither nature nor art will ever make of him anything but a third-rate novelist. He suffers from acute verbosity. He has a rush of words to the brain and he allows these to gush forth and then stands almost breathless at what he takes to be inspiration.

This critic is thoroughly enjoying his own verbal exuberance; he goes on to score easy points against the helpless author with undergraduate humour and paints a comic picture of Crockett's true forte. His first fame, the review says, had been as a kailyard writer, and it had led him astray.

But for the extravagant eulogies and senseless praise that have been heaped on him by incompetent or dishonest

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critics, he would very probably have continued in the career for which he was essentially fitted and become by this time a kindly and popular Dissenting minister. It is easy to imagine him entertaining his eminently respectable congregations at meat teas with mildly humorous anecdotes. But unfortunately for the cause of Nonconformity, and for himself, Mr. Crockett has been persuaded into the belief that he is a great writer.

Several passages which the critic finds especially sentimental, slangy, silly and "sticky" are then quoted, and he concludes

If this is not "sticky" enough to suit all tastes the diligent reader will doubtless find "stickier" passages in the book. There is one point, however, in which "Me and Myn" marks a distinct advance upon Mr. Crockett's previous works. It is not written in dialect.

The final sentence and the use of "Dissenting minister" are revealing; the critic is English and perhaps not at home in the boisterous rollicking humour with which Crockett has chosen to invest this particular book.

The critic is moreover unaware of the source of Me and Myn. It originally appeared in Gibbons Stamp Weekly as a serial story, Me and Myn, Limited, and was thus part of a vogue of philatelic fiction in Great Britain which began in the early 1900s in that periodical with a story The Stamp King translated from the French dealing with two philatelists travelling the world looking for rare stamps.¹ The authors of a book on The Postage Stamp show a more realistic perspective in discussing it; they declare that although the writer's knowledge of stamps was a little shaky here and

there, it was amusing and entertaining to its readers --
they quote one passage as a sample of its contents with
pleasure and approval. *Me and Myn*, therefore, was a "one-off"
piece for a light-hearted specialist audience and not
intended for comparison with Crockett's serious books.
Indeed, its publishers, T. Fisher Unwin, entered into
litigation with another of Crockett's publishers, James Clarke
and Co., precisely on these grounds; James Clarke had
issued a circular which quoted Crockett as saying that
"*Me and Myn* is a light collection of stories on stamp
collection, and is not intended as a full-dress novel", and
Unwins somewhat understandably had complained that this would
affect *Me and Myn*'s sales and be to their disadvantage.
Judgement was given for James Clarke and Co.¹

In view of
this litigation, and The Academy critic's onslaught,
Crockett may well have regretted the book publication of
*Me and Myn*, but the fact that such a slight work should have
been allowed to come out as a book at all, with Crockett's
approval and encouragement, is an indication of how much he
was dependent on the income from every possible literary
source.

The years of his residence at Peebles, therefore, were
years during which Crockett was writing against an opposing
current of opinion and circumstances. It would not be true
to say that he had written himself out, but the need for
continuous production was pressing too strongly upon him.
He was no longer able to choose subjects from within his true

¹Penicuik Cuttings: S.R.C., p. 49, 31/3/1908.
bent; quantity rather than quality was the financial necessity. His health too was against him; some form of kidney complaint was constantly enervating him, and he could no longer bear the cold of Scottish winters. His increasing need for warmth and sunshine forced him to spend most of the year abroad, and visits to Peebles took the place of residence in Peebles. He came home during the warmer months of the year; the remainder of his time was spent in Spain or France, returning as it were to the solitary life which had been natural to him as a child. His family paid him visits abroad; he paid visits to them in Peebles or in Auchencairn. And whether at home or abroad, he wrote and wrote, in a desperate attempt to keep himself before the public. No man can maintain the quality of his writing under such circumstances.

Of this he was himself well aware. When his New College class held their twenty-first anniversary dinner, he was in Spain and unable to attend it, but he wrote a long letter of apology for his absence in which he hinted at his dissatisfaction with himself and the feeling of strain with which he had perpetually to live. They are all ministers, and he has chosen another path in life but they should not envy him.

Sometimes you feel doubtless that the congregation, the little parish, the daily round hardly afford elbow-room. But a little taste of this bitter bread, and a little climbing on the steep stairs of the literary profession make for contentment with the manse, and even with the Deacon's Court. I do not say that I regret anything. The calling was and is too strong for that. But I
know well that I was serener-minded when two sermons dominated my week. Give thanks then all of you.¹

The honesty of this admission, and the clarity with which he saw how far he had fallen short of his ideals, compel respect and sympathy.

On a happier occasion, when in 1906 the citizens of Dalbeattie, that Stewartry town near Castle Douglas which perpetually vies with it in civic pride, gave a Public Banquet in somewhat tardy honour of Crockett on 28th September, he returned to the same point, only more lightly because of his company. Presided over by Sir Herbert Maxwell, surrounded by Provosts, ministers, local landowners and municipal dignitaries, he rose ultimately to reply to the flattering speeches. He talked of himself as a Galloway man and of Galloway as "la petite patrie, my little fatherland" and was glad to see around him faces that he had not seen for twenty years or even thirty.

Whatever I have written for other people I have always kept the best for you, and if I forget Galloway, my little Fatherlands, may my right hand forget its cunning. (Applause.) Sometimes it is said to me -- "Ah, the 'Raiders,' the 'Lilac Sunbonnet,' -- this, that, and the other -- why do you not write us another 'Raiders,' and other 'Stickit Minister?" Well, it is like this. I do not need to tell a Galloway audience anything about the rotation of crops. Suppose for a moment that year after year for ten years one of you sowed only one kind of crop. What would be the consequence? The soil would be exhausted. Moreover, before that even, the landlord's patience. (Laughter.) Now, so with books, which are the crops of the mind. You cannot go on producing the same kind of crop. After

¹"The Late Mr S.R. Crockett and a New College Anniversary". The Scotsman, April 25th 1914, p. 8, Column 6.
each book is finished the brain becomes something like cold boiled turnips. To recover its elasticity, to strike fresh that unexhausted soil, one must try a new crop — something as different as possible from the old. There are, besides, for the professional author, not one landlord, but many. Editors and publishers who out of their wisdom desire such and such a crop, and will only pay according to their needs. But though I write of Latin lands, of stately Spanish ceremonials, of Apulian brigands, true it is that of Galloway I may always say, "My heart, untravelled, fondly turns to thee." (Loud Applause.) But I think, I hope, I believe, that I have yet kept the best for you. And to you to-night I promise that some day, when editors cease a little from troubling and publishers from dictating, I will write for you of Galloway, and for you, brither Scots, akin to her, a real Galloway book, in the full dialect, to be understood only by those to the manner born. . .

Like Braddock, borne away, dying after defeat from the banks of the fatal Monagahela, I say — "We will do better next time."  

But editors never did cease from troubling nor publishers from dictating. The extent to which Crockett was at their mercy can be gauged from two ominous signs in correspondence.

In letters sent by his agent A.P. Watt to Hodder and Stoughton negotiating the royalties to be paid on cheap editions of already published works in the United Kingdom and abroad, there occurs several times with slightly varying wording the postscript that

the above mentioned royalties will be placed in the first instance against that portion of the advance which is still unearned.  

The books in question had in their six shilling edition

1 Crockett and Grey Galloway, pp 161-167.

2 Letters from A.P. Watt to J.E. Hodder Williams, December 22nd 1910, June 9th 1911 and October 11th 1912, supplied in photostat copies by Messrs Hodder and Stoughton.

3 S.R. Crockett: Princess Penniless (London 1908), Rose of the Wilderness (London 1909) and The Dew of their Youth (London 1910).
sold so poorly that they had not earned the amount advanced to Crockett before publication, and he must make up the difference by forfeiting part of the payments earned by later cheap editions — and this even although previously, in 1908, he had been forced to agree to a reduction in advance payment from £500 to £400.¹ The amounts by which this reduced advance had been unearned can be seen clearly in a written slip included by Hodder and Stoughton among the photostats of their Crockett agreements. It is noted as

Overpaid Crocketts including "Ione March"

and goes on to list the sorry story.

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<td>Rose of Wilderness</td>
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Crockett's later works were simply not selling; their early

¹Letter from A.S. Watt to J.E. Hodder Williams, June 26th 1908, supplied in a photostat copy by Messrs Hodder and Stoughton.

²The books mentioned in this written note are: S.R. Crockett: Ione March (London 1899), The Stickit Minister, Deep Moat Grange (London 1908), Princess Penniless (London 1908), The Dew of their Youth (London 1910), Love in Pernicketty Town (London 1911) and Rose of the Wilderness (London 1909). It will be noted that apparently even The Stickit Minister by this time was not earning its keep.
dear edition did not earn their advance, and cheaper editions had to be taxed by Hodder and Stoughton in their own interest.

In view of these figures, one understands why in May 1911 and October 1912 Crockett was obliged to sell large quantities of his cherished books in the saleroom at Sotheby's. The catalogues of these two sales are in the Hornel Collection at Broughton House, Kirkcudbright and in themselves provide a conspectus of the astonishing range of Crockett's interests and the sophistication of his book collecting; titles include incunabula as well as first editions of nineteenth century authors, natural history as well as folklore and exploration, the Breviarum Romanum as well as Naphtali, or the Wrestlings of the Church of Scotland, fifty-nine volumes of The Studio as well as twenty-seven volumes of the Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. On and on the list runs, in a heady jumble of variety -- seventeen volumes of Burton's Arabian Nights in the Kamashastra Society edition (1885-1897), first editions of Jane Austen (sixteen volumes), Elzevir editions of Caesar's Works and Terence's Comedies (both 1635), Joseph Ritson's Caledonian Muse (1821), Archenholz's History of the Pirates, Freebooters and Buccaneers of America (1807), G.P.R. James's Works in one hundred and ninety-six volumes, thirteen volumes of The Yellow Book (1894-97), Ackermann's Poetical Magazine (four volumes, 1811) with plates by Rowlandson, Bewick's History of British Birds (1804), Defoe's A System of Magick, or a
History of the Black Art (1727), a First Folio Shakespeare, Sir Thomas Malory's Works edited by Rhys and illustrated by Beardsley (1893), a red morocco Virgilius (1583) with the arms of a cardinal on the sides and his crest on the back, Coryat's Crudities (1611), the first English translation of Don Quixote (1620), Dugdale's Monasticon Anglicanum (1718-23), Blaeu's maps of Scotland and Ireland coloured by Pont (1662), a 1525 edition of Froissart's Chronicles, Purchas his Pilgrims (1625-26), the Poetical Works of Gavin Douglas edited by John Small (Edinburgh 1874), of William Dunbar edited by David Laing (Edinburgh 1834) and of Robert Henryson edited by David Laing (Edinburgh 1865), as well as sets and first editions of Victorian classics like Browning, Thackeray, Arnold, Carlyle, Ruskin, Clough, and Morris, and books in French, Provencale and Spanish, both old and modern. And these are taken at random from the 1911 and 1912 sale catalogues only; when the posthumous sale of the remainder of his library took place at Sotheby's in 1915, even greater catholicity of taste was revealed. The earlier sales must have cost him many a pang, as he disposed of his treasures; the fact that they took place at all shows the precariousness of his financial position, with a wife, four almost grown-up children to be launched on careers, and ill-health into the sad bargain.

Three letters have survived, extracts from which give glimpses of his patience under the discomfort of illness.

The first was written in September 1911 from Auchencairn, a pleasant fishing village on the Solway coast overlooking
the island of Heston, the "Isle Rathan" of The Raiders.

Crockett's two uncles had retired to a cottage there, which he inherited in due course after Robert had died in 1902 and William in 1908; it was called Castle Dauphin, which local usage turned into Castle Daffin. The letter was written to his cousin Samuel Crockett, then of Castle Douglas, the son of William Crockett of Glenlochar, at whose wedding in 1887, the year of his own wedding, Crockett had officiated along with the Rev. H.M.B. Reid of Balmaghie, and who like Uncle Robert had died in 1902.

Auchencairn
20 Sep 1911

Dear Cousin Sam,

Many thanks for your excellent letter. I shall indeed be glad to see your mother when she comes, though I don't know if I will be out of my bedroom to receive her. However that won't matter. She will understand.

The fact is I was never rightly better of the influenza-malaria I had before I came home and I took a severe sore throat with other symptoms and have been laid up since Sunday week. The doctor does not think it serious, but forbids me to work or go out. I am also on the lightest diet -- 'slops' indeed, & no solid food of any kind. However I hope to have better to report, and also I hope to see your mother (though I can't yet speak much) on Friday -- I should like to have a talk with you too before I go. I mean to be here most of the autumn if I get better and settled down to work. At present I can't do much, but I hope this nasty relapse will pass away.

Affectionate regards to the girls, your mother, and every heartiest token of good will to yourself,

Your friend and cousin,

S.R. Crockett.

Miss Cannon has been exceedingly kind during my illness. She is very 'heartsome' & mindful, also a good friend of yours.
Will you call in at F. Walker's, chemist, and ask him if he has any Terebinthine, a kind of gum for kidney complaints, and also to send me half a dozen bottles of Vichy Celestine by the carrier or just Davie Gass? I have an account there.

The other two letters are to the Rev. William Thomson of Auchencairn Free Church, and written from France in 1913, trying to make arrangements to have Bagster's Bible, the Oxford edition of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy and three volumes of Montaigne's essays sent out to him from Castle Dauphin, together with "the plaid marked R.C." which "is, I believe, in a tin trunk -- or was when I left it". The first is dated October 18th 1913 and headed "Private Hospital, St. André, France". It apologises for the trouble his request has caused Mr Thomson and gives the details of where the things should be.

I have been through much pain and trouble since I saw you. An error of diagnosis put my cure back for years, and every grain of the Quinine I took was so much irritant poison. I am now, I hope, slowly getting the better of the enteritis, but instead of going forth like a strong man rejoicing in his weight, I turn the scales at less than you, i.e. between 9 and 10 stones! However there is now hope for me, and I take my best draughts of this fine air and sunshine, sleeping upon the covered balcony every night and sunning myself in the front of the old orchard wall (old Convent of St André, old as Dundremnan and like it Cistercian, but perfect) . . .

I hope, if I am stronger, to see you next year. This year I have had to stick to the treatment to keep the candle alight. I have written all my books in bed or on a couch. But I have worked and a great comfort it has been.

Letter from S.R. Crockett to Samuel Crockett, "Cousin Sam", lent by Miss Joan Hastings Crockett of Edinburgh, "Cousin Sam's daughter."
My daughter is at College in Edinburgh hunting for degrees. Philip has been 3\frac{1}{2} years with the Scotsman people, and George 3 years in China with the Canton River pirates and such cattle. He is a sub-lieutenant now and as he says, "No end of a little man."

Mrs Crockett does not stir from home and Margaret (17) is still at school. But the three children pass every weekend at Torwood.

In the holidays we managed to unite -- partly, that is. I am pinned to my rest cure and can't go north on pain of death.

I drink your health in milk -- all I have lived on for 13 months! ¹

The second letter to Mr Thomson, written four months before Crockett's death, acknowledges receipt of the plaid and the books, with many thanks. It is dated December 1, 1913, "Still in Private Hospital, near Perpignan, Pyrénées Orientales".

I am still only partly able for work. I have had rather a bad three weeks and have been confined to my room, which means to bed and couch, all the time. But I have not had such a turn for a year, which ought to make me grateful. Though how much more grateful I should have been not to have had it at all!

On the whole I may call myself content. I can live here with my two windows open and my lungs full of fresh air. Here I can do a little work occasion¬ally, and even when the days are warm and the breezes propitious, rather more than a little.

But early winter always tries me, even here and were I in the North I might as well retire to my little landed property (or "howking") in Balmaghie Kirkyard. To live and work, however, are great things and

¹Letter from S.R. Crockett to the Rev. William Thomson of Auchencaim Free Church, lent by Mrs Sandilands of Edinburgh, Mr Thomson's daughter.
permission to do both about as much as we have any call to ask of God.

I remember looking from Monte Rosa across the great plain of Italy a hundred miles to Monte Viso — all corn and vine lands, crowded with towns, villages and farms. A sense of the insignificance of the life of man came over me. But it was my eye which was distorted. For once down there on a farm I became at once interested in all the outgoings and incomings of the peasant and farmer folk, and saw that I had been only removing myself wilfully from the life of men.

I do not understand whether the "Dent" book packages are at the Manse or at the Cottage. If at the Manse please open them and mark on one of the lists which are enclosed what volumes I have received. Also please inform Dent that these packages have been received by you for me, who am kept abroad by "continued indisposition". If at the Cottage, Dent must just do without.

I have to keep my son Philip busy contradicting the paragraphs about my being ill, &c. For publishers won't take books from sick authors any more than people will be cured by an invalid doctor. So I say as little as I can about my illness, and my literary agent, Mr Watt, exhorts me to say nothing at all.

I enjoy the Montaigne very much and above all I am glad to have my old Bible, marked when I still knew a good deal of Greek and even a little Hebrew. I envy you who have kept your classics up. I can read Latin still, because so many chronicles and historical works are written in Latin, but if Greek I could not pass, except in the N.T. now (by remembrance of the context.) Xenophon would throw me sure and as for Hebrew -- I don't believe I know all the letters!

All good grace to you and salaam to the lady your wife.

Ever your friend,

S.R. Crockett

I hope to shake your hand some good day yet to come.¹

On the 16th of April 1914, Crockett died at Tarascon, near Avignon. The end came quickly, without pain. Mrs

¹Letter from S.R. Crockett to the Rev. William Thomson of Auchencairn Free Church, lent by Mrs Ruth Sandilands of Edinburgh, Mr Thomson's daughter.
Crockett wrote of it to the Macmillans at Glenhead of Trool on April 27th.

... all was over before we knew, he was dead and in his coffin and sent over to this country by this French doctor. Poor Philip had to go and identify the poor dead body, it was terribly hard for the lad, we have not got full particulars yet, we know it was sudden and unexpected, and thank God we know it was very peaceful. My poor husband can have had no idea of it himself.¹

Crockett was brought back to Scotland. His body travelled by train to Castle Douglas and was taken in procession through the streets to the tolling of the town bell; after the four country miles to Balmaghie Churchyard there was a simple service in the church and Samuel Rutherford Crockett was buried among the Crockets of Little Duchrae and Drumbreck.

In his introduction to Reid's *The Kirk Above Dee Water*² he had written movingly of how he hoped to lie there when his time came;

--- there in the high corner I should like to lie, if so the fates allot it, among the dear and simple folk I knew and loved in youth. Let them lay me not far from the martyrs, where one can hear the birds crying in the minister's lilac-bushes, and Dee kissing the river grasses, as he lingers a little wistfully about the bonny green kirk-knowe of Balmaghie.

He had his wish, and there he lies, his name and dates and two separate professions inscribed on the bottom space

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¹Crockett Letters (Horneil); letter from Ruth Crockett to John and Marion Macmillan, Glenhead, April 27th 1914.
of the tombstone which records the names of his grandfather and grandmother, his mother, his aunts, his uncle, and a young Duchrae cousin who died young. There was just space enough to contain the four lines. As was mentioned at the beginning, there was doubt among his surviving relatives as to his right to lie there; it was felt that in his life he had moved so far from their simple ways and their austere values that he had no genuine kinship with them left. But one is glad that he was not denied the quiet resting-place he had wished for himself. Perhaps the finest, kindest comment was one made by a fellow Free Church minister, the Rev. John Grant of Nottingham, who had at one time served near him when he was ministering in Penicuik and had known him well as friend and colleague. In an obituary article in the British Weekly, after vivid personal recollections of this "Saul among men", written with affection and admiration, his fellow-minister faces squarely the vexed question of his resignation.

From this ministry, into which the "three-fold call" and a mother's prayers conspired apparently to carry him, Samuel Rutherford turned aside. By so divesting himself of his sacred office he lost caste with many Scottish folk. Did he do well or ill? Who shall judge? He came to be less clear regarding his call to the ministry than as to the calling he ultimately gave himself to. He chose as he chose who knew best what was best to do. . .

Only, I could not judge him unkindly, had I deemed him at fault; he was so generous himself. . . 1

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CHAPTER 5
In the Beginning: The Stickit Minister and Some Common Men

Crockett's first modest venture into literature under his own name between the covers of a book came when, urged on by W. Robertson Nicoll of the British Weekly, he gathered together a selection of the short stories and sketches he had been for some time contributing to the Christian Leader and sent them to T. Fisher Unwin for consideration. They found favour and were published in March 1893 under the title of The Stickit Minister and Some Common Men. The volume was an immediate success and went into edition after edition, making Crockett, like Lord Byron, famous almost overnight.

It was dedicated to Robert Louis Stevenson who, according to Crockett's "Letter Declaratory to the Second Edition", had turned its author towards prose; after reading Dulce Cor and presumably enjoying Crockett's racy letters, Stevenson (in a rather left-handed compliment) advised him to

1"S.R.C. at Home", pp. 813-814.


3See Appendix 1, p. 608

Write . . . my Timothy, no longer verse but use Good Galloway Scots for your stomach's sake — and mine. There be overly many at the old tooth comb!

Certainly the stories, all of them set firmly in Scotland, have a verve and bite which are entirely lacking from Ford Bereton's faded Tennysonian measures in Dulce Cor.

The twenty-four stories — some of them little more than sketches — vary widely in mood and point of view; most of them are set in Galloway, and reflect the country and small town people of Crockett's boyhood, among scenes he knew and remembered well, but even among these there is variation in treatment. Many of them have to do with ministers, ranging from the sly satire of "A Day in the Life of the Reverend James Pitbye, Minister of Nether Dullarg" to the quietly-told sadness of "The Stickit Minister" from which the book takes its title. The satirical mood is on the whole predominant — it is significant that the story of the Rev. James Pitbye, the lazy minister, is by Crockett's own account his first published story; it was sent to the Christian Leader as a substitute for a requested editorial on a religious subject which Crockett had no time to write, and the editor, the Rev. W.H. Wylie, immediately realised its quality and asked for more.¹

Some of the ministerial tales are frankly comic, with a straightforward enjoyment of the ridiculous for its own sake — "Trials for License by the Presbytery of Pitscottie", "The Probationer" and "The Three Maister Peter Slees, Ministers in the Parish of Couthy". Two are ministerial love stories,

¹"S.R.C. at Home", p. 813.
one sad, the other happy, "The Minister of Scaur Casts out with his Maker" and "The Courtship of Allan Fairley, of Earlswood". "The Split in the Marrow Kirk" uses two small boys to describe the violence in a severely Presbyterian country church when a contumacious elder rebels against the minister; in totally different mood and style, "Accepted of the Beasts" tells of a young minister too fine and mystical for this wicked world; while two other stories deal with typical stumbling-blocks that lie in a minister's path, "John Black, Critic in Ordinary" and "The Candid Friend". "Why David Oliphant Remained a Presbyterian" is a sketch of a young Scots divinity student tempted for a moment by an urbane bishop and the charms of Anglicanism to leave the Kirk of his forefathers; one inevitably suspects in this an undertone of autobiography. "The Lammas Preaching" describes with richly sardonic relish a young minister with more ardour than common-sense and how he was saved from his own folly. "John Smith of Arkland Prepares his Sermon" is more homespun and commonplace in its gentle moralising, and "The Glen Kells Short Leet" describes three candidates who came to preach at Glen Kells for the vacancy caused by a minister's death, how they behaved, and how they fared. "Boanerges Simpson's Encumbrance", the one story of a minister not set specifically in Galloway but in a larger town of indeterminate locality, contrasts an unctuous successful preacher with his shy retiring wife, his "encumbrance" in the eyes of the world, who turns out to be something far different in eyes that are more discerning.
Leaving aside the ministers, we come to the "Common Men", who are not all necessarily masculine. Here too there is wide variation in style and treatment. Two stories set in Edinburgh, "A Knight-Errant of the Streets" and "The Progress of Cleg Kelly, Mission Worker", introduce Cleg Kelly, an urchin of the slums whose prototype Crockett must have met during his work in the Pleasance Mission. "The Tragedy of Duncan Duncanson, Schoolmaster" tells of a minister who has been deposed from his office because of drunkenness and become a village dominie. "The Tutor of Curleywee" retells an anecdote originally told by Sir James Caird of Cassencary; in it a Minister of Education traversing the wilds of Galloway discovers to his astonishment how families in the isolated hill cottages manage to educate their children during the summer with the help of students from college. "Ensamples to the Flock" and "The Siege of M'Lurg's Mill" tell the story of a thirteen-year-old girl who after her ne'er-do-well father's death takes charge of her three brothers and against all odds dragoons them into "decency and school attendance". In contrast "A Midsummer Idyll" is a fanciful account of a wayward young girl who contracts to marry three young men on the same day at the same time, and in contrast again "'The Heather Lintie'" describes a lonely woman who has grown up alone with dreams of being a poetess and is saved by death from discovering how cruelly a clever young

1"Heston" and "Theodore Mayne": "Sons of the South: S.R. Crockett", The Gallovidian, II (Summer 1900) p. 46. The Minister of Education to whom the incident had happened was John Bright.
journalist has trampled on her dreams.

No two stories are alike -- not even the two about Leeb McLurg and her family or the two about Cleg Kelly. Each has its own theme, its own point of view, its own separate identity; some are told almost entirely in Scots, some almost entirely in English, some in a blend of the two, just as Crockett thought best for his particular purpose in that particular story. The strength and vigour of the writing stems from the stories' roots in Crockett's own experience; the diversity of their styles from the different areas of language which he knew at first hand and had mastered. He was a boy brought up amongst Scots-speaking peasants and therefore knowing their tongue by heart; his ear was attuned to the rhythms and cadences of the Authorised Version of the Bible, which was read aloud each day as part of the farm's normal life; he had grown up reading the Covenanting pamphlets of Patrick Walker, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Simpson's Gleanings Among the Mountains, Woodrow's History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland so that the turns of phrase of the seventeenth century were familiar to his memory, as indeed they were present in the prayers and admonitions of his elders. In less solemn vein, he had listened to the homely talk of dairymaids and ploughmen at the different farms he came to know as he grew older -- Little Duchrae and Mains of Duchrae broadening out to Drumbreck and Airieland -- and learned "all the mirth of farm-ingles and merry meetings under cloud of night".¹ At school and at Edinburgh

¹Raiderland, p. 36.
University he had been well drilled in the mechanics of nineteenth century English, the solid workmanlike prose into which his Latin and Greek texts would be translated, and was familiar with "sermon English" both in country and city pulpits and in religious periodicals both Scots and English in origin. He had during his University career mastered the locutions of the plain journalistic English of his time by contributing to daily and weekly papers, and afterwards had travelled abroad with English and American companions of education and wealth. He was more practised in varying styles and voices than most young men who come to the profession of writer. Barrie is a more sophisticated stylist but he is always Barrie. Crockett on the other hand will not stay still; he is always trying something new.

W. Robertson Nicoll, reviewing The Stickit Minister in his formidable personage as Claudius Clear in the British Weekly, remarked on these variations in treatment which to his mind brought about variations in quality. He detected something new, something which set the book apart from the other "Scotch" books which had followed in the wake of Barrie. Three quarters of The Stickit Minister, he says, consists of swift bright sketches, whose subjects are nearly all taken from Scotch ecclesiastical life. They are racy and entertaining, sympathetic and high-spirited, as others have been before them.

The remaining fourth, however, has puzzled me very much. It is so good that one is tempted to say without more

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ado that Mr. Crockett is a man of genius. There is something in it beyond journalism; whether it is genius I cannot decide.

This is vague enough in all conscience; one hopes that he was more specific in conversation with his protégé. He goes on to compare Crockett with Barrie and Hardy.

In Thrums and in Wessex there are those who for all the simplicity of their surroundings have experienced the extreme joys and agonies of life... They know nothing of life beyond its great elements, and yet they know it all. It is this brooding elemental quality that Mr. Crockett's work lacks, even as his world lacks the majesty of the antique order. It is for the most part the world of today, which may be made interesting but hardly impressive. He shrinks from direct contact with tragedy, though he often glances at it...

Mr. Crockett will solve the problem by-and-by, and I have great hopes. No fair critic will deny that he has his own style and method; he is not an imitator. The fault which he should avoid is a tendency to use cheap newspaper phrases. His diction might well be richer and more copious. Mr. Crockett should follow Mr. Barrie and Mr. Hardy to Elizabethan springs.

Nicoll here seems to be offering Crockett the most deadly advice. He wants him not to write of his own experience and his own background but of some nostalgic past which would have "the majesty of the antique order", whatever that means. He would like him, in fact, to blunt that very energy and directness which made his stories lively and confine himself to the idealisation of the simple Scottish peasantry, in the hope that this would give his work a "brooding elemental quality" such as Hardy created for Wessex. He recognises the freshness and originality which The Stickit Minister shows but seems to be complaining that Crockett's style is not dignified enough -- it uses, for example, "cheap newspaper phrases". As we shall see, it is this ability to parody newspapers, to catch alien and unsympathetic comments and
reproduce them embedded in his own paragraphs, which is one of Crockett's prime skills. Nicoll, in his desire for the mixture as before, fails to come to grips with the genuine novelty of Crockett's personal stylistic devices. But at least he can see that Crockett is no mere imitator, no matter how patronisingly he admits it.

In the heavy columns of The Academy, William Wallace, its reviewer of Scottish books, himself a Scottish journalist and author of Scottish sketches, shows much the same puzzlement.1

"Barrie or the Devil," will be the criticism passed upon The Stickit Minister by many a hasty reader. Such a criticism would be very unjust. It is quite possible that Mr. Crockett would not have written and published before him. It is even possible that there would not have been so much about ministers but for the successes scored by the author of Auld Licht Idylls. Mr. Crockett is in no sense, however, an imitator of Mr. Barrie or of anyone else. He has a genuine turn for simple but graphic description, and a not inconsiderable fund of pathos; and both are seen to advantage in the sketches he here gives of country ministers, probationers and street arabs. Although, to judge from internal evidence, both Mr. Crockett's heart and person are in the country, some of his best stories deal with the town... He may be expected to do something far more ambitious than The Stickit Minister; as things are, he is an important accession to the ranks of Scottish artists in fiction.

Reading between the lines of this brief "Minor Notice" which was all William Wallace had space for, especially since three other works had to be dealt with in the same notice and The Stickit Minister came last, one can see a genuine sense of something fresh and original having added itself to the literary scene. William Wallace realises that Crockett can

deal with the town as well as with the country and that in his variety of theme there is great promise for the future. It is unjust to say that he is merely a second Barrie, but what is, wherein lies, the difference?

The comparison with Barrie was inevitable, even though both these critics were aware of a clear distinction between the established chronicler of Thrums and the new voice which told so many dissimilar tales in very dissimilar moods and spiritual perspectives. What the two authors had in common, their fondness for depicting ministers, may be laid to the account not of Barrie's example but of Crockett's writing in the first instance for a religious weekly. He himself was a minister and well stocked with anecdotes about the adventures and the misadventures of ministers. What else was he to write about in these circumstances and with this experience? The most important distinction between Crockett and the other writers of the so-called "Kailyard School" led by Barrie and later Ian Maclaren was the nature and depth of his involvement. He was not writing of "life as seen through the windows of the Free Kirk Manse" as George Blake was to write accusingly in retrospect several times;¹ he was not writing through the eyes of an imaginary schoolmaster, a little above and apart from his characters, as did Barrie; he was writing from his own independent and free-ranging intelligence as a shrewd and critical observer moving in the midst of and at the same level as his characters, choosing as

¹George Blake: Barrie and the Kailyard School (London 1951) p. 42, p. 45.
his style and mouthpiece whatever personality seemed the best vehicle for the comment he wished to imply.

The person who appears most often in The Stickit Minister, sometimes as story-teller, sometimes as character, is Saunders M'Quhirr (or Mawhurr) of Drumquhat, a canny Scots-speaking farmer of humorous and honest mind, warm-hearted, sharp-tongued, no respecter of persons unless he felt them worthy of respect. Crockett, in fact, was identifying himself more often than not with the Galloway peasant, not with the minister of the Free Church. Some of the stories in The Stickit Minister may well have delighted the ordinary members of congregations more keenly than they did the ministers or elders. He is critical of ministers who are self-indulgent and lazy, like the minister of Pitbye, or who have "a bland, vague, upward-looking eye", or who like the Rev. Augustus Towers are "content with himself and secure of his chances". He enjoys tearing away the pretensions of rich landowners who look down on the Rev. Allan Fairley's mother because she is a peasant and has knitted socks for her ploughman husband. He tells sharp stories about the manses whose households are less than friendly towards young probationers nervously arriving to preach in their churches and is merciless about

1"Boanerges Simpson's Encumbrance", The Stickit Minister, p.160.
3"The Courtship of Allan Fairley, of Earlswood", The Stickit Minister, p. 127.
4"The Probationer", The Stickit Minister, pp 70-72, pp 74-77.
the rich ladies bountiful who distribute tracts from their
carriages in the Edinburgh slums.\(^1\) He attacks everything
that smacks of humbug and complacency, from the

big colony o' dreadful respectable gentry in oor
pairish -- retired tradespeople frae Glasgow and
Edinburgh, with a pickle siller and a back-load o' pride\(^2\)
to the clever young Junior Reporter

buckling up his sleeves to enjoy himself, and feeling
himself born to be a *Saturday Reviewer*\(^3\)
as he makes cheap easy fun of Janet Balchrystie's poems with¬
out pausing to think of the human being he may hurt in the
process. Crockett is not a kindly historian of quaint rural
characters in idyllic retreats where all is for the best in
the best of all possible worlds; his is a rougher experience
than that of the more sophisticated Barrie. He has met

cruelty and deceit and hypocrisy in many forms -- he has had,
after all, to work his way up to the Free Church Manse by
the use of his own brains from the most humble of beginnings --
and what he writes has a refreshing edge of scorn which is
honest and alive. This in itself must have caught the
fancy of the readers of douce religious periodicals like the

\(^1\)"The Progress of Cleg Kelly, Mission Worker", *The Stickit
Minister*, p. 183.

\(^2\)"The Courtship of Allan Fairley, of Earlswood", *The Stickit
Minister*, pp 129-130.

\(^3\)"The Heather Lintie", *The Stickit Minister*, p. 49.
Christian Leader and the British Weekly whose contents however worthy had a soporific moralising quality which must have grown tedious. Through Saunders M'Quhirr Crockett said for them what they must often have said among themselves, or have wanted to say.

Moreover, in these stories which at first glance seem so much a response to popular fashion, so delightfully "Scotch", so run-of-the-mill in 1893, there are passages of description which in sudden flashes of illumination light up unfamiliar areas of experience. He is able to take the reader through what is happening to his characters and make us see what they saw; he does not tell us what they were feeling, he gives us the actual experiences to live through in imagination so that our sympathies are enlarged. He does not lull us to comfortable quiescence in the contemplation of rural charm, he wakes us up to keener appreciation of rural and urban reality.

In "The Probationer" we hear the young minister describe how he had to take the afternoon train to Elvanby and arrive on a pouring wet night in a strange place in which he has to find the manse.

'So,' continued Tammas, 'I speered at the porter at the station the way to the manse. "It's at the fit o' the Back Street," says he, "but somebody telled me that he was no' leevin' in't noo; but gang ye ower there to the shop o' yin o' the elders, an' he'll be sure to ken."

'The master was oot, but a laddie telled me that the minister was leevin' aboot twa mile oot the Carlisle Road, but he didna think that he was at hame, for there had been naething sent up to the hoose for a month. This was real cheerfu' hearin' for me wi' my heavy bag.
and an umbrella, but there was naething for it but to gang on. So I trudged away doon the Carlisle Road, glaur to the oxters, an' changin' my bag frae the yae side to the ither as if I war swingin' it for a wager. I speered at every hoose, but the answer was aye, "It's aboot a mile farther doon!" They maun be poor road surveyors in that direction, for their miles are like sea miles for length.

'At the hinner en' I fand the hoose, by scartin' a match an' readin' the plate on the gate. I rang the bell, but a' was in darkness. I stood a gey while in the rain, an' I declare that my thocht were no ministerial.

'Presently a wunda' gaes up somewhere in the garret stories, an' a heid pops oot.

"Fa be you?" it says.

"'I'm the minister that's to preach for Mr. Fergusson the morn," says I, "an' I'll thank you to let me in oot o' the rain."

"I ken nocht aboot you!" it says, and doon gaed the wunda'.

'Noo I tell you that if that woman hadna letten me in at that time o' nicht I wad hae driven a stane through the gless, if they had had me afore the Presbytery for't. But in a wee the door opendd an' the lassie lets me in.'

Crockett with grim relish spares us nothing of the young probationer's humiliation -- the darkness, the wet, the heavy clumsy bag, the rather comic umbrella, the muddy miserable progress down the Carlisle Road with nobody knowing or caring anything about him and nothing to help him find his way but vague hearsay reports. The minister for whom he is to preach has made no arrangements for his reception, and the woman whom he finally rouses (after what we are left to imagine as an awkward task with a box of matches in the rain as well as the bag and the umbrella -- Crockett often gives

1"The Probationer", The Stickit Minister, pp. 74-75.
our imagination the facts and leaves them to create the picture without his having to fill it all in) cares even less. It is only because of the kindness of "the lassie", a stranger like himself, that he gets in at all. We are dragged through the whole dank dismal undignified experience and the miserable Sunday that follows, without either welcome or encouragement, and by the end of the incident a new dimension is added to our knowledge of man's inhumanity to man -- a comic one but vividly revealing.

Incidentally, it will be noted that the narrative is in Scots; the young minister "belongs to this part of the country, and his father before him", and tells his tale sitting on Mrs M'Quirr's baking table. Most of the ministers of whom Crockett approves are of this kind, straightforward, unpretentious and direct, of peasant stock; it is from the middle classes that thoughtlessness and hypocrisy proceed.

We may assume that the absent minister of Elvanby was well-to-do in addition to being lukewarm in his Christianity. The narrator tells the story well; he can see the funny side of the adventure and manages the details the better because of this, but we can guess that this, or something like this, had happened to Crockett or to one of his friends. He is always at his best when dealing with actual experience.

The wild wet night at Elvanby illustrates how he can assemble the glaur and the rain and the endless Carlisle Road as heartless nature buffeting the young man. He is equally

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1 "The Probationer", The Stickit Minister, p. 66.
good at quiet static scenes. In "Ensamples to the Flock", Leeb M'Lurg's little house after she has cleaned and white-washed it and rearranged its simple furnishings is described with brilliant economy, both inside and out.

The minister came by that day and stood perfectly aghast at the new splendours of the M'Lurg mansion. Hitherto when he had strangers staying with him, he took them another way, in order that his parish might not be disgraced. Not only were the walls of the house shining with whitewash, but the windows were cleaned, a piece of white muslin curtain was pinned across each, and a jug with a bunch of heather and wild flowers looked out smiling on the passers-by.

The minister bent his steps to the open door. He could see the two M'Lurg cows pasturing placidly with much contented head-tossing on the roadside, while a small boy sat above labouring at the first rounds of a stocking. From the house came the shrill voice of singing. Out of the fir-wood over the knoll came a still smaller boy bent double with a load of sticks.

"Elizabeth," said he, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Will ye be pleased to step ben?" said Leeb. The minister did so, and was astonished to find himself sitting down in a spotless kitchen, the walls positively painfully white, the wooden chairs scoured with sand till the very fibre of the wood was blanched, and on a floor, so clean that one might have dined off it, the mystic whorls and crosses of whiting which connect all good Galloway housekeepers with Runic times.

Nothing here is very remarkable — except perhaps the "aghast" used of the minister, but its unexpectedness emphasises his astonishment and the sense of shock he momentarily feels when his expectations are so suddenly upturned. We are creatures of habit and have all felt this even when changes are for the better. The details are all kept ordinary and unremarkable so that what has happened

1"Ensamples to the Flock", The Stickit Minister, pp 213-214.
shall not seem idealised. We know that Leeb has bartered with the village mason for the whitewash in return for three dozen eggs, so that is explained. The windows have been cleaned and a rough-and-ready expedient has been adopted for the moment; Leeb has no curtains but "a piece of white muslin curtain" is pinned over each window -- not elegant, not even adequate, but she is making the best of what she has. We can see and sympathise immediately with these lopsided uneven heartwarming pieces of muslin. Leeb moreover cannot produce a flower vase, but she knows that all respectable households have flowers in the window. Once more she makes use of what she has and a homely jug holds heather and wild flowers. "Smiling" in its smooth brightness sums up the total effect -- the plain cheap pottery jug with rough glaze, the simple flowers and the gleaming clear windowpane through which their colours show in cheerful pleasantness.

The cows continue the picture. They are "pasturing placidly" by the roadside, the words suggesting their slow satisfied approval of the new regime as well as their gentle pulling at the soft wayside grass. Young Benny watching over them is possibly not quite so contented; in order that the scene be not too idyllic he is shown to be "labouring" at the early rows of a knitted stocking and making heavy weather of it, a very Scottish detail this, since in country schools boys used to be taught to knit within living memory.

Leeb's welcome of the minister is a masterly expression of her new-found status as a housekeeper. Despite her
father's attempts to stop her she has managed to attend school and keep her eyes and ears open; she knows how old-fashioned house-wives greet their visitors. "Will ye be pleased to step ben?" she says with delighted unaccustomed happy formality. All her awareness and enjoyment of the new situation comes through in those few common-place words, all her years of frustration at the dirt and forlornness of her home swept away in a day's hard work. They are so simple, yet so eloquent. We can sense her womanly pride in the effect the change is having on the astonished minister without its having to be mentioned at all.

The interior details are mentioned with the same affectionate exactness -- the clean kitchen, the "painfully" whitewashed walls, (a reaction we have all felt in our homes when the painters have been and gone and we have not had time to feel at home in the new splendours), the chairs so well scrubbed that the wood is laid bare and naked, bleached white with the rough sand. Crockett here is absolutely unsentimental; the truth is that Leeb has overdone things. The kitchen is too clean, too ruthlessly scrubbed and scoured, to be comfortable; she has gone too far in the opposite direction to the squalor of the bad old days. However, he merely hints at this in the passing, leaving it to the reader to notice or not, and moves on to one of the touches in which he delights; the floor is not only clean but marked with the curves and patterns in the traditional manner of Galloway housewives decorating their stone floors, another detail which the observant Leeb has picked up from the kitchens of neighbours.
This, in Crockett's values, relates her to the distant past and makes her one of the continuous generations of housewives leading back into the mists of time -- the Runic past, mysterious and powerful. His grandmother must have done this at Little Duchrae. He thinks it is done with whiting, but it can be forgiven to a mere male observer that he was not aware that it is done with whitenin, or chalky stone. The effect is the same; Leeb by her own efforts, on her small scale heroic, has united herself and her three brothers to the decent self-respecting community of well-doing people and earned the minister's commendation. We may note in passing that Crockett has shifted his position with regard to respectability in this story, or more accurately has altered his definition of the respectable. This time to become respectable is for Leeb to assert her own honesty, integrity and courage -- genuinely to win the respect of her peers in the village near which she lives, a respect which is worth having because it is never granted to the mere outward appearance of conformity. In the second story of the M'Lurg's this is made even more clear. Timothy M'Lurg, Tyke's drunken brother, turns up like a badpenny, threatening to take over his brother's money, possessions and family and look after them all as a trustee and guardian. Leeb hears the news from the village grocer.

'I hear ye've gotten your Uncle Timothy back.'

Leeb whitened to the lips at that name of dread. She remembered the wild nights when Timothy brought his companions with him, and turned the little world of M'Lurg's Mill upside down.

'No,' she answered, determined not to show any
emotion to the watchful eyes of David Clark, 'I didna ken.'

She spoke as though the news were some ordinary and unimportant gossip.

'Where has he come frae?" she asked.

David Clark knew that he had come from a long sojourn in one of Her Majesty's prisons, owing to the death of a keeper in one of Tim's poaching affrays. But David was not a man to commit himself unnecessarily when a well-paying customer was concerned.

'They were sayin' that he was up about the public, an' that he cam' frae Cairn Edward in the bottom o' a coal cairt.'

Calmly Leeb settled her reckoning with the eggs and butter which she had brought, and received the balance in good Queen's silver. Calmly she took her sedate way down the street, no step discomposed or hurried. But in her heart there was a deadly tumult.

Her scheme of life, so carefully constructed and so sturdily worked for, came tumbling about her ears. She had no idea what her uncle's powers might be -- whether he could take the mill or claim the cows. She only knew that he would certainly do all the ill he was capable of, and she thought of her fortress lying open and unguarded at her enemy's mercy, with only old Sanny MacQuhatt hammering and grumbling to himself over the reconstruction of the rickety sawmill. As soon as she was clear of the village Leeb took to her heels, and glinted light foot through the poplar avenues along the skirts of the bright June meadows, where the hemlock was not yet overtopped by the meadow-sweet, as in a week or two it would be.¹

In this taut piece of writing Crockett shows how well he understands the values of a peasant community. The shopkeeper is a neutral, taking no sides because he has to earn his living from the people around him, but he passes on information briefly and cautiously as part of his trade. By Leeb's reaction, controlled and calm, she demonstrates the strength of her self-respect; she has earned her position

¹"The Siege of M'Lurg's Mill", The Stickit Minister, pp 218-220.
in the eyes of her neighbours and is not going to lose it by
showing emotion. She asks only one natural question with
carefully casual interest, and David Clark shows by the
 guardedness of his answer that both he and Leeb fully
understand the situation though neither wants or needs to
make it explicit. The mention of the public house and the
coal cart is enough to convey the entire truth. In
deliberate contrast with the slovenly indignity of Uncle
Timothy, Crockett in his telling of the story prolongs the
small transaction between Leeb and the grocer, mentioning the
eggs and butter to remind us of Leeb's independence and
industry in her clean and homely farmyard -- the small detail
of her receiving "the balance in good Queen's silver" shows
that she is more than holding her own in the rural economy
and suggests also that if Uncle Timothy descends upon her,
she will be in danger of losing this honestly earned money to
his greed for drink and easy popularity: "Timothy M'Lurg had
always spent other people's money like a man",¹ as we have
been already told.

Her control over her emotions continues as long as she
is within sight of the village and its curious although
sympathetic eyes, but her gradual panic is built up as she
goes along -- the hard work, the carefully managed pattern
now endangered, the fears of what this violent and unprincipled
drunkard may be able to do, the vivid picture in her mind of
the house and mill lying empty for his plunder, with only the

old joiner working at the sawmill to fend him off. As we take in each element in her thoughts, we share her fright, and it is a relief to us when she reaches the open country and is able to run as fast as she can back home, though by a skilful evocation of the carefree sunlit countryside of summer around her Crockett emphasises the burden that she has taken upon herself, the youthfulness of the girl as she runs and the irony of the contrast between the beauty of nature and the ugliness of some men's lives.

Fortunately, Leeb's resourcefulness and her friends are a match for Uncle Timothy, and the situation resolves itself into broad knockabout comedy involving a bull, the schoolmaster disguised as a policeman and the old millwright turning the full force of the mill-lade stream upon Uncle Timothy to sober him up. He makes off and is never heard of again. The climax of the story is simple country humour of the kind which made some of the primmer of Crockett's readers castigate him as coarse and vulgar, but it is well in keeping with the rustic mores of the people he is describing and knows well. It reminds us of episodes in his own life — the thrashing of the "ghost" who had tried to frighten his Gallaberry cousin, for example. Once again, he is writing from knowledge and experience.

The sharp observation and noting of detail in this effective way makes Crockett's Galloway stories more pictorial than Barrie's set in Thrums. He is both closer to the scenes of rural life he describes and more akin to the humble personages who people them. Barrie's description of
The farm kitchen was Bell's testimonial. Its chairs, tables, and stools were scoured by her to the whiteness of Rob Angus's sawmill boards, and the muslin blind on the window was starched like a child's pinafore.\(^1\)

But in comparison with Leeb's kitchen, this does not win the warmth of our interest; Crockett's eye has the greater depth of focus. Barrie records as an interested observer, at a distance, both in time and in place, but Crockett's memory works in flashes of vision which enable him instinctively to select those small piercing touches which sum up the scene but also indicate its significance in the story.

This freshness and directness of description must surely have been one of the qualities which attracted the readers of 1893. He caught their imaginations and thrust them into the middle of the events he was describing with energy and sureness. He made the reality of rural Galloway -- or urban Edinburgh -- as excitingly present as any foreign background or historical pageantry. Allied to this descriptive power he has, as we have already to some extent seen, a keen ear for speech and an instinctive mastery of word and phrase. He is able to suggest the tone and speed of speech as well as its content -- the energetic explosive narrative of the young minister telling of his misfortunes with grim gusto, and the single "Will ye be pleased to step ben?" of the happy Leeb which compresses so much into so little. In the story which gives the book its title, "The Stickit Minister", we are given three levels of style, the quiet restrained

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narrative of Crockett's prose and the speech-patterns of two clearly distinguished characters. The way in which the three work together to make the point of the story demonstrates how skilfully Crockett can employ his different voices.

The narratives about the M'Lurgs have been told to us in language whose basis is English, with occasional Scots words or phrases; the Scots — as for instance the "grooin' in his inside" which the late Tyke M'Lurg had always adduced as incapacitating him from prolonged work, references to the "loons" the first time they are mentioned and the "hidie holes" to which they retreat from the School Board officer—are singled out by inverted commas, or else used in such a way as to make it clear that the narrator is quoting the words of one of his characters:

"Tyke, being an independent man, was down on the compulsory clause of the Education Act, and had more than once got thirty days for assaulting the School Board officer."3

In the passages already quoted, there are only the slightest touches of Scots: "The minister came by that day . . ." and "strangers staying with him". In the account of Leeb's transaction with the shopkeeper there is not one word of Scots in the narrative, though the dialogue is Scots in both cadence and vocabulary, and not until Leeb is out of the

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2"Ensamples to the Flock", The Stickit Minister, p. 205.
3"Ensamples to the Flock", The Stickit Minister, p. 203.
village and able to run do we come to a Scots word, "glinted light foot through the poplars". The effect of this is to keep the story light, cool and neatly ironic in its commentary; it prepares us for the comic happy ending, and its tone throws into strong relief the Scots voices of the various characters; Leeb's "Will ye be pleased to step ben?" has already been discussed, in which the "step ben", homely and yet slightly more formal and old-fashioned than "come in" is so effective. In the two M'Lurg stories Crockett, although sympathetic, remains detached and a little amused, as is appropriate.

In "The Stickit Minister" the style of the unknown narrator, Crockett's chosen persona, is much more strongly Scottish right from the first sentence, and this influences us to feel a more serious, a more deeply felt narrative on the way.

The crows were wheeling behind the plough, in scattering clusters, and plumping singly upon the soft, thick grubs which the ploughshare was turning out upon an unkindly world. It was a bask blowy day in the end of March, and there was a hint of storm in the air -- a hint emphasised for those skilled in weather lore by the presence of half a dozen sea-gulls, white vagrants among the black coats, blown up by the south wind from the Solway -- a snell, Scotch, but not unfriendly day altogether.1

Here the use of the past continuous tense is distinctively Scots -- "were wheeling", "were plumping", "was turning out", and there is a real country ring about "there was a hint of storm in the air", an echo of Scots voices making that very remark, just as they say "There's a nip in the air today" or

1"The Stickit Minister", The Stickit Minister, p. 7.
"That's a cold wind" where an Englishman would remark "It's frosty today" or "The wind is cold". The vocabulary is not set apart by inverted commas; it is an integral part of the description and welded firmly into it, "a bask blowy day in the end of March", "a snell, Scotch, but not unfriendly day altogether". The concluding "altogether" has a colloquial gathering-up effect which is not at all English and in fact reminds us that Galloway is very near Ireland and Galloway Scots likely to borrow constructions from across the Irish Sea.

This piece of careful scene-setting therefore is more Scots than English, Scots in its constructions, its vocabulary, its concrete natural imagery so vivid to the eye — "the soft, thick grubs which the ploughshare was turning out", "white vagrants among the black coats" — though set down without any self-consciousness or any feeling that its idiosyncrasies should be marked apologetically by special punctuation. It is a good passage of what Professor Kurt Wittig calls "Scots-English" when dealing with Burns;¹ it has to be "pronounced with a Scottish accent". The scene, with its dark colours and slow elemental movements, is drawn clearly and memorably, distinctively in Scotland and suggesting by its content the harshness of the world, which we are to have confirmed in the story which follows.

The story is a simple one. Robert Fraser has been a divinity student of some promise and ability who discovered

while at college that he was suffering from a fatal lung
disease. He has voluntarily, on discovering this, given
up his career, returned to the little Galloway farm which
was his father's legacy to him and his brother, and settled
down as a hard-working farmer to earn the money which could
send his younger brother to college in his place, to qualify
as a doctor and fulfil his rather materialistic ambitions of
success. When he finishes his day's ploughing, he stables
his horses and goes "in to his supper" (another Scotticism
offered without inverted commas) and finds his friend and
neighbour, Saunders M'Quhirr of Drumquhat, "sitting by the
peat fire in the 'room'".1 Unfortunately, Crockett here
has lost the fine confidence with which he began and finds
it necessary to single the Scots word out by the inverted
commas, and a few lines later does the same for *ben the hoose*
by the use of italics.2 The Scots which he spoke so natur¬
ally and could, if he allowed himself, write so well without
self-consciousness, was in the late nineteenth century an
uncertain instrument as far as its setting-down went and
Scots writers like Crockett still let themselves be nudged
by their self-doubt into writing it as if it were an eroded
and imperfect form of English. But for all this, Crockett
hears and records it very clearly. The two men talk
together, and their words fit their personalities and their

1 "The Stickit Minister", *The Stickit Minister*, p. 9.
2 "The Stickit Minister", *The Stickit Minister*, p. 9.
experiences with perfect exactness. Fraser, the peasant who has been to college and encountered a wider world, tells Saunders why he gave up his career, a story which up to now he has kept to himself.

"I have not spoken of it to so many; but you've been a good friend to me, Saunders, and I think you should hear it. I have not tried to set myself right with folks in the general, but I would like you to see clearly before I go my ways to Him who seeth from the beginning."1

He speaks in Scots which retains its own constructions —

"I have not tried to set myself right with folks in the general" -- but which has been influenced by English forms and standards; he says "I have not", rather than "I hae na" or "I hinna"; "I think" rather than "I'm thinking". The concluding sentence with its Biblical reference hints at his theological training as well as his religious beliefs; it has a note of the Authorised Version grown familiar through long acquaintance.

Saunders' energetic reply is impulsive, warmhearted, less dignified perhaps but much more thoroughly Scots in its vocabulary, its constructions and its speech-habit.

"Hear till him," said Saunders; "man, yer hoast is no' near as sair as it was i' the back-end. Ye'll be here lang efter me; but lang or short, weel do ye ken, Robert Fraser, that ye need not to pit yersel' richt wi' me. Hae I no' kenned ye sins ye were the size o' two scrubbers?"2

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1 "The Stickit Minister", The Stickit Minister, pp 10-11.
2 "The Stickit Minister", The Stickit Minister, p. 11. Hoast is explained as [cough] within square brackets in some editions but not in the 8th, Illustrated Edition, 1894.
The expostulatory mock-indignation is a very Scottish characteristic, addressed to no one in particular but relieving the speaker's feelings; the English "Listen" has become "Hear", or more accurately has remained in its northern Old English form used with the dative. The affectionate "man" as a form of address is peculiarly Scots — it can be used as a sign of anger, but here it is a combination of affection and the mock-indignation already referred to; it very often introduces an exasperated piece of argument, as it does here. "Hoast" or "host" is a common Scots word for a cough, especially of a long-lasting and continuous variety; "sair" is the old Anglo-Saxon "sar" persisting in Scots and northern English without undergoing the southern English vowel-change to "sore"; moreover, instead of merely meaning "sore" as in English, it has an additional Scottish significance of "severe" or even "violent" which gives it greater strength and vividness. The sentence which follows is full of northern forms of common English words; "lang efter" instead of "long after", "weel do ye ken" instead of "as you know well", the older vowels persisting and the colloquial Scots "ye" giving a warmer feel than the English "you", and the inversion of "weel do ye ken" adding a Scottish force and energy to the statement. The direct address of the person by name has also a Scottish ring, conveying again the effect of mock-indignation in this case. "Pit yersel' richt wi' me" is not only Scots in its pronunciation but Scots and colloquial in its construction. The "scrubbers" are objects
common in southern Scots, what one could call miniature heather besoms made out of the wiry stems of heather and used to clean pots. Saunders through his speech emerges as a warm-hearted down-to-earth individual, given to speaking his own mind with vigour and using a form of Scots more thorough-going than that of the better educated Robert Fraser, with vocabulary drawn from common everyday objects. "The size o' twa scrubbers" is a Galloway version of the Irish "the size of two turf", a common simile in ordinary speech.

The speech of the two men therefore by its different levels of Scots carries clearly both their social status and their attitude of mind. Fraser continuing his story to Saunders is quieter, less exclamatory, more resigned; his language is closer to English but drops into Scots when he reaches points which affect his emotions. Conversely, Crockett gives him purely English expressions when he is remembering and almost reliving in memory his experiences in Edinburgh. He describes, for example, the day on which he received his sentence of death.

"I had been troubled with my breast for some time, and so called one day at the infirmary to get a word with Sir James. He was very busy when I went in, and never noticed me till the hoast took me. Then on a sudden he looked up from his papers, came quickly over to me, put his own white handkerchief to my mouth, and quietly said, "Come into my room, laddie!" Ay, he was a good man and a faithful, Sir James, if ever there was one. He told me that with care I might live five or six years, but it would need great care. Then a strange prickly coldness came over me, and I seemed to walk light-headed in an atmosphere suddenly rarefied. I think I know now how the mouse feels under the air-pump."

"What's that?" queried Saunders.
"A cruel ploy not worth speaking of," continued the Stickit Minister.\(^1\)

"Troubled with my breast" and "get a word with Sir James", although English in the form of the words have both a Scots turn of speech; "breast" would not be used for "chest" in English and would be pronounced "breist" although spelled "breast", and "get a word with" is Scots colloquial.

"Come into my room, laddie" spoken by Sir James is another example of Crockett's ability to suggest by a commonplace phrase the concentrated truth of a situation; it is the only sentence spoken by the physician directly, yet we can hear in it his concern, his professional need to investigate further the ominous cough he has just heard, and in the "laddie" his affectionate and pitying understanding for a fellowcountryman whom he suspects already to be doomed, in spite of his youth. In "he was a good man and a faithful" we can detect once more a faint echo of the Bible which so often lies underneath Fraser's speech and the speech of all pious nineteenth century Scots as an inheritance from older times; "faithful" conveys not merely loyalty but also truthfulness and trustworthiness, as in Psalm 5, Verse 9: "for there is no faithfulness in their mouth". "He never noticed me till the hoast took me", on the other hand, is colloquial Scots in both vocabulary and construction, indicating a quiet emotional climax for the narrator.

The physician's pronouncement is reported in clear simple English, given a Scots accent by the Scottish usages which

\(^1\) "The Stickit Minister", The Stickit Minister, pp 11-12.
have preceded it. But the next sentence is English entirely. Fraser is remembering and putting into words an experience far removed from anything a Galloway farmer like Saunders knows of and needs words belonging to the larger world he has known in the city.

"Then a strange prickly coldness came over me, and I seemed to walk light-headed in an atmosphere suddenly rarefied. I think I know now how the mouse feels under the air-pump."

Crockett's ability to render physical experience comes into effective prominence; with this sentence the speed of the words slows down and we sense Fraser's mind reliving and reflecting on this cold unforgettable moment, detached and analytical in his comparison with the mouse under the air-pump, trying to express it in words for his own understanding as much as Saunders'. Saunders' quick sharp question "What's that?" with a peasant's honest curiosity brings both him and us back to the present. Fraser is not a man given to self-pity, and brushes the air-pump aside with a deliberate vagueness that diminishes it at the same time as it prevents further giving way to emotion: "A cruel ploy not worth speaking of". We are back with Scots in "ploy", and accompanying it is his natural reticence — he has not meant to be so personal in his story, even with his friend Saunders, and quietly puts aside any explanation as being unnecessary and too painful to be talked about. He is not seeking pity but understanding, and understanding moreover not for himself but for Harry, his younger brother. It is Harry he is seeking to justify and explain; his own affairs have been settled in his own mind and are secondary. He continues
his story with quiet restraint, the words and phrases in Scots breaking through here and there to show how deeply he feels, underlined in this version ¹ to save time.

I came my ways home to the Dullarg, and night and day I considered what was to be done, with so much to do and so little time to do it. It was clear that both Harry and me could not gang through the college on the little my father had left. So late one night I saw my way clear to what I should do. Harry must go, I must stay. I must come home to the farm, and be my own "man"; then I could send Harry to the college to be a doctor, for he had no call to the ministry as once I thought I had. More than that, it was laid on me to tell Jessie Loudon that Robert Fraser was no better than a machine set to go five year.

The restraint of that last sentence is outstandingly impressive; to Fraser this honest facing of facts was all that could be done -- no shirking of the situation, no heroics, no hint that Jessie Loudon was any less realistic than he was himself. Both he and she are peasants, and in a peasant society a man with tuberculosis is of no use to a woman in the harsh realities of farming life. He does not, as in a fashionable romantic novel, suggest that they marry and have their short time of happiness together before he dies. They have faced the facts without sentimental trimmings, though not without pain and anguish, and have accepted this hard lot with decent resignation. The laconically direct terms he uses to sum up his fate are characteristically concrete in their metaphor; one can almost feel a note of self-contempt: "no better than a machine set to go five year" -- and that singular "year" is strongly Scots. The peasant knows what is what and is not afraid to say so without elegant periphrasis.

¹ "The Stickit Minister", The Stickit Minister, p. 12.
Unfortunately, this mention of time points to the flaw in the story. Seven years before Fraser had been given five or six years to live because of the cough which indicated he was tubercular. Crockett's own family experience must have shown him that tuberculosis was a quick destroyer; his mother had died of it in twelve months, according to her death certificate; his uncle Robert of Drumbreck in five months, his literary cousin Robert of Drumbreck in six months. Yet in order to contrast Fraser with his grasping younger brother Harry, Crockett depicts him as running the family farm on his own for all this time; he shows him ploughing in all weathers as if he were a healthy man, with only a white forehead and a heavy lock of black hair "as in Severn's picture of John Keats on his deathbed" to suggest that there is anything out of the ordinary about him. This literary touch if we examine it in the cold light of day rings not only false but falsetto. We can believe in Robert Fraser's blindness to the faults of the selfish younger brother and even accept that there is a "soft look in his eyes as he glanced up at his brother's portrait in cap and gown, which hung over the china dogs on the mantelpiece" because many such sacrifices have been made by good and sensible human beings for others who were unworthy of the love they received; what we cannot believe if we think about it is that a man doomed by this weakening disease could live through the years of hard labour he is said to have lived through. Yet in order that Robert's selflessness

1"The Stickit Minister", The Stickit Minister, p. 8.
should counterpoint the hard ambitious selfishness of Harry; he must do just this. Crockett strains our credibility; it would make a better story that way, and so however improbably or impossibly, so it was. His sense of the dramatic has overcome his sense of reality and we are faced with melodrama instead of tragedy. Yet the honest homely detail with which this improbable story is buttressed makes us almost believe -- certainly makes us want to believe. Robert Fraser is very real in his quiet weariness as he tells the bitterest part to Saunders.

"The story went over the country that I had failed in my examinations, and I never said that I had not. But there were some that knew better who might have contradicted the report if they had liked. I settled down to the farm, and I put Harry through the college, sending all but a bare living to him at Edinburgh. I worked the work of the farm, rain and shine, ever since, and have been for these six years the "stickit minister" that all the world kens the day. Whiles Harry did not think that he got enough. He was always writing for more and not so very pleased when he did not get it. He was aye different to me, ye ken, Saunders and he canna be judged by the same standard as you and me."

"I ken," said Saunders M'Quhirr, a spark of light lying in the quiet of his eye.¹

The increase in the number of underlinings necessary in this passage shows that we are near the heart of the stickit minister's trouble, the unworthiness of his younger brother. Saunders' understated "I ken" brings to our attention skilfully the ambiguity of "different" and "canna be judged by the same standard" of which Fraser is for the moment unconscious; Saunders appears to agree with what he says but in fact is thinking of the difference and the standards

¹"The Stickit Minister", The Stickit Minister, p. 13.
in a completely opposite sense. Harry is not better than Fraser, but infinitely less; Saunders agrees that he cannot be judged by the same standard, but this is so because he cannot rise high enough to be placed in the same class as his brother. The brief glimpse of anger lying latent in Saunders' eyes emphasises this. And the hurt that we are shown at the beginning of the paragraph -- the hurt felt by the brilliant Robert that he was judged to have been an academic failure when he was not -- shows Crockett's sympathetic understanding of the older brother. Compared to the rest of his sacrifice, this was so small a detail that it was not worth his denial, but his pride as a good student and a promising minister has felt the sting keenly.

The climax and final exchanges of the story are made explicit by the two levels of Scots interacting on one another. The farm has been mortgaged to buy Harry a practice, and payment is now almost due.

"I got my notice this morning that the bond is to be called up in November," said Robert. "So I'll be obliged to flit."

Saunders McQuhirr started to his feet in a moment. "Never," he said, with the spark of fire alive now in his eyes, "never as lang as there's a beast in Drumquhat, or a poun' in Cairn Edward Bank" -- bringing down his clenched fist upon the Milton on the table.

"No, Saunders, no," said the Stickit Minister, very gently; "I thank you kindly, but I'll be flitted before that!"^1

The different elements are handled with dexterity and sureness -- the flat legal terms in which Fraser, quietly and without

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drama, announces the crisis which faces him, which has been in his mind all day as he ploughed and which has brought about this confidential talk with his friend, foreign although it is to his reticent nature: the impulsive speech and action of Saunders made aware of it now for the first time and reacting violently; the Milton lying on the table which reminds us of Fraser’s learning and promise so cruelly wasted; the repetition of the contemptuous term the ”Stickit Minister,” emphasising Fraser’s humble patient bearing of a false accusation and apparent failure in the same moment as we recognise his stature as a man aware for a long time of his fate but unafraid of it; and above all the concentration of meaning in the simple Scots ”I thank you kindly, but I’ll be flitted before then!” The final phrase -- although one would have wished Crockett to omit the italics: it is sufficient in itself without extra emphasis -- contains layers of meaning. The verb is a common Scots one derived from Norse, not found in English; it means to move house -- brief, sharp, casual and concrete, yet invested in this context with a dry effectiveness of meiosis, a calm acceptance of what is to come, a hint of triumph that he is soon to be beyond the reach of brother, lawyers, and all the gossip of the countryside, and a humour especially Scottish in its sardonic equation of death with a mere change of abode -- which it literally is when we consider it -- all this concentrated into a simple sentence of common speech. Once again Crockett has used the common-place to extract the fullest significance from a situation. He has been so
skilful in the manipulation of honest detail and the two kinds of speech that it is easy not to notice that the story itself is based on dishonest manipulation of reality. The melodrama is embedded in homely truth and so convincingly hidden that it almost passes for tragedy. Our hearts are beguiled by the surface realism into warm sympathy; it is our intelligence thinking it over in tranquillity that warns us that we are being tricked.

It is interesting to compare "The Stickit Minister" with the story which follows it, "Accepted of the Beasts". Here a much less homely incident is handled, perhaps necessarily, in a more elevated style. It is more thoroughly based in English than "The Stickit Minister"; there are only occasional hints of Scots in the narrative, and the phrases which catch our ear as not full English are from the Bible or from the jargon of Presbyterian administration. The latter may be counted so characteristic of Scotland as to be part of the national culture, but it seems best to make the distinction for purposes of analysis.

It was a bright June day when the Reverend Hugh Hamilton was placed in the little kirk of the Cowdenknowes. He was twenty-two years of age, and he had flushed like a girl of sixteen when he preached as a candidate before the congregation. But he did not blush when he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. There was a look of the other world on his face as he knelt in sight of all the people to receive on his yellow hair the hands of the assembled brethren. 1

The plot — if plot it can be called — is borrowed from a tale that must have been common knowledge in Galloway in Crockett's youth; the tale of William Nicholson, the

1"Accepted of the Beasts", The Stickit Minister, p. 15.
Galloway packman and poet, who played music to a group of colts in a disused quarry. It is told by Malcolm Harper in the memoir of the poet which prefaces his edition of the poems\(^1\) and also by Alexander Trotter in *East Galloway Sketches*.\(^2\) In each case the tale stresses the idealism of the packman poet, and Crockett makes a similar incident the climax of Hugh Hamilton's brief doomed life; just before the young minister, deposed from his charge because of lies and rumours circulated against him by slanderers -- in particular one woman who repents too late -- is found lying dead, he is seen and heard singing Handel's "He was despised and rejected of men" to a group of cattle, "nowt" beasts, in a whin-bound quarry hole.\(^3\)

Crockett, trying to depict a character too rare and Christlike for this rough world, wisely never allows him to speak, but describes his sermons and his personality in a mannered style with a strong infusion of Biblical imagery.

He was aware that all men did not act aright on every occasion; but Hugh considered this to be not so much their own fault, as a proof of the constant agency of that power which worketh for evil, of which he was morbidly conscious in his own soul.

His first sermon was a wonder. As the theological postman said, "He was ayont the cluds afore we could

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\(^3\) "Accepted of the Beasts", *The Stickit Minister*, p. 24.
get oor books shut, oot o' sight gin we gat oorsel's settled in oor seats, an' we saw nae mair o' him till he said, "Amen". But Hugh Hamilton knew nothing of this. He had been in high communion with the unseen, and he doubted not that each one of his hearers had accompanied him all the way and seen the sights of the seventh heavens as he had seen them.

As he walked down the street on the following day he swung along to an unheard melody -- the music of the other world playing in his ear. But he did not know enough of this world to catch the eye of the wife of the richest merchant in the place when she had got all ready to bow to him.

"An' him had his tea in my verra hoose on Wednesday three weeks, nae farther gane, the proof upstart!" said she.

Here Crockett is playing off his high-falutin description of the sermon and the unseen music against his sharply-observed and accurately-heard Scots comments. The "theological postman" introduces a flash of humour in his very person, as well as his vivid evocation of a congregation shutting their books, settling themselves comfortably in their pews to listen to the minister, and being flatly bewildered by what they heard; and the merchant's wife is brought before our very eyes in the huffed precision of her remembering the exact date of the good tea wasted on the young man.

He does the same later in the story.

Hugh Hamilton was not a great success in the pulpit. "He's far ower the heids o' the fowk," was the complaint laid against him where the wiseacres most did congregate. "W' out doot he has graun' heid-knowledge, but it's no' to be lookit for that a laddie like him should hae the leevin' experience o' religion."

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1"Accepted of the Beasts", The Stickit Minister, pp 17-18.
But he had a mysterious fascination for children of all ages. They recognised that in somewise he was kin to them. The younger they were, the stronger seemed the attraction which drew them to the minister. He seemed to be a citizen of that country forth from which they had lately voyaged. There were a dozen of them ever about his knees, listening rapt while he told them the simple stories which pleased them best, or as he sang to them in a voice like a heavenly instrument or a lonely bird singing in the first of Spring.

"I like nae siccan wark," said some; "how is he to fright them when he comes to catechise them if he makes so free wi' them the noo, that's what I wad like to ken?" "Na, an' anither thing, he's aye sing, singin' at his hymns. Noo, there may be twa-three guld hymns, though I hae my doots -- but among a' that he sings, it stan's to reason that there maun be a hantle o' balderdash!" 1

Here even more strongly the stylised description of the minister, his stories and his hymns, with its echoes of Wordsworth and Coleridge, is opposed by the strident voices of the critics, mean, destructive and familiar as they are; we have all heard this kind of remark: "He's far ower the heids o' the fowk" -- clearly the fault of the minister not of the "fowk", and Crockett has so surrounded "laddie" with gloomy prognostication, "it's no to be lookit for that a laddie like him should hae the leevin' experience o' religion", that the word, in contrast to its use by Sir James, becomes an expression of contempt. Crockett has so accurately marshalled the peevish grumbles of the congregation that we are reminded, as we listen to the ungenerous carping chorus, of the "bodies" of George Douglas Brown's Barbie in The House with the Green Shutters; their voices have a nasal repetitiveness -- "aye sing, singin'" -- and a distrust

1"Accepted of the Beasts", The Stickit Minister, pp 19-20.
of anything out of the ordinary -- "there may be twa-three guid hymns, though I hae ma doots" -- that they sum up entrenched, ingrained prejudice, unable to approve of anything that they are not used to, unable to recognise the Christlike goodness of the young man because it does not square with their ideas of respectability. The "theological postman", the affronted middle-class merchant’s wife, are allowed to speak out and condemn themselves without a word of comment from the author. He catches well the unimaginative whines: "That’s what I would like to ken"; "Na, an’ anither thing . . ."; "it stan’s to reason that there maun be a hantle o’ balderdash"; "how is he to fright them when he comes to catechise them. . .?" -- this final complaint adding a satirical note; to attract the children by kindness is obviously wrong, since the way to teach them the Catechism, the central doctrines of faith, is by fear and fear alone.

Unfortunately, the voices of the complainants are the only lively part of "Accepted of the Beasts". Robert Fraser was real although his predicament was artificial and contrived, but the Rev. Hugh Hamilton has no life to oppose to his very vocal opponents; we just do not believe in him and read of his sad death singing Handel to the brute beasts with cold unmoved scepticism. The dead body of the Strange Woman who commits suicide over the Kirkclaugh Heuchs, having repented her wicked slanders, and leaves a note pinned to her hat and veil to say so, is a piece of cardboard fiction
out of cheap melodrama. It is true, of course, that to describe a virtuous character is much more difficult than to describe a wicked one but a more accurate diagnosis of the failure of this story is that there is nothing in a character like Hugh Hamilton to correspond to Crockett's temperament. The voices of the congregation come from his own experience -- possibly it is they which suggested the story to him in the first place -- but his own active, shrewd, realistic appraisal of human character is so far removed from the mystical Hugh that he cannot give him life. He knows he ought to admire him, he tries hard to depict him as admirable, but the attempt falls miserably flat. An unfortunate probationer caught in the rain on the Carlisle Road is one thing; an unfortunate saint with no knowledge of human nature is another; and Crockett has too much of the one and too little of the other in him to manage both. "'Accepted of the Beasts' is clever but not convincing", said Claudius Clear in his review;¹ one would question whether it was even clever -- recognising the wisdom of not allowing the saintly character to speak, we can nevertheless see that the wordless Hugh juxtaposed with the carping voices was doomed from the start.

In "The Lammas Preaching", on the other hand, Crockett tries a slightly similar theme with much more success. The minister in this story, the Reverend Douglas Maclellan, is inexperienced like Hugh Hamilton, but not in the ways of the

world. It is the Galloway landscape and the Galloway climate of which he is ignorant, and in his foolish defiance of the Skyeburn in flood he nearly meets his death. He too is accompanied by critical voices — his housekeeper, the precentor, Ebie Kirgan the parish ne'er-do-well — but while they deplore his foolhardiness they are on his side, even in the most scathing of their comments, and their voices are balanced by the minister's own voice, authoritative even when most mistaken. Crockett refers at the beginning to "the same high, level tone in which he did his preaching", and we hear this tone whenever he speaks.

"And I further intimate," said the minister, "that I will preach this evening at Cauldshaws, and my text will be from the ninth chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes and the tenth verse "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

"Save us," said Janet MacTaggart, "he's clean forgotten "if it be the Lord's wull." Maybe he'll be for gaun whether it's His wull or no' -- he's a sair masterfu' man, the minister; but he comes frae the Machars, an' kens little aboot the jealous God we hae amang the hills o' Gallowa'!"

This simple conflict between the minister from the Machars, the eastern and southern part of Wigtonshire which is mainly lowland, and the wilder reaches of upland Galloway where man is at the mercy of the elements, is the whole theme of the story, but it is driven home by the remarks of the spectators

1 "The Lammas Preaching", The Stickit Minister, p. 79.
2 "The Lammas Preaching", The Stickit Minister, p. 79.
who form a kind of Greek chorus with strong Scots accents highlighting the various stages in their minister's high-minded foolhardiness. It is stated right at the beginning in the opposition between the minister's intimation and his housekeeper's broad Scots comment thereon:

"Save us," said Janet MacTaggart, "he's clean forgotten "if it be the Lord's wull."

and cunningly Crockett plays variations on this throughout the story. We hear the minister in private conversation with Janet his housekeeper; he repeats his intimation to her in his pulpit English, she comments drily in brief crushing Scots sentences that she knows, and has placed his sermon under the clock for safety — a remark that tells a Scot volumes about the minister: he reads his sermons, a thing not to be approved of at all. Flicked on the raw by her implied criticism he replies in unguarded irritation by a retort in Scots, then remembering his position reproves her in more formal pulpit tones again.

"Janet," said the minister to his housekeeper, "I am to preach to-night at Cauldshaws on the text, "Whatsoever thy hand findest to do, do it with thy might."

"I ken," said Janet, "I saw it on yer desk. I pat it ablow the clock for fear the wun's o' heeven might blow it awa' like chaff, an' you couldn' do wantin' it."

"Janet MacTaggart," said the minister tartly, "bring in the denner, and do not meddle with what does not concern you."

This is a delightfully managed interchange; the two voices can be clearly heard as distinctive in both language and

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1"The Lammas Preaching", The Stickit Minister, p. 81.
implication; Janet's blunt comparison of the written sermon to chaff which the winds might blow away is an additional insult deliberately offered ("Janet could not abide read sermons" Crockett comments in the next paragraph, in case his non-Scots readers may have missed the point) and the minister's naming of her by name and ordering her to "bring in the denner" is totally Scots in construction and pronunciation.

The same device is used throughout; the minister's speech is contrasted with the thoughts of the precentor, the sensible warnings of the ne'er-do-weel, even the comments of the congregation.

He had thanked the Lord that morning in his opening prayer for "the bounteous rain wherewith he had seen fit to refresh his weary heritage."

His congregation had quietly acquiesced, "for what", said they, "could a man from the Machars be expected to ken about meadow hay?"

The narrative which accompanies these sharp pieces of conversation is Crockett's Scots-English again, this time conversational in tone, with Biblical echoes and Scots phrases built into it although it is set down in English form.

Now, Galloway is so much out of the world that the Almighty has not there lifted his hand from reward and punishment, from guiding and restraining, as He has done in big towns where everything goes by machinery. Man may say that there is no God when he only sees a handbreadth of smoky heaven between the chimney-pots; but out on the fields of oats and bear, and up on the screes of the hillsides, where the mother granite sticks her bleaching ribs through the heather, men have

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1"The Lammas Preaching", The Stickit Minister, p. 82.
reached great assurance on this and other matters.¹

"The Almighty had not there lifted his hand" bears a strong Biblical reminiscence, but the "fields of oats and bear" are Scottish, and the reference to "mother granite" will remind Gallovidians of the almost proverbial expressions "auld granny granite girnin' wi' her grey teeth". Yet in contrast to the Scots-English of "The Stickit Minister", the Scots-English of this passage is light and amused, pointing out with a measure of sardonic delight that the people of wild country regions see the divine will more clearly than mere towndwellers whose vision is limited by smoke and chimneys, and concluding with a flash of irony very characteristic of Crockett (and reminiscent of Carlyle) that here men "have reached great assurance on this and other matters".

But the narrative in "The Lammas Preaching" is merely a refrain to, an underlining of the conversational exchanges, with the minister reiterating stubbornly his intention of preaching at Cauldshaws and his companions uttering vain warnings.

The precentor stood up to his knees in water on what had once been the bank, and wrung his hands. But the minister pushed steadily ahead into the turbid and sluggish water.

"I canna come, oh, I canna come, for I'm a man that has a family."

"It's no' your work; stay where ye are," cried the minister, without looking over his shoulder; "but as for me, I'm intimated to preach this night at Cauldshaws, and my text ---"
Here he stepped into a deep hole, and his text was suddenly shut within him by the gurgle of moss water in his throat. His arms rose above the surface like the black spars of a windmill. But Ebie Kirgan sculled himself swiftly out, swimming with his shoeless feet, and pushed the minister before him to the further bank -- the water gushing out of the rents in his clothes as easily as out of the gills of a fish.

The minister once again, in the emotion of the moment, has slipped into Scots: "It's no' your work; stay where ye are", then back into English for the repetition of his intimation and his text, which the elements combine to smother in a comic picture of mud and flailing arms and the ne'er-do-weel to the rescue. The total irony of the tale lies in the text, for if even anyone did whatever his hand found to do, and did it with his might, it was the Reverend Douglas Maclellan, and his ignorant following of his own text nearly brought about his death. "The Lammas Preaching" is a commentary made by a forthright peasant mind upon the dangers of too great literalness coupled with lack of common-sense. It is appropriate that the final scene should be in the bedroom of the farm-house of Cauldshaws with the minister safely in bed but still repeating his text and the mistress of the house making her kindly but firm comment:

"My bonny lad," said the goodwife, tenderly, "you'll preach best on the broad o' yer back this mony a day, an' when ye rise your best text will be, "He sent from above, He took me, and drew me out of many waters"."2

1 "The Lammas Preaching", The Stickit Minister, pp. 84-85.
2 "The Lammas Preaching", The Stickit Minister, p. 90.
The comfortable Scots voice with its homely everyday imagery, "on the broad o' yer back", is a vivid contrast to the mud and the roaring burn in flood and the violence of the world outside; it conjures up both the warmth of the country welcome and a determination to look after this foolish young man, and in addition, with a flourish that must have delighted Crockett's heart as he conceived it, opposes another text, from Psalm 18, Verse 16, as being more humble and more suitable. At times, the peasant congregation can put their ministers firmly in their place. It is a neat and most professional ending.

This is the best story in The Stickit Minister; the simple idea is well worked out and executed; each personage and each passage of description and commentary is carefully fitted into a disciplined pattern, with nothing irrelevant and nothing that we would wish away. Once more, it is Crockett writing out of his own experience and dealing with natural scenes and ordinary people whom he knows by heart.

Freshness of description and accuracy in recording speech, therefore, are two of the qualities which must have impressed the reading public in 1893. Underlying both, however, and controlling the effects made by both, is Crockett's sense of humour -- his down-to-earth sense of the fitness of things, exemplified very clearly in "The Lammas Preaching". Laughter is part of the personality of the man and is never far away when he is writing well, whether it happen to be his sense of fun, his delight in the ridiculous,
his sardonic appreciation of the contradictions and hypocrisy of the respectable, or his anger at injustice which issues as merciless derision of the unjust. All of these can be found in the twenty-four stories which make up The Stickit Minister and give to their pages that relish for life which is the very heart of Crockett.

His sense of fun can be found in small touches which add life to the main themes. Leeb M'Lurg whitewashes the outside of the cottage as a sign of the new régime, but the total effect of her efforts is conveyed to us in a flash of comedy.

Next morning the farmer of the Crae received a shock. There was something large and white down on the loch-side, where ever since he came to the Crae he had seen nothing but the trees which hid M'Lurg's mill.

"I misdoot it's gaun to be terrible weather. I never saw that hoose o' Tyke M'Lurg's aff our hill afore!" he said.¹

We chuckle appreciatively at this, the one and only appearance of the farmer of the Crae in the story, but it brings home the totality of what Leeb has achieved.

The minister at a Sunday School picnic becomes confidential with the superintendent, as they sit by the sea-shore and let the other teachers look after their charges.

All was peaceful and happy, and the minister was the happiest of all, for his sermons were both done, and lying snug within his Bible in the study of the manse. He talked to the superintendent at intervals,

¹"Ensamples to the Flock", The Stickit Minister, pp. 212-213.
sucking meanwhile the ends of some sprays of honeysuckle. Then he crossed his legs, and told tales of how Rob Blair and he lived on ten shillings a week in their first session at college. The superintendent took mental notes for the benefit of his own boys, two of whom were going up to college this winter with quite other notions."

The details of this comfortable laziness are deftly sketched in. The concrete picture of the sermons tucked into the Bible is vividly convincing, recurring to the minister with a cheerful consciousness of work done for the moment. He talks "at intervals" to the superintendent, being too much at peace to talk all the time, his physical state being well summed up by the sucking of the honeysuckle. His thoughts turn to reminiscences of his student days, and he sits up and crosses his legs with interest in his own stories as he relates his anecdotes, unaware that they are spelling trouble for his two young parishioners; he is too innocent, too full of the pride of his own exploits and thrift, to realise that the superintendent is taking all this boasting very literally and will in due course apply it very practically to his unfortunate sons — "for the benefit of his own boys" is a splendidly double-edged phrase.

Crockett laughs not only at the foibles of others; he laughs at himself. In "The Three Maister Peter Slees" he does this with exuberance by letting the Established Church beadle hold forth about his minister, Mr. Slee:

"... he's a graun' naiteralist, the body," said the minister's man, "an' when the big Embra' societies

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1 "John Black, Critic in Ordinary", The Stickit Minister, p.246.
come doon here to glower an' wunner at the bit whurls an' holes in the rocks, he's the verra man to tak' them to the bit; an' when the Crechton Asylum fowk cam' doon to a picnic, as they ca'ed it, it was Maister Slee that gied them a lectur' on the bonny heuchs o' Couthy. An' faith, I couldna tell ye what yin o' the twa companies was the mair sensible.\(^1\)

Here the Rev. S.R. Crockett, organiser of improving lectures for his flock on geology and meteorology, is cheerfully making fun of himself and enjoying it as much as his readers.

Cleg Kelly's exploits provide many of these flashes of enjoyment. For the stories of the Edinburgh waif, whose nickname literally means "horsefly", the narrative style Crockett adopts is one of rather heavy English which keeps him at a distance from his young hero but enables him to include ironic comments on his dexterity in the most difficult of situations and when necessary drop into simpler usages for comic effect. He regards him with amusement and affection.

He was not a Christian, was Cleg Kelly. Neither was his father. He said he was a 'snow-shoveller,' and as his profession could be carried on during a very limited number of days in the year, he made his fellow-citizens chargeable for his keep during the rest of the year, and personally collected the needful. So his fellow-citizens thoughtfully provided for his accommodation a splendid edifice on the side of the Calton -- the same which American tourists wax enthusiastic about as they come into the Scots metropolis by the North British Railway, mistaking its battlemented towers for those of Edinburgh Castle.\(^2\)

There is a sufficient remnant of the old Calton Jail Governor's House left today for us to be able to share

\(^1\)"The Three Maister Peter Slees, Ministers in the Parish of Couthy", \textit{The Stickit Minister}, p. 122.

\(^2\)"A Knight Errant of the Streets", \textit{The Stickit Minister}, p. 171.
Crockett's jibe at the misguided visitors. The old-fashioned slang "the needful" is one of the drops in style which by deliberate circumlocution calls our attention to the fact that Cleg's father was a thief.

For Cleg himself Crockett has unlimited sympathy — he admires his energy, his cheerful cleverness, and shows his admiration by affectionate laughter at his crafty plays. The boy who had been able to beat the other boys at Castle Douglas and Laurieston when it came to a fight can identify easily with the cunning street urchin.

It was Sunday afternoon, and he had been across the narrow isthmus of houses which separates the Alps of the Salisbury Crags from the Lombard plain of the Meadows. He had been putting in his attendance at five Sunday Schools that day, for it was the leafy month of June when 'trips' abound, and Cleg Kelly was not quite so green as the summer foliage; besides all which, about five o'clock there are lots of nice clean children in that part of the town on their way home from 'congregational' Sabbath schools. These did not speak to Cleg, for he only went to the Mission schools which were specially adapted for such as he. Also, he wore no stockings. But Cleg Kelly was not bashful, so he readily spoke to them. He noted, especially, a spruce party of three leaving a chemist's shop on the shortest track between the park and the meadows, and he followed them down through the narrow defile of Gifford Park — thoughts of petty larceny crystallising in his heart. Ere they could escape through the needle's eye at the further end, Cleg Kelly had accosted them after his kind.

"Hey, you, gie's that gundy, or I'll knock your turnip heids thegither."

This is very far indeed from the saintly Mr Hamilton singing nice hymns to the country children. The "nice clean

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1 "A Knight Errant of the Streets", The Stickit Minister, pp 172-173.
children" are this time the victims, and Crockett is on the side of the attacker, but the justification for this attitude is carefully embedded in his paragraph. By writing of the Alps and the Lombard plain, he manipulates us into thinking how limited and unromantic Cleg's haunts are in comparison; the five Sunday Schools which he is careful to attend for the sake of the trips remind us that these will be his only outings, and the remark that he was "not so green as the summer foliage" gives us a piece of Cleg's own cheeky philosophy, imposed on him by circumstances. We are told that the "nice clean children" do not "speak" to Cleg -- in that we can hear their respectable parents talking -- and this is followed by a piece of quoted middle class snobbery:

"... he only went to the Mission schools which were specially adapted for such as he." The comfortable vagueness of this, disclaiming all kinship to the ragged waif by saying there were places provided for him and such as him, is followed, in case we have missed the point, by the damning fact which indicates the gulf fixed between Cleg and all good children: "Also, he wore no stockings". After these facts, conveyed in a style which seems almost lazy in its quiet slowness, we are ready to see likely victims in the "spruce party of three" at Gifford Park -- their very spruceness tells against them, for us as well as for Cleg, and it is perhaps not without deliberate intention that Crockett reminds us of the rich man and the camel when he refers to "the needle's eye" at the further end.

Underneath the quietness of the Cleg Kelly stories
there is anger — anger at the class-distinction which makes
the comfortable Christians set themselves apart from the
stockingless boy. This emerges most strongly in the comic
incident in which Cleg comes up against the lady with the
tracts. She is unwise enough to give one to Cleg.

The good lady was much surprised by that small boy's
action, and has a poorer opinion than ever of the 'lower orders'. She is now sure that there must be
some very careful grading in heaven before it can be
a comfortable place of permanent residence. Her
idea of doing good has always been to go through the
houses of the poor with the gracious hauteur of a
visitant from another and a better world, and to
scatter broadcast largess of tracts and good advice.
The most pleasant way of doing this, she finds, is
from a carriage, for some of the indigent have a way
of saying the most unpleasant things; but a pair of
spanking bays can sweep away from all expressions of
opinion. Besides, tracts delivered in this way
bring with them a sense of proper inferiority as coming
from one who would say, "There, take that, you poor
wicked people, and may it do you good!" Cleg Kelly
was "again' tracks." But after a single moment of
stupified surprise that this woman should insult him,
he rushed for the tract. The lady smiled at his
eagerness, and pointed out to her companion, a poor
lady whose duty it was to agree with her mistress,
the eager twinkling eyes and flushed face of Cleg as
he pursued the bays. Cleg at short distances could
beat any pair of horses in Edinburgh. He had not
raced with bobbies and fire-engines for nothing. He
was in fine training, and just as the carriage slack-
ened to turn past the immense conglomerate castle
which guards the St Leonard's Park entrance, Cleg shot
up to the side at which his benefactor sat. He
swiftly handed her a parcel, and so vanished from the
face of the earth. There is no safer hiding-place
than the coal-waggons full and empty that stand in
thousands just over the wall. The good lady opened
the little parcel with her usual complaisance. It
was her own tract, and it contained a small selection
of articles — the staple product, indeed, of the
Pleasance ash-buckets — imprimis, one egg-shell
filled with herring bones, item — a cabbage top in
fine gamey condition, the head of a rat some time
deceased, and the tail of some other animal so worn
by age as to make identification uncertain. On the
top lay the dirtiest of all scrawls. It said,
"With thanks for yer traks." The lady fell back on
...her cushions so heavily that the C springs creaked, and the poor companion groped frantically for the smelling-bottle. She knew that she would have a dreadful time of it that night; but her mistress has resolved that she will distribute no more tracts from her carriage. The lower orders may just be left to perish. Their blood be on their own heads; she has once and for all washed her hands of them.¹

This is good vigorous stuff — not subtle, perhaps, but the situation which it was assailing was so entrenched in Victorian respectability that the readers of the Christian Leader were as well to have it spelled out to them.

Stevenson, that master stylist, liked Cleg Kelly²; he too had come into sharp contact with Edinburgh middle class standards. The difference in social class comes out again and again; the lady wanted careful grading in heaven "before it can be a comfortable place of permanent residence". Possibly this is one of the "cheap newspaper phrases" which Claudius Clear criticised in his review, but one can see that Crockett is using it deliberately to echo the kind of heavy commercial description which would be used by or at any rate familiar to a well-to-do vulgarian like the lady of the tracts. He has caught her speech-pattern and reproduced it in order to place her in her unimaginative social group. She goes "with the gracious hauteur of a visitant from another and a better world", in her own eyes at least; but later when after opening the parcel she falls

¹"The Progress of Cleg Kelly, Mission Worker", The Stickit Minister, pp 182-183.
²Penicuik Cuttings S.R.C., p. 91, 1894. See also S.R. Crockett: The Stickit Minister's Wooing and other Galloway Stories (London 1900), "A Look Behind and a Look Forward", pp x-xi.
back on the springs and makes them creak, we realise with relish that she is fat and heavy and quite the reverse of gracious or graceful -- only a large lady could make strong C springs creak. In contrast to her easy charity and condescending lack of understanding, we see Cleg as very much alive, with twinkling eyes and swift movements, the very opposite of his "benefactor", and are given a few short sentences which reflect his values: "Cleg at short distances could beat any pair of horses in Edinburgh. He had not raced with bobbies and fire-engines for nothing". We can almost hear him saying these things. And the contents of his parcel are not chosen at random; they are "the staple product of the Pleasance ash-buckets", an ironical phrase from the geography book to introduce the reality of the dirt and filth, vermin and rotting decay, which surrounded the doors and closes of the evil slums in which Cleg had somehow to live. The incident is superficially comic -- knock-about farce like the expelling of Uncle Timothy from M'Lurg's Mill -- but it is written by a man who had worked among these places and knew the ugliness and neglect with which Cleg and those like him had to contend and used his stories to show them up for what they were. He had met the ladies in the carriages, and thought little of them, as Cleg did.

There is little conversation in these two Cleg Kelly stories, perhaps because Crockett felt that his carefully managed paragraphs incorporating scraps of speech as part of his commentary were a better vehicle for his point of view. In several other stories Crockett does not use
conversation to any great extent, in "Boanerges Simpson's Encumbrance", for instance, and "The Heather Lintie"; yet both have admirable qualities. Boanerges Simpson is a self-satisfied minister very much at ease in Zion who nevertheless preaches the most wonderful sermons; it is not until after his wife dies that the Provost who is an elder in his church realises with a sense of shock that it is his wife, his "encumbrance", who has written all the sermons for him, even the one preached on the Sunday after her own funeral. To introduce this story, Crockett uses a heavy style with phrases from reported speech and from newspapers inset ironically in his own narrative. The beginning is masterly.

Every one said that it was a pity of Boanerges Simpson, the minister of St. Tudno's. This was universally recognised in Maitland. Not only the congregation of St. Tudno's, but the people of other denominations knew that Mr. Simpson was saddled with a wife who was little but a drag upon him. They even said that he had been on the point of obtaining a call to a great city charge, when, his domestic circumstances being inquired into, it was universally recognised by the session of that company of humble followers of Christ that, however suitable the Rev. Boanerges Simpson might be to receive £1200 a year for preaching the Carpenter's gospel to it, Mrs. Boanerges Simpson was not at all the woman to dispense afternoon tea to the session's spouses between the hours of three and six.¹

Crockett puts us on our guard right away with his deliberate use of "Every one said...", the facile phrase which introduces so many pieces of unkind gossip which are seldom true, and follows this up with the mean colloquialism which

¹"Boanerges Simpson's Encumbrance", The Stickit Minister, p. 159.
uses the generous word "pity" in such a shallow trivial way that it suggests malicious scorn: "it was a pity of Boanerges Simpson". We can hear the uncharitable voices at their mean work. Not only the congregation of St. Tudno's are of this opinion, but their gossiping has infected all the other denominations; their tittle-tattle has spread among congregations who have no direct experience of the Simpsons until they all "know" in their ignorant way that "Mr. Simpson was saddled with a wife who was little but a drag upon him". The crude ugliness of this imagery, that of a horse pulling a cart with an iron shoe or some other device which acts as a brake upon it, is an index to the delicacy of their minds. "Universally recognised", that meaningless phrase beloved of cheap leader writers and politicians, is used twice, to emphasise the emptiness of the minds who accept unthinkingly whatever they are told, especially if it is to the discredit of their victim. Once more we are reminded of the "bodies" of Barbie. The long final sentence of the paragraph introduces a series of jarring contradictions which show up the commercial values of the small town of Maitland; Mrs Simpson has been such a handicap upon her husband that she has actually deprived him of material advancement, surely the greatest iniquity of all: "They even said that he had been on the point of obtaining a call to a great city charge" when his wife's unworthiness came to light. Then Crockett's sarcasm comes into play; the session of the "great city charge" are referred to as "that company of humble followers of Christ," and we are told that although Mr Simpson would have been a
sound financial speculation for them, worth a lavish salary of £1200 a year for expounding the goodness and beauty of poverty, "preaching the Carpenter's gospel", his wife was simply not good enough to preside over his tea-table and offer tea to the wives of the "humble followers of Christ". Their lack of true Christianity is exposed by their values, and their middle class respectability is expressed in their ponderous phrases: "his domestic circumstances being inquired into", "dispense afternoon tea", "on the point of obtaining a call to a great city charge" -- this last being surely the greatest unconscious revelation, since the "obtaining" of a call suggests a degree of intrigue and backstairs wangling which is grossly inappropriate to a man dedicated outwardly to the humble simplicity of Christ. Crockett by manipulating both the simple colloquialisms of the gossips and the heavier jargon of the Kirk Session is loading his paragraph with the very phrases which surround the incident, and giving us an insight into the forces at work which suggests that in his own way he is exploring the technique which Lewis Grassic Gibbon was to use in A Scots Quair much more freely many years later.

The only man who seems to oppose the Rev. Boanerges Simpson is the Provost, a straightforward direct man whose homely Scots speech is apt to "cut through the pretentiousunction of the cleric like a knife through soap",¹ and even he is impressed by the sermons, until he finds out the truth

¹"Boanerges Simpson's Encumbrance", The Stickit Minister, p.163.
after Mrs Simpson's death. He remembers then the short conversation he has had with her and realises its significance; "There is no monument over the grave of the first Mrs. Simpson, but the provost often walks out there of an evening and lays a white rose upon it". He and he alone knows her worth, but he keeps his promise and does not give away her husband's contemptible secret.

The story is told with power and impressive sureness, but as with "Accepted of the Beasts" Crockett cannot draw a convincing picture of a passive saint. Mrs Simpson is insufficiently motivated, insufficiently alive; in spite of Crockett's forceful manner, we cannot help asking why she allowed herself to be used in this shameful way. There is nothing in the Rev. Boanerges Simpson that makes her attitude reasonable or even momentarily convincing to us. Her husband, the provost and the voices of Maitland dominate the story; she remains a thin and somewhat exasperating shadow, a puppet twitched mechanically for the sake of a situation that is grossly improbable and could have been made probable only through her personality.

"The Heather Intie!", although with even less dialogue in its telling, begins in a direct and straightforward manner. Its heroine is Janet Balchrystie, a lonely girl living at the back of the Long Wood of Barbrax because her father worked for the Port Patrick Railway. After his death she grows into a lonely woman whose whole life is devoted to

1"Boanerges Simpson's Encumbrance", The Stickit Minister, p.170.
the writing of bad but sincere poetry about rural life. Part of the merit of this story comes from Crockett's careful setting of it; he draws on his knowledge of local railway workers and their habits and sets Janet realistically against this background; it will be remembered that two of his uncles were railway porters and he always was keenly interested in railway affairs; at Penicuik he entertained to dinner from time to time the Superintendent of the Line, Mr Deuchars, and the Stationmaster of Waverley Station, Edinburgh; the porters at that station knew him so well that whenever he travelled on their trains he was given V.I.P. treatment long before that phrase was invented. Her dealings with the local newspaper which condescends to print mangled versions of her poems are described with careful accuracy, and when she decides to have them printed in a book at her own expense, that transaction too is delineated with realism in horrid detail.

Finally the book was produced, a small, rather thickish octavo, on sufficiently wretched grey paper which had suffered from want of thorough washing in the original paper-mill. It was bound in a peculiarly deadly blue, of a rectified Reckitt tint, which gave you dazzles in the eyes at any distance under ten paces. Janet had selected this as the most appropriate of colours. She had also many years ago decided upon the title, so that Reckitt had printed upon it, back and side, "The Heather Lintie," while inside there was the plain acknowledgement of authorship, which Janet felt to be a solemn duty to the world, "Poems by Janet Balchrystie, Barbrax Cottage, by New Dalry."^1

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^1 Statement by the late Mr James Milroy, confirmed by others.

^2 "The Heather Lintie", The Stickit Minister, p. 46.
Crockett the collector of books knows exactly what the provincially-produced volumes of local poets are apt to be like; he makes no exception in Janet's case. He knows about paper and its quality -- he has seen the processes and the different grades in Cowan's papermills in Penicuik. The book is sent for review to "a great city of the north" where a clever young reporter seizes avidly upon it.

If there was anything weak and erring, anything particularly helpless and foolish which could make no stand for itself, The Night Hawk was on the pounce.

Crockett knows the style well, and the "clever" review he produces as from the pen of the journalist is so neat and exact a parody of the style of T.W.H. Crosland in The Unspeakable Scot, attacking the literary clique of W. Robertson Nicoll, that it seems likely Crockett had already encountered some of Crosland's work, although The Unspeakable Scot was not to appear until 1902.

The authoress will make a great success. If she will come to the capital, where genius is always appreciated, she will, without doubt, make her fortune. Nay, if Miss Bal---, but again we cannot proceed for want of an interpreter -- if Miss B., we say, will only accept a position at Cleary's Waxworks and give readings from her poetry, or exhibit herself in the act of pronouncing her own name, she will be a greater draw in this city than Punch and Judy, or even the latest American advertising evangelist who preaches standing on his head.  

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1"The Heather Lintie", The Stickit Minister, p. 47.
2"The Heather Lintie", The Stickit Minister, p. 48.
3"The Heather Lintie", The Stickit Minister, pp 49-50.
So far, so good; but unfortunately Crockett shirks the harsh ending which the situation demands. Janet has been ill for many months and is growing weaker; she receives the newspaper late in the evening and by the darkening light has time to read only the first sentence; she takes its mock approval for genuine praise, and leaves the remainder to be read in the morning. Before then, a merciful God has taken her home and she dies without ever realising the truth. "God" Crockett concludes portentously, "is more merciful than man." ¹

In four stories, therefore, death has been manipulated to move us in a way which invalidates the integrity of the story. In "The Stickit Minister" it has been conveniently postponed for the sake of a strong and dramatic conclusion; we have been deluded into believing in the seven unlikely years of gruelling work on the part of a dying man so that Crockett can make his point with greater force. In three stories, "Accepted of the Beasts", "'The Heather Lintie'" and "Boanerges Simpson's Encumbrance", death has been used as a convenient ending, to avoid the need for working out a satisfying conclusion. It would have been more interesting (if more unpleasant) if Hugh Hamilton had not expired while singing to the cows; more like real life (if more painful) if Janet had read the whole review; more revealing (if more difficult to work out) if Mrs Simpson had lived to explain why she was so devoted. In each case, the careful working out of the story -- the realism with which it is plentifully

¹"'The Heather Lintie'", The Stickit Minister, p. 52.
surrounded -- deserved better of its author. The Great Presence has been diminished to a mere literary device. We feel cheated. It may be objected that "A Midsummer Idyll" in which a girl allows her name to go up on the Registrar's board as being about to marry three men on the same day, or "The Three Maister Slees" in which a minister in the 1890s thriftily preaches his grandfather's sermon giving thanks for the victory of Waterloo are equally improbable, but what is unacceptable in tragedy is acceptable in comedy; we laugh at the exaggeration and do not feel that reality has been seriously outraged, as we do in the others. We are glad to enjoy the lightness and the humour, and turn with relief to the lesser stories in which Saunders M'Quhirr is the dominant voice, for these, although lesser, are honest, genuine and "true" in the craftsman's sense of measure and proportion.

Enough -- perhaps more than enough! -- has been said to show how various were the short stories which filled The Stickit Minister and took it to the top of the publisher's lists in 1893. The form suited Crockett well and he could manage the compression and concentration which it demanded. He could write with sincerity and simplicity when this was appropriate, and could also adopt a wide range of voices and personae; he was obviously a young man, but a young man of talent, eager not to repeat himself, interested in trying out different devices and different effects. His stories were all derived from his own experience which he could describe vividly and comment upon with ironic zest; he was
not afraid to be critical of his colleagues and of congregations and had a healthy scorn of what we would now call the "Establishment". His sympathies were with the underdog; his anger was directed against humbug, hypocrisy and complacency whether it lay in a Presbytery who deposed a minister for drunkenness and then "adjourned to the Gordon Arms to wash down their presbyterial dinner with plentiful jorums of toddy"¹ or in the comfortable rich who regarded the poor as subhuman. He was happiest in Galloway because he knew it best, and his ability to note and use the speech of his native province for comic or dramatic effect was very marked. His ability to catch the mood of a landscape or the significance of a movement of a hand or turn of a head was also striking. He could build up a scene with careful dramatic effect and had a visual imagination which he used to good purpose. Even when, like any young writer, he tried to extend his themes into areas which he did not understand, like that of saintliness and passive suffering, he was genuinely trying out his farthest capabilities in an honest desire to learn.

Both Nicoll and William Wallace hailed him with enthusiasm as an addition to the band of writers intent on depicting the Scottish scene, and to this day he is generally classified by literary historians -- if he is mentioned at all -- as one of the "Kailyard" group. But among his early reviewers, Sir George Douglas makes the most acute comment,

¹"The Tragedy of Duncan Duncanson", The Stickit Minister, p.95.
especially when one takes into account the directions in which he later was to develop. Sir George commends his humour which he declares to be spontaneous, wholesome and hearty, and the element in his writing with which Crockett has to take least trouble because it comes naturally. He commends also his dialogue; Crockett, he says, has "an ear for the fall of sentence and an instinct for word and phrase" which serves him well -- he praises Saunders in particular. But he strikes a note of warning in what he has to say about these twenty-four stories.

All are vigorously written; indeed, where fault is to be found it is rather on the ground that restraint rather than force is wanting. For instance, that blow from a poker which falls on a boy's head in "Duncan Duncanson"; that incident with the powder-flask in "The Split in the Marrow Kirk" -- do they not savour somewhat too strongly of Mr. Kipling's manner to be perfectly in place among quiet tales of a country parish?"¹

This written in August 1893 is extremely perceptive. Even when one does not agree with Sir George's particular instances; even if one answers his criticism with the suggestion that Galloway country parishes were not as quiet as he imagines them to be, and certainly not as quiet as Ian Maclaren's Drumtochty; even after pointing out that Crockett was not trying to write "quiet tales of a country parish" but rather to convey the variety of human life as he had seen it in mean and brutal episodes as well as in gentler ones, one must still admit that in The Stickit

¹Sir George Douglas: "The Stickit Minister and Some Common Men" (Review), The Bookman, IV (August 1893), p. 146.
Minister there are elements of melodrama which reveal a defect in Crockett's literary taste. The extreme saintliness which fails to ring true, the unconvincingness of Boanerges Simpson's wife and her fatuous devotion to a pompous hypocrite, the operatic summons of Janet Balchrytie, the falsification of the facts of an illness in order to sharpen the drama of the Stickit Minister's selfless devotion -- all these, even when presented with the utmost honesty of dialogue and the most careful depiction of background, landscape and incident, are ominous portents. Crockett could manage his styles but not his imagination; as time went on, these faults, small in the early work of a young man, were to grow greater and more serious. He had a tendency to the sensational, to the melodramatic and over-done, which in his later years, writing more and more hectically to meet the demands of publishers, he was unable to control. Some of his later work is to be as wild almost as Dracula, some as improbable as Trilby and Peter Ibbetson, some as melodramatic as The Witch of Prague, some as sentimental and gushing as any novelette. He was not amenable even to his own discipline; he wrote easily and hastily; he relaxed his standards. Some of this was probably because of the demand for his writing, because of his heady popularity and the irresponsible taste of a public which irresponsibly sought the exciting and the strange, but the danger lay in his own enthusiastic uncritical temperament.

In The Stickit Minister, then, we see a good beginning to a literary career, a talent worth taking seriously --
freshness, honesty, humour, humanity, a sharp response to
natural beauty, vivid awareness of storm and calm, loving
understanding of simple people, and a good ear for the
nuances of speech, especially in Scots. There is a dis-
cernable point of view, a position taken up with regard to
social inequality and the casual indifference of the
comfortable Christians. But there are also cracks in the
structure which suggest a flaw in the imagination -- a flaw
which will grow wider if it is not carefully attended to.
It is interesting that at least one critic was aware of this
and noticed the touches of the violent, the over-done which
marred some of the early stories.

Claudius Clear advised the young writer to turn to
Elizabethan springs and make his writing more exalted and
full of elemental brooding. He hailed "The Heather Lintie"
as "a veritable triumph". William Wallace declared that
"he may be expected to do something far more ambitious than
The Stickit Minister". Both are counsels tempting Crockett
to excess. It might have been better if he had curbed his
tendency towards melodrama and easy sentiment and taken the
advice of Sir George Douglas: "in his next book let Mr.
Crockett tell his plain tale with no thought in his head but
to get it told". A plain tale he could handle well and
with stylistic economy, making his points with restraint and
force. Sir George dismissed "The Heather Lintie" as "the
false sublime", and this should have been a warning that

1 Sir George Douglas: "The Stickit Minister and Some Common
Men" (Review) The Bookman II (August 1893) p. 146.
Crockett heeded. His sense of humour was his saving quality; in these high-flying tales that are violently different from life as he knew it, he ceased to use it at all. "God is more merciful than man" is a convenient concluding bromide, almost falsetto in its dishonest posturing — how could Crockett or Claudius Clear be sure?

If Crockett had seen this, had resisted the praise of Nicoll and aimed higher than the British Weekly, had written more slowly and with greater thoughtfulness, he could have disciplined the exuberance of his nature into the fine astringent style in which he wrote at his best. In the strength and humour of The Stickit Minister he showed brilliant promise; we read it with admiration and respect, and cannot help regretting that, for all the energy and liveliness that was to follow in his later work, that promise was never completely fulfilled.
CHAPTER 6
1894: Minor Experiments and some Theory

After the extraordinary success of The Stickit Minister in 1893, it was natural that Crockett should look for new areas to conquer. He had already been meditating a novel; in the Idler interview of July 1895 he says that the first half of The Lilac Sunbonnet was being written at the same time as the early sketches for the Christian Leader at a guinea a-piece.\(^1\) The Raiders, on the other hand, was not thought of until the latter part of 1893; letters to the Macmillans tell us that in August of that year he had been with them at Glenhead of Trool collecting material about and impressions of the remoter parts of Galloway for a book about the old smuggling days.\(^2\) The Lilac Sunbonnet, his first novel (although it did not appear in book form until October 1894, after having been serialised in the Christian Leader) was contemporaneous with the early domestic sketches of Galloway and in a way was The Stickit Minister writ large; The Raiders whose publication preceded The Lilac Sunbonnet by more than six months, in March 1894, was a venture into an entirely new field, that of outdoor adventure in Galloway's savage past. Both of these full-length works will be discussed in separate chapters, as they deserve and demand;

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\(^1\) "S.R.C. at Home", p. 814.

\(^2\) Crockett Letters (Hornel) August 17th 1893; August 30th 1893; 22nd September/30th October 1893.
at present we are concerned with various other ideas with which he was experimenting in 1894.

One area traversed in *The Stickit Minister* was still active in his mind at this time, the theme of Cleg Kelly, the cheerful reprobate of the Sooth Back. On January 11th 1894, the *British Weekly* announced that

Mr. S. R. Crockett has undertaken to contribute to the Sunday School the further history of Cleg Kelly. This will be interesting news to readers of "The Stickit Minister" and, among these, to Mr. R. L. Stevenson, who says "Cleg Kelly is a delightful fellow. I enjoyed his acquaintance particularly."

The Dumfries and Galloway Standard of February 14th 1894 confirms this news and gives more specific detail:

"Cleg Unregenerate" is the title which Mr. S. R. Crockett, author of "The Stickit Minister", gives to the first of his new sketches of "The Surprising Adventures of Cleg Kelly, Christian." It appears in *The Sunday School* for this week.

"Cleg Unregenerate" in all likelihood is the first appearance of one or more of the early chapters of *Cleg Kelly, Arab of the City*, which ran as a serial in the *Cornhill* magazine in 1895 and appeared in book form in 1896. The title is appropriate and Cleg indeed unregenerate; he opens the book with the startling declaration "It's all a dumb lie! -- God's

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2*Dumfries Standard*, February 14th 1894, p. 6.

3S. R. Crockett: *Cleg Kelly, Arab of the City* (London 1896). This book is hereafter referred to as *Cleg Kelly*.
dead!" and is summarily expelled from Hunker Court Mission School by the indignant superintendent, so that to cheer himself up he sets fire to the whins on the side of Arthur's Seat. But *Cleg Kelly* will be dealt with in its proper place; it is sufficient at the moment to record that Crockett was still occupied with his young hero's courageous running battle with the forces of hypocrisy and indifference.

Two other books also appeared in 1894 from Crockett's pen, *Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills*¹ in August and *The Playactress*² in December, both in T. Fisher Unwin's small-paged pocket-sized Autonym Library, a series which featured items by other popular authors like F. Marion Crawford, Mrs Oliphant, Louis Becke and George Gissing. Before examining the two full-length novels, it is worth while looking at these slighter works as indications of how Crockett's imagination was working. Neither is a very distinguished composition and it is debateable whether they would have made their way into print if their author had not been in the news already; the degree to which his publishers regarded him as the man of the moment may be deduced from the fact that another first novel submitted to T. Fisher Unwin and published by them in 1895, *Don Quixote*, was furnished with a longer title, *Don Quixote of the Moors*, to bring it into line with Crockett — much to the annoyance of its author.

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²S. R. Crockett: *The Playactress* (London 1894). This book is hereafter referred to as *The Playactress*. 
John Buchan, who embarked on his vigorous trouncing of the Kailyarders and of Crockett in a signed article for the Glasgow Herald in the same year, when he was an ambitious young undergraduate at Oxford.  

Mad Sir Uchtred and The Playactress are longer than short stories but not as long as novels, although they are divided into chapters as if they were novels -- "novelle" might be the most apt description. Crockett had a lingering affection for this form and returned to it frequently in tales like Saint Lucy of the Eyes, The Seven Wise Men, The Little Fair Man, Vernon the Traitor, and The Fitting of the Peats. Their variable length, the scope they gave for the picturesque sketch and the sharp vignette, and the relatively undemanding treatment which was all they had time

for suited his temperament well, and Stevenson had already used this type and length of story in tales like *The Beach of Falesa, The Merry Men, The Misadventures of John Nicholson* and *The Pavilion on the Links*, so that he had good and recent precedent. It is only just to point out that in this briefer form, whatever one may think of the contents, he was able to discipline himself and keep to the story he was telling. But the two novelle in question are of interest less for their content than for the two areas which Crockett can be seen to be exploring when he wrote them.

*Madd Sir Uchtred* is the story of Sir Uchtred Dowall of Garthland, an apostate Covenanter who has joined the royalist forces in oppressing the true believers in Galloway during the Killing Time in the 1680s. Uchtred is a name borrowed from far back in Galloway history — Uchtred Lord of Galloway founded the collegiate Abbey of Lincluden near Dumfries in the twelfth century. Sir Uchtred rides with his troopers to evict the Rev. Alexander Renfield from his church of Kirkchrist and his manse because he adheres to the Covenant, Renfield being an imaginary figure representing any or all of the Covenanting leaders Alexander Peden, James Renwick or Samuel Rutherford, "the little fair man". Renfield is taken prisoner and his church emptied, but as he watches his belongings being taken from the manse and piled up ready for burning, the sorrowful cry of his wife makes him call down the vengeance of God on Sir Uchtred, likening him to Nebuchadnezzar who in his pride built Babylon, yet was brought
low like a beast of the field. Sir Uchtred is immediately stricken with madness, gnashing his teeth and unable to speak; he breaks free from his troopers who try to bind him and escapes to the hills, the Clints of Clashdaan near the Dungeon of Buchan, where for three years he lives a naked wanderer, his nails growing like claws, his hair matted and his body caked with mud, haunted by visions and delusory dreams, feared and hunted by his tenants, while his popinjay brother Randolph takes charge of his estates and tries to win the love of his wife. He remains the beast-man of Clashdaan, sharing his fox-earth with a wild-cat who is thought to be his demon familiar, until the love of his wife and the sound of the bells of Kirkchrist lead him back to sanity, and beside the little church Alexander Renfield's prayers lift the curse.

The sensationalism latent in the author of The Stickit Minister has come strongly to the surface in this extraordinary tale. The desolation of the moors and rocks is drawn with savage relish and Uchtred's cries and antics are frenzied in the extreme. The illicit pursuit of Lady Philippa by Randolph is less convincing: "mere Restoration-and-water" growled William Wallace.¹ Yet the choice of this story showed that Crockett had realised how valuable a theme the Covenanting times could be. His work in building up the

¹William Wallace: "Mr. Crockett's Novels: The Raiders; Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills; The Lilac Sunbonnet", The Academy, xLVI (November 3rd 1894), p. 345.
outdoor adventure of The Raiders, set in Galloway's wild past, had led him through Silver Sand and the older characters, to the days of the Covenanters, part of Galloway's history that he could not leave out. He may have overdone the melodrama in Mad Sir Uchtred, but he is dealing four-square with the Covenanters for the first time; The Raiders had opened up the possibility of genuine historical fiction.

An interesting sidelight on his methods is cast by a letter to John and Marion Macmillan on April 27th 1894:

I have just finished a short book called "Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills." I have used the Clints of Clashdan -- which I have called Clashdaan, and the Dungeon as a background. The names are so grand.

The names are indeed grand, but if he can make them grander by prolonging a vowel or changing it, he will not hesitate; in the same letter he talks of Loch Enoch and the Wolf's Slock --

I knew Slack was right but Slock was the better word for writing.

We may be warned by this that Crockett will be no sober historian but will assume the right to sharpen and intensify the drama when he deems it necessary. Because of this he tended to be often under critical fire, sometimes unjustly. William Wallace dismissed Mad Sir Uchtred as "an historical impertinence in the guise of historical fiction" because, he asserted, no Covenanter ever claimed the power of working

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1 Crockett Letters (Hornel) April 27th 1894.
miracles. Here Crockett was right and Wallace wrong; Andrew Lang took up the point in a letter saying that miracles were "as common as blackberries" in Covenanting literature, and listing a few examples, and Wallace and Lang argued in the columns of the Academy until Lang had the last word.  

Sir Uchtred mopping and mowing like an ape on the Clints of Clashdaan, eating his prey "quick and quivering" and laughing "a rough laugh like the clacking of dead men's bones" is perhaps rather much for us to accept, but the quiet description of the congregation faced with the threat of the armed men is a very different matter. Here Crockett is controlled, restrained and impressive. He writes in a period style to suit his material, as Stanley Weyman and Andrew Lang and Maurice Hewlett and other historical novelists did at the time, and it has a mannered charm that in quiet passages is in its own way effective. Once again he is trying a new vein.

For they rode that day to turn out of his kirk and manse Alexander Renfield, the minister of Kirkchrist, whom the people loved. An hour afterwards, clattering in iron and bravery, Uchtred of Garthland turned his bridle and rode up the kirk loaning. As he came under the wall of the manse the lilac blossom hung overhead; and Uchtred, having sword in hand, in wantonness cut a branch of the scented blossom and caught it as it fell.

There was a great silence in the kirk as the men rode forward. A bronze-faced congregation sat

1 Correspondence: The Academy, XLVI (November 10th 1894) p. 376; (November 17th 1894) p. 402; (November 24th 1894) p. 424.

2Mad Sir Uchtred, p. 121.

3Mad Sir Uchtred, p. 155.
listening to one who preached to them from an old black pulpit over which hung a sounding-board. Every man heard the trampling of the horses, yet none so much as turned his head about. The minister who preached was a little fair man, slender and delicate. It seemed as though a breath of wind might blow him away. Yet he swayed the folk's hearts as the breath of God that blows upon the trees of the forest.

With that Sir Uchtred of Garthland set the hilt of his sword to the door and drove it open, both leaves of it clashing back against the wall. Then bowing his head, but not for meekness, upon his horse's neck, he rode in, armed as he was — into the quiet and solemn house of prayer. The spray of cut lilac bloom from the manse wall was in his hand, and the babe in the arms of the minister's wife crowed to pluck at it as the war-horse clattered up the aisle. Then in the narrow seats the men stood up, grim and silent, while the women sat and trembled, some crying out to God to help them in their trouble.

So they shut to the door of the kirk, and the minister stood quiet and silent between two troopers while they turned the slender gear that was in the manse out upon the green. And the minister's wife stood by the little grey sundial and saw all the plenishing that she had brought from her home made into a heap — the goodly cloths she had spun with hope in her heart, and the little lovable things that were of no value to any, but dear to her as her life. She stood with her bairns in her hand, like a hen that gathers her chickens, as near to her husband as they would let her. But when they set the children's cradle on high a-top of all, and Uchtred of Garthland cried to a soldier to set his match to the rubbish-heap, suddenly she wailed aloud. It was only for the cradle that her foot would rock no more. She had seen so many flaxen heads in it, and some of them were now within the veil. So when the cradle was set on the heap to be burned, she cried aloud as she had not done when God took her bairns themselves out of her arms.

He has caught accurately the rhythm of Patrick Walker in his lives of the Covenanters, as we can see by comparing these paragraphs with Walker in a passage chosen at random.

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1 Mad Sir Uchtred, pp 44-46.
2 Mad Sir Uchtred, pp 46-47.
3 Mad Sir Uchtred, pp 50-52.
When the day of his death drew near, and not able to travel, he came to his brother's house in the parish of Sorn, where he was born; he caused dig a cave, with a saughen-bush covering the mouth of it, near to his brother's house; the enemies got notice and searched the house narrowly many times. In the time that he was in this cave, he said to some friends that 'God shall make Scotland a desolation. 2dly, There shall be a remnant in the land, whom God should spare and hide. 3dly, They should lie in holes and caves of the earth, and be supplied with meat and drink; and when they come out of their holes they should not have freedom to walk for stumbling on dead corpses. 4thly, A stone cut out of the mountain should come down, and God would be avenged on the great ones of the earth and the inhabitants of the land, for their wickedness, and then the Church should come forth with a bonny bairn—time at her back, of young ones.'

The spelling in Crockett is modern but the cadences are old; he may have added more colour, more telling detail — the little grey sundial, the flaxen heads, the old black pulpit with its sounding-board — but he has reproduced the homeliness and matter-of-factness. He has indeed expanded and given more time to each event, but he was trying to recreate a scene, not merely record; he was an artist, not a reporter; and he has put himself into the parts of his characters and felt intimately with them in a way which Walker was not attempting to do. He brings the minister's wife vividly to life — the child laughing in her arms at the lilac, the warmth of the Scots word "plenishing", the "little lovable things that were of no value to any, but dear to her as her life", the sharp word of Sir Uchtred to whom these things were only a "rubbish-heap". In these passages he shows that his Covenanting heritage is real and alive in his mind and

that he is able to visualise it clearly as part of genuine human lives. He can write with simple warm understanding of these old heroisms; we are reminded that Men of the Moss Hags (its tentative name The Killing Time) had already formed in his mind by April 1894\(^1\) and that possibly Mad Sir Uchtred was a preliminary exercise, which would explain its tendency to excess. He wrote to the Macmillans in the "Clashdaan" letter of 27th April.

I have to come down again to get stuff for a great book (in size) about the Galloway Covenanters. So John must be picking up all the tales he can for me about them. . . . This Covenanting story is bought by Good Words to be their leading story next year, running through the whole year. . . . I think of making Glenhead a leading place in the story — a headquarters of the hill folk. So it will be famous one day, no doubt.

Gleefully he has seized on this immense store of material, most of it already in his mind through family traditions and the books he has been brought up with, the rest to be garnered from tales still alive in the Galloway uplands, and to encourage him, Mad Sir Uchtred, though it did not please William Wallace, was declared to be "Exceedingly readable" by the Daily News, while Vanity Fair thought "Emphatically this is a book to read".\(^2\)

The Playactress proceeds in a different direction, using a different range of his experience, though it too has a minister as hero. It marks a sad declension from the tautness and realism of the stories in The Stickit Minister;

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\(^1\) "News Notes", The Bookman, VI (May 1894) p. 38.

\(^2\) T. Fisher Unwin: Advertisement in The Academy, XLVI (September 29th 1894) p. 221.
they may have manipulated events to intensify dramatic effects, but *The Playactress* is compounded of glutinous sentimentality heavily applied and uncritically wielded. The emotions are superficial and self-indulgent, the characters unlikely, the coincidences so unaccounted for as to be ridiculous. The most charitable comment is that T. Fisher Unwin probably wanted a new Autonym book for the Christmas market, and Crockett may have cobbled it together hurriedly while his mind was on other things.

The story begins on a Sabbath day in Cairn Edward, Crockett's name for Castle Douglas, where the Great Preacher (the capitals are Crockett's) has come from his home in Edinburgh to take the service. The church is packed.

The Old Hundred had gone up with a grand rush, swinging from the hearts of these plain Scottish folk like the tramp of armies.¹

The "Old Hundred" is surely careless proof-reading; an English compositor may have set it up thus but any Scot knows that the tune is called the Old Hundredth -- and it ought not to have gone up with a grand rush like the tramp of armies, in any case, being slow and dignified, its words those of the metrical Psalm 100, "All people that on earth do dwell". William Greig, the elder, always thinks of his dead wife when it is sung, "and of sitting by her side when the white cloths were laid in the Hill Kirk for the earthly communion of the saints",² though the connection is not

¹*The Playactress*, p. 9.
²*The Playactress*, p. 10.
The Rev. Gilbert Rutherford, the Great Preacher, prays for forgiveness for all sinful people, old and young, with a moving vibration "as though the minister's heart were singing like an Aeolian harp as the breath of the spirit of God blew through its strings". This simile, not really appropriate for this type of prayer, becomes unreal and falsetto if placed beside the simplicity of "Yet he swayed the folks' hearts as the breath of God that blows upon the trees of the forest" in Crockett's description of Alexander Renfield. And to make matters more complicated, deep within him even as he prayed, the Great Preacher was crying out, "Oh, my boy Willie, lad of my love and of the dead mother's care, where art thou? May the Lord in His providence send thee home after these many years".

This establishes the situation; the Rev. Gilbert Rutherford has lost all his family but Willie, and Willie has left home long since and gone he knows not where. The Great Preacher is a stock character also found in Barrie and in Ian Maclaren, the Aged Yearning Parent.

Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.

High in the dusk of the gallery, into which only two skylights look down, like high-set peep-holes for the angels to spy out men's hearts as they sit in the narrow pews, a young woman sat, her head bowed on her hand, and the tears dripping steadily through her thin fingers. She wore a plain black dress, and a fair-haired little girl sat beside her.

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1 The Playactress, p. 10.
2 The Playactress, p. 12.
This young woman, under the small twin windows borrowed from the Free Church, Penicuik, weeping in full view of the angels like any pre-Raphaelite penitent, is Miss Bessie Upton, aunt of the little girl, who happens to be the defecting Willie’s only child. From her sombre garments and behaviour one would have guessed that she was a seamstress in reduced circumstances, but no; as the story unfolds it transpires that she is an actress from London whose sister is the divorced wife of Willie. He has died in Jamaica, and she brings a letter to the Great Preacher from him begging for forgiveness and asking him

for the sake of the boy that played horses with you in the old orchard among the apple trees\(^1\)

to take in the child and care for her.

Good-night, my father; I must stop. The candle is going out.

is the conclusion of the letter, with no signature, and the tears of the father “were running now like rain”.\(^2\)

It almost breaks Aunt Bessie’s heart to give up the child, but she does not think it fitting that so sweet an innocent (playing as the conversation proceeds among the daisies on the grass under the kirk dyke) should remain with her unworthy mother in the wicked city among actors. She has heard that the Great Preacher is to be in Cairn Edward that day and has brought the child north to hand her over to him, making it quite clear where she thinks his duty lies:

\(^1\)The Playactress, p. 27.

\(^2\)The Playactress, p. 28.
"Can you still do justly and love mercy," said the young woman in black, "or have you preached all your righteousness away?"¹

After this thorough-going approach, she gets her way and leaves her niece with Mr Rutherford; the child's name is Ailie, the same as that of Mr Rutherford's dead wife, and for that matter of William Greig's dead wife too, which involves William Greig in her future. Aunt Bessie walks steadily away from the Kirk; "The light of her life had suddenly, as it were, gone out,"² comments Crockett, cribbing shamelessly from Carlyle's epitaph for his wife, "suddenly snatched from him, and the light of his life, as if gone out". Some of his magpie borrowings are hard to forgive.

Mr Rutherford learns from the child's artless prattle that Aunt Bessie, although an actress, has brought her up with readings from the Good Book and the Pilgrim's Progress, has taught her to say her prayers, to know the names of birds and flowers, and to trust confidingly in all the world, even in her mother, who is sometimes "not well" and hurts her. "She turned up her little hand and showed the livid scar of a healed wound on her wrist".³ The Great Preacher is greatly puzzled; he has thought the theatre altogether wicked and cannot accept that Bessie Upton is a Christian for all her goodness; he resolves to go to London and find out.

¹The Playactress, p. 22
²The Playactress, p. 35
³The Playactress, p. 77
Stepping out of the station in London, he asks a policeman where he can find decent lodgings and is taken to a boarding-house run by the policeman's sister. On the way they encounter Tommy, a young "shaver" who discourses in music-hall Cockney about that "old geezer" his mother and the "theaytre" where he takes his girl. Of all the thousands of hansom cabs in London, one passes in which Rutherford sees Willie's ex-wife and Bessie Upton. By chance also, the boarding-house happens to be just opposite the Siddons Theatre where Bessie performs, and a fellow-boarder happens to be in love with Bessie whose pure influence leads him to church; he also has an Annandale mother and is in the habit of saying his prayers in secret.

The Great Preacher attends a play with him and is bewildered by the experience. The next day he makes his way backstage and is present when Ailie's drug-maddened mother bursts in, cursing and screaming, threatening one and all with a knife. He reveals his identity and his "daughter-in-law" falls down in a faint and has to be taken home by cab with the help of Tommy and a friendly dresser. He visits her again the next evening and sees the cigar-smoking wine-drinking men who come to her sleazy drawing-room with the worst of intentions. He tells them the truth about "this woman" and her noble-minded sister's sacrifice; they all slink away in shame, shaking hands with the Great Preacher as they go, and by the time Bessie arrives her sister has had a stroke. She lingers for a few days, tended by Tommy and Bessie and Bessie's Johnny from the
boarding-house, and talked to so movingly by the Great Preacher that she weeps with grace and happiness over his hand as he sleeps, wearied out, by her bedside. In his sleep he says aloud "Neither do I condemn thee -- go and sin no more."\(^1\) And so she dies peacefully in the sunshine which happens to struggle through the London fog at that very moment; "She went and sinned no more." This would verge on the blasphemous if it were not so silly.

Bessie subsequently goes north to be with Mr Rutherford and Ailie, who seem to have taken up permanent residence at the Greig's farm of Nether Larg. Suddenly one day, as Bessie enacts the part of Cinderella to little Ailie, Johnny pops over a dyke to propose as Prince Charming, and the story ends with a happy tableau among the gowans, the reader obviously not expected to ask awkward questions about where we go from here.

This sort of stuff is little better than Sunday School tracts. It is so riddled with improbabilities and coincidences that one cannot take it seriously for a moment. Conceivably Crockett might have justified the coincidences by putting them down to the kindly governing of divine Providence, and he certainly could have invented explanations for some of the improbabilities, but he does not bother. We are meant to swallow it whole and be edified.

Yet it pleased the taste of the time. William Wallace declared with enthusiasm

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\(^1\)The Playactress, p. 206.
Mr. Crockett has . . . tried a daring experiment, and has achieved a remarkable, if not an absolute success. He has sought to bring the natural wilds of Galloway and the moral wilds of London into the closest association, with the help of the Rev. Gilbert Rutherford -- an intensely religious man of the type, if not quite the stature, of Bishop Mylyrea and Jean Valjean. . The Playactress is far and away the best of Mr. Crockett's shorter stories.1

We can scarcely believe that anyone could place this sentimental concoction above the solid native wit and realism of "The Lammas Preaching" but the British Weekly was equally fulsome.

This is a little masterpiece, the most even and finished thing that Mr. Crockett has yet given us. It is written with wonderful zest and force. There are few stories of the time which proceed so buoyantly, so freshly, so swiftly as this little book. The narrative never loses hold, and its charm is so legitimate that the reader does not resent being five-fingered as he is from first to last. . . Mr. Crockett closes his Annus Mirabilis with not the least of its achievements.2

Earlier that year, in October, Robertson Nicoll had reviewed The Lilac Sunbonnet very favourably as "a sweet, slow idyll of Scotch love-making"3 but had added, more in sorrow than in anger,

I will own to some disappointment that religion plays so poor a part in the story.

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3(W. Robertson Nicoll) "The Correspondence of Claudius Clear", British Weekly, XVI (October 13th 1894) p. 409.
It seems at least likely that *The Playactress* represents a chastened Crockett returning to the fold after this reproach; one realises from both William Wallace and Robertson Nicoll how ill served he was by his critics.

However, there are several interesting points to note about *The Playactress* in spite of its cheap sentimentality and facile melodrama. Its style is undistinguished and invites comparison with that of many of the "Scotch" stories which were pouring out at the time, but every now and then a sentence pierces the mediocrity and reminds us of the keenly-observant Crockett who can catch in words a memorable detail and bring a scene to life. The city morning arrives with genuine vividness.

Robert [the policeman] opened his lamp, which shed upward a smell of hot tin, warm air, and rancid oil. He blew it out and shut it up again with a snap.1

It was drawing near the hour of police relief. Gilbert Rutherford was left by himself for a moment under a lamp-post which had a ludicrous wisp of dirty yellow streaming from it, whistling because the burner was bad and the pressure of gas increasing as the lights were put out with the coming of the morning.2

The theatre is alive in his mind as brick and mortar reality;

. . . they crossed the road to the Siddons Theatre, and looked in at the stage door, but saw nothing through that gateway of marvels save a long draughty passage and a box with a wicket gate in it.

There was a strong blow of gassy air in their faces as they strode along through empty halls and down stairs which echoed as they went.3

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1 *The Playactress*, p. 94.
2 *The Playactress*, p. 96.
3 *The Playactress*, pp 141-142.
He knows the ways and vocabulary of the theatre -- the star system with its troublesome leading ladies, its "Standing Room Only" notices, its "marvellously impressive posters signed with a French name" -- could this last be Mucha, who did posters for Sarah Bernhardt? He can visualise exactly what happens when Bessie's sister bursts in on the company just before the play starts and makes a commotion backstage.

"Come near me at your peril, any one of you!" she shouted, like a furious tigress at bay. Thus for a long moment the drug-maddened woman stood with her back against a woodland scene of utmost peace.

The manager and stage-manager came flying from opposite directions.

The stage-manager cried "Hush" instinctively as he came, and the manager called out --

"Less noise there -- they can hear you in front."¹

The house in which Bessie's sister lives is described with tawdry precision,

... in a maze of dull, ashen-grey streets down which the straws from the Earl's Court Road for ever blew. In the brief moments which Gilbert spent within it, he noted in the lower public rooms an extraordinary richness of decoration and furnishing, together with an inexplicable disorder. The carpets were of the finest, but infinitely hashed and spotted. One of the great marble ornaments on the mantelpiece was broken through the middle. There was a broken globe on the chandelier, and thrown into one corner, a battered doll. Gilbert Rutherford took this last in his hands. He was sure that in this most unfriendly dwelling, here at least was something the history of which he knew. It was one of Ailie's dolls. He set it upon the sideboard, but finding it near a tray of stale cigar-ends mixed with matches, he took it up again and thrust it into his coat pocket.²

¹The Playactress, p. 171.
²The Playactress, pp 177-178.
In one or other of his visits to London, Crockett has looked around and soaked in the city atmosphere; he has visited the theatre often enough to have been backstage and picked up its jargon; in later novels he uses it again — *Ione March*\(^1\) features a shabby School of Drama and its students, *Sandy's Love Affair*\(^2\) is with an actress and contains cheerful accounts of life backstage in London, the provinces and Edinburgh, and the heroine of *Anne of the Barricades*\(^3\) is Nini Auroy, *première divette* at the Imperial Opera House, Paris. The London scenes are described far more freshly than the stereotyped and predictable rural ones of Cairn Edward; his mind is much more fully engaged with his new theme of the city in the second part of this slight work; it alone has genuine Crockett touches.

Two points emerge from this undistinguished potboiler. The first is that Crockett is ready and willing to extend his range from Galloway to the grimm streets of the metropolis, and can write of it with vivid accuracy in spite of the hasty melodrama to which in this case it is the background. The second and more depressing point is that when writing to meet current taste, especially the taste of the readers whom Robertson Nicoll had in mind, Crockett is

\(^{1}\) S.R. Crockett: *Ione March* (London 1899).
\(^{2}\) S.R. Crockett: *Sandy's Love Affair* (London, n.d.)
\(^{3}\) S.R. Crockett: *Anne of the Barricades* (London 1912).
capable of lowering his sights and writing Band of Hope trash. It is particularly sad that he should have turned in the direction of the lazy sentimentality which produced cheap effects with little effort and unfortunately sold so well. His addiction to melodrama was a weakness but not so great a one; one can respect Mad Sir Uchtred, even while admitting its defects in the mad scenes. But basically what both Mad Sir Uchtred and The Playactress lack is Crockett's delightful irony and humour; his sense of the ridiculous must have been temporarily suspended or he would have seen their faults for himself.

It may be timely at this moment, before proceeding with some relief to the real achievements of 1894, The Lilac Sunbonnet\(^1\) and The Raiders,\(^2\) to examine what Crockett's aims as a writer were, and establish what were the standards from which he had fallen away. This is rather difficult; temperamentally he was no abstract theorist; he did not have the analytical intelligence of a critic, and one doubts whether he would have defined a novel more specifically than as "a great book (in size)", the phrase he used to the Macmillans of Men of the Moss Hags.\(^3\) But one can glean from

\(^1\) S.R. Crockett: The Lilac Sunbonnet (London 1894). This book is hereafter referred to as The Lilac Sunbonnet.

\(^2\) S.R. Crockett: The Raiders (London 1894). This book is hereafter referred to as The Raiders.

\(^3\) S.R. Crockett: The Men of the Moss Hags (London 1895). This book is hereafter referred to as Men of the Moss Hags.
the reviews, literary articles and introductions to other men's books which he wrote in his heyday as a man of letters some of the qualities he himself looked for in a novelist.

He was not altogether enamoured of the serious novel as it had developed by the 1890s; although what he wrote about fellow-authors like Barrie, Stevenson and Kipling tended to be anecdotal, impressionistic and enthusiastic rather than sober assessment, he delivered tart comments here and there on some of his contemporaries. He disliked intensely the didactic novel, the novel of purpose. If a writer had a "purpose" he ought to conceal it and write from his heart. In an article on Scottish National Humour he makes this very clear.

The purpose must emerge, not be thrust before the reader's nose, else he will know that he has strayed into a druggist's shop. And all the beauty of the burnished glass, and all the brilliancy of the drawer labels will not persuade him that medicine is a good steady diet. He will say, and with some reason, "I asked you for bread — or at least for cakes and ale — and lo! ye have given me Gregory's Mixture!"

He instances Scott and Shakespeare to support his argument.

Scott did not write with any purpose, save with the primitive instinct to tell an entrancing story. And in spite of Gervinus and cartloads of commentators, chiefly Teutonic, I do not believe that Shakespeare did, either...

For the "novel of purpose" developed round some set thesis is not of the essence of story-telling, but of preaching and pamphleteering. These two things are, no doubt, of the world's greatest necessities, but I would not have them trench upon the place of

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1S.R. Crockett: "Scottish National Humour", Contemporary Review, LXVII (April 1895) p. 529. See also Raiderland, p. 91.
creative imagination. ... It will be better if, instead of posing as the religious regenerator of the future, the novelist confines himself to telling a plain tale in the best way he can, simply striving by the thrilling of his own heart to cast a spell upon the hearts of others.¹

One forms the impression that the classification "novel" was not for Crockett a complimentary one -- that although his tombstone describes him as a novelist, it would not have done so if he had had any say in the wording of it. In the dedications he prefaced to the first dozen or so of his books, before he dropped the practice of dedication altogether (whether because he had run out of people to whom to dedicate or because his later works were too much the product of publishers' orders to be in his opinion worth dedicating it would be hard to say) he calls them "stories" or "chronicles" or "this attempt at a true history", never novels. His admirers at the Dalbeattie dinner in 1906 talk of him as a novelist -- Mr G. Pringle who could not attend sent a letter declaring him to be "the greatest living Scottish novelist"² -- but Crockett in his speech says always "my books" or "my works". He promises that he will "write for you a real Galloway book",³ not a real Galloway novel.

In writing of other authors the same habit prevails. His articles in The Bookman are about "Mr. Stevenson's

²Crockett and Grey Galloway, p. 144.
³Crockett and Grey Galloway, p. 162.
Books", 1 "J.M. Barrie's Books", 2 "On Some Tales of Mr. Kipling's", 3 In his introductions to the edition of John Galt's Works issued by Blackwood in 1895 and 1896 4 he refers consistently to the "works" of John Galt or "this book of John Galt", not his novels. He praises a book and its story, not a novel and its plot. When once or twice he does mention "novels", it is in tones of disparagement of some other writer whom he considers inferior. The parts of Sir Andrew Wylie which he finds poorest are the intrigues of the upper-class characters which recall "the justly forgotten society novels of the last century". 5 He relishes the quiet progression of day after day in The Annals of the Parish because they are so very different from the monotony of "some Transatlantic novels, where something is always on the point of happening, but never comes off", 6 which disposes neatly of Henry James, whose meticulous patient hesitant analysis Crockett must have found intolerable.

3 S.R. Crockett: "On Some Tales of Mr. Kipling's", The Bookman, VII (February 1895) p. 139.
Crockett, therefore, was far from thinking of the novel as a superior literary form to which he as a short-story writer humbly aspired. On the contrary, it was a pedestrian modern debasement of the fine old-fashioned story; he much preferred to think of himself as a romancer, a free imaginative story-teller who strove "by the thrilling of his own heart to cast a spell upon the hearts of others", whether by what he calls "the Humour of About-the-Doors" in tales of everyday life in countryside or town, or by the adventurous recreation of adventure in past or present, in Galloway or elsewhere, or by an admixture of both. The two elements are respectively the "bread" and the "cakes and ale" he offers his readers.

If any doubt remains, some remarks about the novel which turn up unexpectedly towards the end of The Adventurer in Spain surely clinch the matter. This book, half travel guide, half narrative of Crockett’s own experiences (the literal truth of which one cannot hope at this distance of time either to prove or disprove) has as a connecting thread the mystery of a little girl stolen from her mother while a baby and restored through Crockett. It is a leisurely rambling book about different places illustrated by photographs taken by the author; its characters include

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2S.R. Crockett: The Adventurer in Spain, with illustrations by the author and Gordon Browne (London 1903).
smugglers, gypsies, a count and a bishop, and Crockett
pauses occasionally to marvel at the coincidences with which
his path is strewn. Just before he embarks on the most
astonishing coincidence of all he declares that the truth
he is about to relate is indeed stranger than fiction.

Now if I had been writing a novel, I never would
have dared to put in that which follows. A novel is
life with the connections put in. Or contrariwise, life is a novel with the connections left out.

In a novel you must explain and explain, leading
up to how Jane came to know Julius -- how the black-
hearted murderer Morpher, thinking to rob a church,
opens the door and finds himself face to face with his
own long-lost daughter, who is the caretaker. Such
things must be explained -- in a novel.

But every one knows that in real life it is not
so. The actual connections are never those which you
think of. You review an unknown man's book in an
obscure periodical, and his daughter becomes your wife
through all time. In a house where you never were
before, and where you are never likely to be again,
you notice a girl sitting in a corner. She lifts
her eyes -- and for the two of you, death itself doth
not divide. . .

The big droning city, the clattering street, the
shrill station, flavoured with its floating drifts of
steam, the hurly-burly of mounting and dismounting from
railway carriages -- these are the true connectives of
life. But they will not do for the novelist -- at
least, not for him who would conquer and keep the
confidence of his readers. In a story a thing must
not only have happened, but the writer must make it
appear that it could not possibly have happened
otherwise!

With this careful adherence to the Aristotelian doctrine of
probability he has little patience. Real life is basically
improbable; to instance this he points to two recent
criminal cases, the Monson-Ardlamont murder and the trial
of Madeleine Smith.

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1 S.R. Crockett: The Adventurer in Spain (London 1903)
pp 342-344.
How bewilderingly impossibility follows on impossibility! They tread on each other's heels -- so fast they come. Nothing, say the critics, says the average novel reader -- could possibly have happened so.¹

He cites (and this is significant in connection with his penchant for melodrama and the macabre) Le Petit Parisien, the great Paper in which to find criminal reports in France -- and a most fair, sane all-round journal and asserts cheerfully that of the twenty or thirty cases reported every week, scarcely one runs on "natural" lines. Hardly one which would be credited if transported wholesale into the pages of a novel. Some are too monstrous -- all are too crude. It is the reductio ad absurdum of realism. This one and that are unbelievable, because the victim's mother -- his wife -- his eldest son could not possibly have acted so. But the strange thing is that they did. The detective and his quarry voyaged together to Le Havre, neither suspecting the other's identity. But, as the local officers had been warned by telegraphs and were on the alert, it was (of course) the detective who was arrested! The criminal got clean away. This is not the plot for a comic opera. It is only a fact. But it would not do for fiction.²

Crockett was not the kind of man to issue solemn manifestos but this would almost serve as one; it is typical that we should find it in a travel-book where critics of novels would be unlikely to look for it. It is certainly a defiant flourish against those who complain, as we have done, that the plot of a book like The Playactress is an outrageous flouting of probability and realism. He would defend himself from such charges, it seems, not by references to the benign all-seeing eye of Providence as pious sentimentalists

¹S.R. Crockett: The Adventurer in Spain (London 1903) p. 344.
might, but by sending us off to read the police reports and note how wild the actualities of real life really are. He relishes the unlikeliness of things, the irony of the detective's being arrested instead of the criminal, the ridiculous paradoxes of human behaviour. His own life has been full of such things -- the barefooted country boy who became the great traveller, the poor student who became the famous writer, the Free Church minister who revelled in bizarre criminal activities as reported in the newspapers -- and French newspapers at that -- and the unknown reviewer who married the daughter of the man whose book he had reviewed. The novel is too tediously explanatory for one who understands the vivid changing liveliness of life; his experience and his temperament force him to react against the "naturalism" of Zola, the determinist and ineluctable logic of Balzac and Flaubert, all of which authors were represented in his library. It is not that he ignores the ugly and seamy side of human existence; he writes, as we shall see, of industrialism, of poverty, of coal mines, of doctors working in shabby back streets and can visualise the squalid detail with almost angry conviction, but these are only part of a greater and more optimistic whole. They provide the darkness which throws into prominence the drama of a good story, the shadow which contrasts with the bright figures in the foreground, the ash-baskets and dead rats which cannot quench Cleg Kelly.

For Crockett it is the writer who makes a story. He confesses that he cannot read John Galt's Ringan Gilhaize
and does not expect ever to be able to. We can hazard the guess that this sombre and carefully-worked novel was too much a "novel of purpose" to appeal to him; the early chapters about Ringan's grandfather were too hard going even for one who was genuinely interested in Covenanters and the Reformation, being written conscientiously to a formulated theme. Moreover, they lack the John Galt that he admired -- Galt the humorist whose "theoretical history" when accompanied by his sly accurate personae Crockett found so delightful. The story-teller is part of the story;

To me the most interesting thing in Mr. Stevenson's books is always Mr. Stevenson himself.

Scott is eminently unquotable, yet I should be prepared to stake his genius on a few passages like this [from the last melodramatic scene in The Bride of Lammermoor] in which, by one or two magic touches, his usual kindly and careless irony suffers a sea-change into something rich and strange -- the irony of the gods and of insatiable and inappeasable fate. Then, indeed, one actually sees the straw and stubble, the wood and stone of his ordinary building material being transmuted before our eyes into fairy gold at the touch of him who, whatever his carelessness and slovenliness, is yet the great Wizard of all time and the master of all who strive to tell the Golden Lie.

The third and fourth decades of a man's life make the thinker; but the first two make the writer. It is from the experiences of these early years that a man makes his background, and places and develops his characterisations. He may flavour his books with learning and experience more lately gathered; but at

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bottom the world of which he writes, is the world of reality or of fantasy, in which he lived until he was twenty.\(^1\)

Of course it is a commonplace that all novelists become their own good and bad characters for the occasion.

As the poet sings --

\[
\begin{align*}
  &\text{I am the batsman and the bat,} \\
  &\text{I am the bowler and the ball,} \\
  &\text{The fielders, the pavilion cat,} \\
  &\text{The pitch, the stumps, and all.}
\end{align*}
\]

Or words to that effect.\(^2\)

It is absurdly typical of Crockett that, when using his friend Andrew Lang's *Brahma*\(^3\) as a neat epitome of his sentiments on the subject of authorship, he did not trouble to verify the quotation but made up "words to that effect" to cover what he did not precisely remember.

By these affinities, Crockett places himself on the side of those who write to please themselves and hope and trust that they will at the same time please their readers. He will not bother too much about a plot but draw on the scenes and people of his young manhood, letting his characters tell their story through their actions observed sharply and ironically by him the author, without tiresome psychological analysis. If the reader finds his stories improbable, shapeless, romantic, sensational, so much the

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\(^3\)Andrew Lang: *Brahma* (In imitation of Emerson), Faber Book of Comic Verse compiled by Michael Roberts (London 1942) p. 233.
worse for the reader; these are the qualities of real life, and Crockett is impenitent. His concern is always the Golden Lie which is more true than mere literal truth. Like Carlyle whom he admired, he wants to reawaken the sense of wonder which serious nineteenth century bourgeois literature seemed to have abandoned. For better or worse, he takes his stand among the romancers, the story-tellers, the retailers of "yarns" whose curiosity and excitement about life leave them no patience to be sober commentators or to write with that "purpose" which he had compared to Gregory's Mixture. It is a pleasing thought that G.K. Chesterton, born in 1874, went to work with T. Fisher Unwin for six years when he was twenty-one, presumably in 1895, and must have come into contact with Crockett's work if not necessarily with Crockett himself; two men who enjoyed the astonishment of life, who had such jovial gusto, who would both have castigated with the same energetic irritation those who had "turned to a tea-shop the Saracen's Head", had much in common, including their cheerful carelessness about the duller pedantic accuracies. It would be pleasant to think that they met.

CHAPTER 7

1894: The Lilac Sunbonnet

After having considered the two shorter books produced during 1894 and examined Crockett's general approach to the novel form, we come to the two full-length works of that year, The Lilac Sunbonnet[^1] and The Raiders[^2]. Conveniently, they fall into the two main categories which contain his writing about Galloway; The Lilac Sunbonnet is a domestic novel set in "the sixties and seventies of the present era",[^3] to use his own typical generalisation about the period of his many Galloway love romances, the period of his own youth at Little Duchrae and Castle Douglas, while The Raiders is an adventure story set in the early decades of the eighteenth century, demonstrating, as William Wallace remarked, that Crockett can "hunt with Mr. Stevenson" as well as "run with Mr. Barrie".[^4]

The Lilac Sunbonnet was especially near to Crockett's heart; it was his first long work, produced at the same time


[^3]: Raiderland, Foreword, p. viii.

as his early short stories for the *Christian Leader*, and he called it "the best expression of my youth".\(^1\) In letters to his friends the Macmillans he several times refers to his pleasure at hearing it read aloud in John Macmillan's warm natural Galloway voice in the farmhouse at Glenhead of Trool before it was published at all, either as a serial in the *Christian Leader* or as subsequently in book form.\(^2\) Yet it is *The Lilac Sunbonnet* and later Galloway love stories in the same domestic tradition which have led to Crockett's lowly placing in literary perspective as merely third in the "Kailyard" triumvirate with Barrie and Ian Maclaren.\(^3\) This estimate, based only on one area of his writing, is current and accepted as the final word on Crockett, usually without either knowledge or critical examination; in *The Red Paper on Scotland*,\(^4\) for example, he is dismissed contemptuously as "Kailyard", with the oft-repeated references to J.H. Millar's *Literary History of Scotland*\(^5\) and George Blake's inaccurate and intemperate

\(^1\)"S.R.C. at Home", p. 814.

\(^2\)Crockett Letters (Hornel): October 1894, postscript; October 12th 1894.


Barrie and the Kailyard School, by a writer who knows so little of his work that he can sum it up "Bloom of the Heather, etc." In fact, bearing in mind what we know of Crockett's affection for melodrama, we can see that the core of The Lilac Sunbonnet is not a sentimentalised Scottish village but the dark mystery which shrouds the origin of the heroine Winsome Charteris and seems likely to wreck her love affair with Ralph Peden, the young divinity student. Parallel to the unfolding of this mystery runs the gradual coming to life of Ralph as he responds to the beauty and disturbing sensuousness of the Galloway countryside and realises that his true bent is not the ministry but the writing of poetry. There are elements of the ecclesiastical life of Galloway in the book — as is to be expected since it was being written alongside the stories in The Stickit Minister — but they are not idealised nostalgic harkings-back to the past; they are either caricatures like Saunders Mowdiewort the beadle and his sharp-tongued mother who provide much caustic detail about the carrying up to the pulpit of Bibles and the howking of graves — caricatures which are both comic and edged with truth, so much so that they roused the disapproval of Robertson Nicoll

1George Blake: Barrie and the Kailyard School (London 1951).
3The Lilac Sunbonnet IX, p. 75; XVI, pp 135-139.
who remarked warningly

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 comic effect,1

or else macabre dark interludes about the Rev. Allan Welsh who lives a strange lonely haunted life in the grim manse of Dullarg, twisted in body—"'shauchelt' was the local word"2 — and racked by agonies of prayer and fancies about death-watch beetles ticking in his head.

The Rev. Gilbert Peden, Ralph's father, is likewise dark and austere; he lives in James's Court in the High Street of Edinburgh — a locality perhaps chosen by Crockett because it had once been the abode of the philosopher David Hume — and allows no woman to come near him but is tended by his "man" and beadle, John Bairdieson, an ex-sailor who is deft in household matters. The Marrow Church to which both these ministers belong can be found in no theological history of Scotland but is an imaginary sect invented by Crockett to suit his purpose and given its name from an eighteenth century controversy about the nature of divine grace.3 It is careless and perverse of Crockett to choose this name, as the original "Marrowmen" were attacked by the Church of Scotland Assemblies of 1720 and later for being

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too liberal, too freely evangelical and hopeful in their attitude to sinful humanity; perhaps he is careless rather than perverse, and was attracted in the first place by the simplicity of the name "Marrow Church" and in the second by marrow's common metaphorical meaning of "essential substance", as in the phrase "pith and marrow". Whatever be his motive for the choice he uses his "Marrow Kirk" as an example of quintessential narrowness and exclusiveness, and through it pokes fun openly at the ridiculous self-importance of all exclusive religious bodies:

the kirk of the Marrow, that sole treasure-house of orthodox truth in Scotland, which is as good as saying in the wide world -- perhaps even in the universe.1

In this way he can express some of the criticisms which he might have liked to make about the Free Church but which as one of its ordained ministers he was not free to express. He makes the Marrow Church a reductio ad absurdum of secession; it has only two ministers, Peden in Edinburgh and Welsh in Dullarg, and when Ralph's love for Winsome makes old sores smart again and the secret is revealed -- Welsh long years ago had run off with Peden's affianced bride and Winsome is their daughter -- the two men thunder out one another's deposition so that their kirk has no minister at all, a situation which Crockett declares he bases on actual fact, although the reason was one of doctrinal difference and not of melodramatic emotional involvement,2 and an


2"Heston" and "Theodore Mayne": "Sons of the South": S.R. Crockett", The Gallovidian II (No. 6, Summer 1900) p. 46.
anonymous article in a later *British Weekly* records full
details of the case with a certain infectious gusto.¹

It is only by the cunning manipulation of John
Bairdieson listening at the keyhole that the Marrow Kirk
is rescued and one minister is reinstated before news can
reach the faithful remnant. This John Bairdieson and his
practical attitude to the Calvinist doctrine of election
provide a delightful snatch of satire which could have made
an additional story for *The Stickit Minister* complete in
itself; when Ralph returns to Edinburgh to announce that
he has "fallen away" from his father's stern doctrines,
John hopes that the cause has merely been carnal sin:

> I wuss it had been the lasses. What wull his faither
> say? Gin it had been ill-doin', he micht hae pitten
> it doon to the sins o' his youth; but ill-doctrine
> he canna forgie.²

Since it is, however, a doctrinal falling away and therefore
inexcusable, John offers to tell any lie that Ralph will
pass as suitable -- he, John, is one of the elect and
therefore free from the taint of sin. Crockett's dry
comment is pungent, and makes the same point as Hogg's
Confessions of a Justified Sinner in much less space:

> Indeed, to start with the acknowledged fact of personal
> election sometimes gives a man like John Bairdieson
> an unmistakable advantage.³

The dark mystery of Winsome's birth, firmly connected
as it is with the sombre doctrine of the Marrow Kirk,

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1. "The True Story of Mr. Crockett's Kirk of the Marrow", *British Weekly* XVII (November 1st 1894) p. 25. See Appendix 2. p. 613
provides the basic plot of the book. Against its macabre structure there is played out the love story of Ralph and Winsome, a happy sunlit contrast, with only minor obstacles to surmount — the machinations of Jess Kissock who sends letters astray so that Winsome going to meet Ralph at night is clasped by the sinister would-be seducer Agnew Greatorix of Greatorix Castle, and Ralph imagining that he is embracing Winsome finds Jess in his arms. But if at one level The Lilac Sunbonnet is a mystery story and at another a love story, at yet another, and perhaps the most important, it can be regarded as a glorious uprush of liberal sentiment, a battle between good and evil, between free and innocent happiness and the rigid dogma of old and unhappy creeds. "Crockett has dared to envision an Eden of innocent love" comments Professor Francis R. Hart, and goes on

Edenic allusion is pervasive; there is no Serpent; orthodoxy is devastated with humour; youth is ripe, unabashed, ready for midnight trysts.¹

Without going as far as Professor Hart and seeing The Lilac Sunbonnet as "a late Victorian neo-paganism", one can agree that there may be justification for this view, especially in the imagery which moves expressively between the sun-drenched bright beauty of fields and the open-air, and the claustrophobic Manse of Dullarg, the narrow house in James’s Court, the dark cob-webbed byre where Jess thinks her jealous thoughts.

The mystery element is the least well handled. The two households which lie behind the lovers explain their sudden and immediate love -- the womanless Peden ménage in Edinburgh, and the farm at Craig Ronald which Winsome, "a veritable Napoleon of finance and capacity"\(^1\) runs for her paralysed grandmother and silent grandfather -- and the early chapters would have been more intelligible if we had come to that meeting with some knowledge of these households, but Crockett, for the sake of the fresh and startling impact of the lovers on the reader as well as on one another, holds back the information in the same way as a writer of a classic detective novel, so that we pick it up here and there through many chapters. Moreover he tantalises the reader with little unexplained incidents -- Mr Welsh kisses Winsome's handwriting on a packet addressed to Ralph,\(^2\) Winsome's grandmother drops hints about Ralph's father's relationship with Winsome's mother "whose name had not been heard for twenty years in the house of Craig Ronald",\(^3\) and Winsome herself speaks of a mystery which she does not understand.\(^4\) We fit together from isolated clues the truth about what has happened twenty years before; Winsome's mother, engaged to Ralph's father, ran away and made an

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\(^1\)\textit{The Lilac Sunbonnet, V, p. 44.}
\(^2\)\textit{The Lilac Sunbonnet, XI, p. 104.}
\(^3\)\textit{The Lilac Sunbonnet, V, p. 43.}
\(^4\)\textit{The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXVI, p. 207, 209, 210.}
irregular and unsanctified marriage at Gretna with Allan Welsh, Gilbert Peden's best friend. The erring pair had lived in Cumberland until Winsome's mother died, then Winsome had been brought back to Craig Ronald and her grandparents, while Allan Welsh returned to the parish of Dullarg as minister of the Marrow Kirk and had carried out his duties as minister ever since, in a state of permanent remorse and gloom, with absolutely no communication between him and his daughter's grandparents. Winsome has no knowledge that he is her father; she does not know at all who her father has been. This plot may have owed something to Barrie's The Little Minister, where of the two lovers one is mistaken and the other, being a gypsy, very vague about paternal identity, but it is much less heavily treated, not at all sentimentalised, and quite free from vindictive elders fearing for their minister's immortal soul. In fact, as soon as his clues are exhausted and the inner history revealed, Crockett loses interest in the plot and rushes us towards the happy ending with a cheerful disregard for probability which is quite refreshing. Winsome's father is reconciled to her grandfather, and they both die, gently and peacefully, on the day of reconciliation and are interred in the same graveyard on a bright August day. "Threads Drawn Together"¹ is the title of the chapter in which this all occurs — as well it might be. Allan Welsh leaves all his property to Ralph, and Walter Skirving

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, XLIII, pp 355-359.
leaves Craig Ronald and all his property to his granddaughter Winsome, so that the wedding can come next, after an unspecified period of time — long enough, however, for Ralph to have published a volume of poems sufficiently successful to justify his embarking on a literary career. In view of the poems we are given to read in the novel, this is perhaps the greatest improbability of all. The barn which Winsome fits up at Craig Ronald for her husband's study is a blossom-strewn idealisation of the wooden library which Crockett had himself in Penicuik and later in Peebles;¹ this and the fact that the book is dedicated "To my Wife" suggests that The Lilac Sunbonnet may reflect, at a very great distance and in different circumstances, Crockett's own romantic experience.

But in addition to the surface narrative, there are symbolic undertones which it is most convenient to explore by examining his use of nature at different times as a perennial current of life and influence.

First, and most obvious, is his use of nature and the Galloway countryside as a disturbing counter-influence to the austere religious life Ralph has been leading in James's Court. We meet him on his way to the manse of Dullarg where is is to study under the guidance of the Rev. Allan Welsh, resting

by the ancient tipsy milestone, which had swayed side-long and lay half buried amid the grass and

¹Crockett and Grey Galloway, p. 115 and illustration facing p. 113.
dock leaves.\(^1\)

an image which in "tipsy" and "swayed side-long" and "half buried among the grass and dock leaves" prefigures the effect nature in its exuberance is to have on his barren precise stony ambitions. Jess Kissock, a troubling image in herself, happens to be passing; he speaks to her, asking the way, and she over-rides his protests and insists "with a curious disquieting look at him"\(^2\) on helping him carry his books.

Later he tries to study in the open air, above Loch Grannoch.

It was the second day of his sojourning in Galloway -- the first of his breathing that heather scent on which the bees grew tipsy, and of listening lazily to the grasshoppers \textit{chirring} in the long bent by the loch side.\(^3\)

The bees, the most industrious of insects, grow tipsy in this delicious summer warmth, and it is the grasshopper, the proverbial time-waster and improvident, to which he listens contentedly. Already within a few pages there are signs that Ralph Peden is being overcome by pleasurable sense-impressions. He is disturbed by a tawny humble-bee which he watches climb up a foxtail grass-blade and fly off, leading his eye to farther delights

\(^{1}\textbf{The Lilac Sunbonnet,} p. 9.\)
\(^{2}\textbf{The Lilac Sunbonnet,} p. 10.\)
\(^{3}\textbf{The Lilac Sunbonnet,} I, p. 12.\)
where on the other side, above the glistening sicklesweep of white sand which looked so inviting, untouched as yet under the pines by the morning sun, the drifted hyacinths lay like a blue wreath of peat reek in the hollows of the wood.¹

There is a smell of peat smoke and a murmur of voices; he tries to read but falls asleep in a haze of contentment, then wakens suddenly to the sound of laughter. This delicately-observed progression of tiny natural details has culminated in the arrival of Winsome and Meg, making preparations for the blanket-washing. The sights, sounds and smells of Galloway have distracted him from his books; and this is only the beginning of their challenge to the sombre scenes in which he has up to now been forced to lead his dull life. He ceases to be a mere spectator and enters into the activities which are part of country life — helps to carry water for the blanket-washing, realistically burning his hand because of his inexperience, and tries to guddle for trout under the tutelage of Andra Kissock. He is restless and must be in the open air; Saunders comments on his perpetual motion.

"He's maist mighty unsettled like," replied Saunders, "he's for a' the world like a stirk wi' a horse cleg on him that he cannna get at. He comes in an' sits doon at his desk, an' spreads oot his buiks, an' ye wad think that he's gaun to be at it the leeve-lang day. But afore ye hae time to turn roon' an' get at yer ain wark, the craitur'11 be oot again an' awa' up to the hill wi' a buik aneath his oxter."²

What has been possible for Ralph in the "narrow hall — . . .

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, I, p. 15.
²The Lilac Sunbonnet, XVIII, p. 147.
more like a passage than a hall" to James's Court is utterly impossible under the wide skies and enticing, intoxicating sunshine. Nature works in vivid and direct opposition to bookish learning.

The second use to which Crockett puts natural description is as an accompaniment to and a commentary on the words, actions and thoughts of the two lovers. Their first speech together is whimsical and light-hearted — mischievous even — and its visual equivalent is the blowing away of the seeds from a dandelion clock. Their mingled embarrassment and pleasure is ended by their walking down to join Meg and help with the water-carrying, and later they walk towards the farm-house so that Ralph can meet Mrs Skirving, Winsome's grandmother. Their walk is described against a background heavy with sensuous detail.

Silence deep as that of yesterday wrapped about the farmhouse of Craig Ronald. The hens were all down under the lee of the great orchard hedge, chuckling and chunnering low to themselves, and nestling with their feathers spread balloon-wise, while they flirted the hot summer dust over them. It fell among their droopy and flaccid combs. Down where the grass was in shadow a mower was sharpening his blade. The clear metallic sound of the "strake" or sharpening strop, covered with pure white Loch Skerrow sand set in grease, which scythemen universally use in Galloway, cut through the slumberous hum of the noonday air as the blade itself cuts through the meadow grass. The bees in the purple flowers beneath the window boomed a mellow bass, and the grasshoppers made love by millions in the couch grass, chirring in a thousand fleeting raptures.

The hens are "flirting" the dust over their feathers for the

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physical pleasure of the sensation, their combs dropping
with lazy absorption in their own enjoyment, "their feathers
spread balloon-wise" to catch every sensation of voluptuous-
ness, and "chuckling and chunnering low to themselves" to
express their rich idle contented self-indulgence. They
are in the lee of the hedge, sheltered and safe in the
luxury of the hot pleasurable dust. In contrast, the
sharpening of the scythe rings as a clear and exquisite
sound conjuring up more sharp and piercing pleasures,
cutting through the tiny comfortable noises of the bees and
grasshoppers close at hand; nature is a sleepy harmony,
with the ringing of the scythe blade as a more exciting
melody reflecting Ralph and Winsome's feelings for one
another against a general pattern of mellow country sounds;
and the grasshoppers in the final image convey the generous
abundance of nature; they are there "by millions" in
splendid fecundity, making love in the couch grass, "chirring
in a thousand fleeting raptures". Because we are made to
hear all these varying sounds, we also hear by inference
the silence in which Ralph and Winsome walk together and
feel in that silence their mood of delight before they
themselves have given it expression. Nature is a blaze
of light against cooler shadow, a multiplicity of sound, a
blending of innumerable tiny movements.

When they reach the farmhouse and go indoors, this
accompaniment is immediately cut off. Ralph finds Winsome
more infinitely removed from him than ever before.
Instinctively he wished himself out with her again on
the broomy knoe. He seemed somehow nearer to her there.1

From the darker lighting of indoors, we look back at a
distance to the rich gold of the broom; the talk of the
older generation, shadowed with the past, drops like a
barrier between them, until Mrs Skirving, intuitively
realising this, sends them out into the sunlight again.

Hoot awa', twa young folk! The simmer days are no
lang. Waes me, but I had my share o' them! Tak' them
while they shine, bankside an' burnside an' the
bonny heather. Aince they bloomed for Ailie Gordon.
Once she gaed hand in hand alang the braes, where noo
she'll gang nae mair. Awa' wi' ye, ye're young an'
honest. Twa auld cankered carles are no fit company
for twa young folks like you.2

Remembering her own vivid happiness with clarity but without
bitterness, Mrs Skirving represents delight in beauty and
colour, a Horatian "Carpe diem" untouched by Calvinism and
the Marrow Kirk and pulsating with energy.

Chapter X in contrast plays with delicate colours and
changing light, to mirror Winsome's mood while she waits
for dawn to come so that she can read Ralph's poem. We
have seen her efficient, mischievous, in control of the
situation; now in the quiet of her white bedroom we see
the other side of her nature.

... neither sleep nor dawn had come, when, clad in
shadowy white and the more manifest golden glimmer of
her hair, she glided to the window-seat; and drawing
a great white knitted shawl about her, she sat, a
slender figure enveloped from head to foot in sheeny
white. The shawl imprisoned the pillow-tossed masses
of her rippling hair, throwing them forward about her

1The Lilac Sunbonnet, VII, p. 60.
2The Lilac Sunbonnet, VII, pp 63-64.
face, which, in the half light, seemed to be encircled with an aureole of pale Florentine gold.\textsuperscript{1}

The imagery combines to express gentleness and vulnerability, new facets of her personality. The shadowiness of her white nightdress and the glimmer of her hair are subdued and muted degrees of colour; she does not walk like the day-time Winsome but "glides", which implies smoothness and softness. The "great knitted shawl" suggests softness again, thick and yielding about her body, the slenderness of which in repose is stressed to convey gentleness in contrast to her energy and decision at other times.

"Sheeny" hints at a radiance about the figure at the window which is picked up by "rippling hair" and carried on to "encircled with an aureole of pale Florentine gold", a phrase which reminds us of old paintings of mediaeval saints, haloed and dim as in ikons, and also calls up Pre-Raphaelite associations with Dante Gabriel Rossetti's women with their heavy splendid hair and Burne-Jones' still figures of women motionless in decorative tranquillity. The "pale" quality of the gold suits itself to the shadowy muted colours; the "Florentine" adds a dusky gleam of richness all the more evocative because it is not defined.

The colour of the sky gradually modulates from clear June midnight through "lingering gold" and "lucent green" to a "roseate tinge"—all delicate pastel shades; the dawn chorus begins, and as the light falls on Winsome's face her senses, sharpened by her new feeling for Ralph,

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{The Lilac Sunbonnet}, X, p. 89.
fill everything with wonder.

Winsome listened as she had never listened before.
Why had it become so strangely sweet to listen to the
simple sounds? Why, after an unknown fashion, did
the rich Tyrian dye of the dawn touch her cheek and
flush the flowering floss of her silken hair?¹

By this time it is obvious that Crockett has a Tennysonian
effect in mind and is over-writing because of it. The
"Tyrian dye" evokes, like "Florentine", a vague richness of
colour, a fine patina of antiquity, and "flush the flowering
floss of her silken hair" in its contrived alliterative
slowness of vowel and consonant dwells cloyingly on
Winsome's pictorial beauty just as the early (and sometimes
the later) Tennyson is inclined to do. Crockett is perhaps
thinking of how

Elaine the fair, Elaine the loveable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot²

and blending with this static sentimental picture the gentle
melancholy of Tears, Idle Tears:³

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds . . .
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

The poem which the dawn enables Winsome to read from Ralph's
crumpled manuscript has a clear reference to Tears, Idle
Tears and strives, not very effectively, to use repetition
to conjure up the same effect:

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, X, p. 90.
²Tennyson, Idylls of the King: "Lancelot and Elaine", 1-4.
³Tennyson, The Princess, Book IV, Second Song.
Love, love, love, the whiteness of the snow; 
Love, love, love, and the days of long ago.  

In fact, the entire scene is Tennysonian in its manipulation, 
bird songs and all, and it is a relief when Winsome, suddenly 
avive and herself again, throws a shell at the thrush 
and goes back to bed. After the most artificial and 
literary passages, Crockett often breaks in with a sharp 
touch of realism and deliberately brings himself, and us, 
down to earth.  

It is later the same morning that Ralph and Winsome 
meet again, both having risen early to be out in the first 
fresh coolness of a summer day. They encounter each other 
by chance and yet without surprise; it is their first day 
in Eden. 

They said no word, for there is no form of greeting 
for such. Eve did not greet Adam in polite phrase 
when he awoke to find her in the dawn of one Eden day, 
a helpmate meet for him. Neither did Eve reply that 
"it was a fine morning". It is always a fine morning 
in Eden.  

Ralph leaps the dyke to join Winsome and take her hand; in 
the hushed light of early morning they watch the sunrise 
together: 

It was the new day, and if the new world had not come 
with it, of a surety it was well on the way.  

Nature each day creates anew the innocent state of Eden 
before the Fall; Ralph and Winsome are both innocents, yet

1 The Lilac Sunbonnet, X, p. 91.  
2 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XII, p. 110.  
3 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XII, p. 111.
have an intuitive wisdom that tells them how to greet each other. Their minds blend for a moment in the morning freshness, and though this morning will pass and trivial daily reality intrude into their relationship for a while, the deeper reality is theirs and will grow steadily until it is completely and permanently present with them.

The intrusion of trivial reality is seen in the early afternoon of the next day when Ralph, thinking that Winsome will have received his letter, visits Craig Ronald. Once more the background points the significance of what is happening. In the confines of the house, things go wrong. Jess with the bowls of flowers intercepts Ralph, and we are given a brilliant splash of colour in the flowers:

roses from the garden and sprays of white hawthorn, which flowers late in Galloway, blue hyacinths and harebells massed together -- yellow marigolds and glorious scarlet poppies, of which Jess with her taste of the savage was passionately fond. She had arranged some of these against a pale-blue background of bunches of forget-me-nots and germander, with an effect strangely striking in that cool, dusky room.¹

These are part of nature, but they are cut and massed and arranged artificially, contrived by the predatory Jess to be "striking" as she was and suit her dramatic flaunting.

It is inevitable that Winsome should see Jess cunningly pin a flower in Ralph's buttonhole and misunderstand the situation; not until Ralph goes to guddle for trout with Winsome and Andra are matters righted between them --

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXII, p. 175.
significantly in the greater freedom and outdoor honesty of their surroundings as
  the water glimmered and sparkled about her feet¹
and Ralph looked down
  on the limpid lapse of the moss-tinted water slipping over the sand and pebbles.²
There is no need for elaborate scene-painting in a chapter so vigorous, but the activity of the three guddlers, their quick laughing talk, the boyish scorn of Andra at Ralph's clumsiness, the clearness of the water and the flashing of the trout sweep away Jess's scheming and reinstate the honest directness between them — especially when Jess's flower drops unregarded from Ralph's coat and Winsome has the pleasure of treading it into the grass.

This indicates, like a hand on a dial, the stage of her prepossession,³ remarks Crockett, making it clear that he knows the exact effect he wants to produce, and is producing, by the manipulation of his details. "The midsummer stillness of the afternoon"⁴ is the background for the long conversation in which they talk of themselves, their families and their perplexities; it is a maturer time of day which suits their

¹ The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXIV, p. 192.
² The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXIV, p. 195.
⁴ The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXVI, p. 206.
deepening trust and understanding of one another. When they part the evening is falling, and into one paragraph Crockett gathers a fullness of significance as their first day together ends.

So in silence they walked down to the opening of the glen. As they turned into the broad expanse of glorious sunshine the shadows were beginning to slant towards them. Loch Grannoch was darkening into pearl grey, under the lee of the hill. Down by the high-backed bridge, which sprang at a bound over the narrows of the lane, there was a black patch on the greensward, and the tripod of the gipsy pot could be faintly discerned.

Silence once more marks their mood of contentment. They leave the shadow of the trees under which they have been talking,

a misty sunlight shining upon them, a glistering and suffused green of fresh leaf sap in its glow

and walk into "the broad expanse of glorious sunshine" which symbolises their new comprehension of one another which has grown from the first instinctive freshness of the morning to the mellowness of late afternoon. But in the "long shadows" which slant towards them we feel not just the day moving into night but a trace of warning — "beginning to slant towards them". Yet the colour is not ominous; it is "pearl grey, under the lee of the hill", with "lee" suggesting shelter and safety. Whatever danger lurks will not be disastrous — which is, of course, true, and critics have complained that the obstacles in the way of this tale of true love are not sufficiently strong to make a good

1. The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXVI, p. 213.
2. The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXV, p. 201.
story. Could it be that Crockett was so taken up with his symbolism that he paid insufficient attention to his events? Finally, as a kind of reprise of their relationship, a comforting restatement, the tripod of the gipsy pot reminds us how swiftly the two have grown in knowledge and sureness of one another since it was first set up.

During the next evening, darkening colours fulfil the warning of the slanting shadows. Ralph and Winsome go unsuspectingly to their trysts -- with one another, as they think; with Jess and Agnew Greatorix as we know. The sky and landscape are full of discordant images.

As the sun went down behind the pines he sent an angry gleam athwart the green braes. The level cloud-band into which he plunged drew itself upward to the zenith, and, like the eyelid of a gigantic eye, shut down as though God in His heaven were going to sleep, and the world were to be left alone.1

The words are quick and sharp; "went down behind", "sent an angry gleam athwart", "plunged", "drew itself upward"; and the image of the clouds as a gigantic eyelid is singularly ugly. Later in the chapter sounds add to the mounting tension, with an echo of Tennyson's Morte D'Arthur bringing an unearthly desolation.

Yet under the cloud there was a great solitariness -- the murmur of a land where no man had come since the making of the world. Down in the sedges by the lake a blackcap sang sweetly, wasomely, the nightingale of Scotland. Far on the moors a curlew cried out that its soul was lost. Nameless things whinnied in the mist-filled hollows. . . A grasshopper, roosting on a blade of grass beneath his feet, tumbled off and gave

1The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXIX, p. 236
vent to his feelings in a belated "Chirr". Somewhere overhead a raven croaked dismally and cynically at intervals. Ralph's ears took in these things as he waited, with every sense alert, at his place of love-tryst.\(^1\)

The grasshopper, earlier a contented symbol of sensuous happiness, now falls disturbed and angry; Ralph no longer merely listens; his ears "took in" the various sounds as if unwillingly, without pleasure. When the cloaked girl appears and is clasped in his arms, the light that reveals Jess instead of Winsome is harsh, ugly and frightening.

There was a growing brightness low down in the west. Strangely and slowly the gloomy eyelid of cloud which had fallen athwart the evening lifted for a moment its sullen fringe; a misty twilight of lurid light flowed softly over the land.\(^2\)

The fallacious brightness is sinister and "lurid"; it flows "softly" over the landscape with remorseless threatening slowness; and the opening of the "gigantic eye" with its "sullen fringe" of eyelashes holds even more horror than its closing.

Similarly with Winsome, the darkness of night as the tryst approaches brings nervousness; she walks gladly and happily when the time comes but Crockett surrounds her with sombre imagery.

Behind her the fading light in the west winked once and went out. Palpable darkness settled about her. The sigh of the waste moorlands, where in the haggs the wild fowl were nestling and the adders slept, came down over the well-pastured braes to her... 

Soon against the darker sky the hill dyke stood

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\(^1\)The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXIX, pp 236–237.

\(^2\)The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXIX p. 240.
up, looking in the gloom massive as the Picts' wall of long ago. It followed irregularly the ridgy dips and hollows downward, till it ran into the intenser darkness of the pines. If anything, the effect is darker than with Ralph.

"Winked" is evil in the context, and "went out" is stronger than "went down". The darkness "settled about her" as a foretaste of the trap into which we know she is going; the "waste moorlands" with all the friendly colour of the day drained from them, and the harshness of "haggs" and "adders" blotting out with short sharp syllables the warmth of "well-pastured braes", are like evil crawling from a distance; this reaches a climax in the ancient Picts' Wall -- a huge imaginative symbol which evokes not only the savage menace of the past but reminds us that Jess who contrived the trap is "a daughter of the Picts". The disquieting angles and quick movements contained in "irregularly", "ridgy dips and hollows" and "ran into the intenser darkness of the pines" convey Winsome's fear and nervousness and her instinct to run back to safety. They also make it possible for the climax to come with swift simplicity:

But out of the dark of the great dyke stepped a figure cloaked from head to heel, and while Winsome wavered, tingling now with shame and fear, in an instant she was enclosed within two very strong arms, that received her as in a snare a bird is taken.

Finally, when the events of the night are over and Ralph and Winsome meet the next morning, the mood of nature is

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1 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXX, p. 248.
2 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XVIII, p. 147: Chapter title.
3 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXX, pp 248-249.
changed and the full realisation of their love is reflected in the renewal and brightening of the landscape. She enters his arms naturally and they kiss for the first time.

"At last!" he said, after a silence.

The sun was rising over the hills of heather. League after league of the imperial colour rolled westward like flame as the level rays of the sun touched it.\(^1\)

The purple of the bell-heather is spread before them in a triumphant immensity of colour; Crockett takes us back to the "waste woodlands" of the night and describes them again, literally in the light of new happiness, showing that their impression is

... not dreary when you came to look at it on such a morning as this.

The careless traveller glancing at it as he passed might indeed call it dreary; but in the hollows, miniature lakes glistened, into which the tiny spurs of rock ran out flush with the water like miniature piers. The wind of the morning waking, rippled on the lakelets and blew the bracken softly northward. The heather was dark rose purple, the "ling" dominating the miles of moor; for the lavender-grey flush of the true heather had not yet broken over the great spaces of the south uplands.\(^2\)

The moors have become bright with hope, alive and gleaming with light; the vast and spreading hills as far as eye can see foretell the future that stretches before the lovers, and Crockett suggests that there is still richer happiness before them than they are now experiencing since it is only the time of the "ling" now and the time of the "true

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1. The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXXIV, pp. 281.
2. The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXXV, p. 297.
heather" is yet to come. Nature in this scene as in the others on which we have dwelt is not merely a background but an active interpreter of mood and reaction, playing a vital part in guiding and controlling our sympathies.

In this aspect of his literary technique, Crockett has a marked and unexpected affinity with D.H. Lawrence who in the same way orchestrates nature to form a powerful accompaniment to the emotions of his soloists. The likeness between the two authors emerges in several ways. Both stress the domination of women over men, though Crockett accepts this with ironic humour and does not dwell as Lawrence does on the eternal tension between the sexes; there are Biblical ideas and undertones in both; in their exalted passages both over-write, Crockett becoming over-sweet and Lawrence hysterical; both are influenced by Carlyle; both use inanimate objects as symbols to connect and involve their characters — Lawrence uses a pound of butter and a bunch of daffodils to make explicit the growing relationship between Tom Brangwyn and Anna Lensky in The Rainbow, for example, just as Ralph's book and Winsome's sunbonnet mark different stages for Crockett. The resemblance between the two authors' techniques is not immediately obvious because the mood and the spectrum are different; Lawrence sees life in terms of sombre atavistic forces, dark eyes and brows, troubled communions with mysterious powers, and sullen furnaces burning deep in the human spirit, whereas Crockett, more optimistic, more superficial and more naive, sees bright elementary colours,
the green of hills, the blue of skies, the grey of rocks and silver glimmer of a loch, with an infinite variety of pastel shades between. Lawrence's world is hot and troubled, Crockett's as cool as the wind, but basically they create their effects in the same way. As far as characters are concerned, their main difference is that Crockett describes his from the outside, observing accurately but not sharing their emotions and physical reactions to emotions, while Lawrence enters the tormented souls and bodies of his men and women, agonising and suffering with them. Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to place short passages from Lawrence alongside parallel passages from Crockett, using The Rainbow and The Lilac Sunbonnet as sources.

**THE RAINBOW**

He felt the fine flame running under his skin, as if all his veins had caught fire on the surface. And he went on walking without knowledge. (p. 32)

**THE LILAC SUNBONNET**

Time and again the blood rushed to his temples, for he was sure that he heard her coming to him. But it was only the sound of the blood surging blindly through his own veins, or some of the night creatures fulfilling their own love-trysts, and seeking their simpler destinies under the cloud of night. (XXIX, p. 238)

Then she looked up at him, the wide young eyes blazing with light. And he bent down and kissed her on the lips. And the dawn blazed in them, their new life came to pass, it was beyond all conceiving good, it was so good.

Winsome drew a happy breath, nstling a little closer -- so little that no-one but Ralph would have known. But the little shook him to the depths of his soul. Thus it is to be young and for the first time

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that it was almost like a passing-away, a trespass. He drew her suddenly closer to him. (p. 46)

Brangwyn went up to his room and lay staring out at the stars of the summer night, his whole being in a whirl. There was a life so different from what he knew it. What was there outside his knowledge? What was this that he had touched? What was he in this new influence? What did everything mean? Where was life, in that which he knew or all outside him? (p. 25)

He had her in his arms, and, obliterated, was kissing her. And it was sheer, blanched agony to him, to break away from himself. She was there so small and light and accepting in his arms ... that he could not bear it, he could not stand. (p. 46)

A shiver, a sickness of new birth passed over her, the flame leaped up him, under his skin. She wanted it, this new life from him, with him, yet she must defend herself against it, for it was a destruction. (p. 40)

mastering the geography of an unknown and untraversed continent. ... There is nothing new under the sun, yet to lovers like Winsome and Ralph all things are new. (XXXIV, p. 290, XXXV, p. 293).

Yet it seemed that in that contact, light as a rose-leaf blown by the winds of late July against his cheek, all his past life had been shorn clean away from the future as with a sharp sword. ... This, however, was wholly a new thing. His breath came suddenly short. He breathed more rapidly as though to give his lungs more air. The atmosphere seemed to have grown rarer and colder. Indeed, it was a different world altogether, and the blanket-washing itself was transferred to some deliciously homely outlying annex of paradise. (VI, p. 53)

Ralph Peden's heart stopped beating for a tremendous interval of seconds. Then the dammed-back blood-surge drave thundering in his ears. He swayed and would have fallen but for the parapet of the bridge and the clinging arms about his neck. (XXIX, p. 241)

Winsome faltered. She had not been wooed after this manner before. It was perilously sweet. Little ticking pulses drummed in her head. A great yearning came to her to let herself drift out on a sea of love. That love of giving up all, which is the precious privilege, the saving dowry or utter undoing of women, surged in upon her heart. (XXVI, p. 211)
And whenever her eyes, after watching him for some time, inevitably met his, she was aware of a heat beating up over her consciousness. She sat motionless and in conflict. Who was this strange man who was at once so near to her? What was happening to her? 

But a sunshiny day came full of the scent of a mezeron tree, when bees were tumbling into the yellow crocuses, and she forgot, she felt like somebody else, not herself, a new person, quite glad. But she knew it was fragile, and she dreaded it. The vicar put pea-flower into the crocuses, for his bees to roll in, and she laughed. Then night came, with brilliant stars that she knew of old, from her girlhood. And they flashed so bright, she knew they were victors.

In Winsome's soul the first flushing glory of the May of youth was waking the imprisoned life. But there were throbs and thrillings too piercingly sweet to last undeveloped. The bursting bud of her healthful beauty, quickened by the shy reticence of her soul, was shaking the centres of her life, even as a laburnum-tree mysteriously quivers when the golden rain is in act to break from the close-clustered dependent budlets.

These comparisons show that Crockett, like Lawrence, is trying to render human sexuality in vivid physical terms. To him this is yet another aspect of nature; his characters themselves are part of living nature with the swift direct innocence of the animal not far under their veneer of conventional behaviour -- indeed, it is part of his humour to show the one in conflict with the other. In this he is more a Galloway countryman than a Free Church minister. He is clear-sighted and realistic; his travels and his reading have made him more sophisticated, more aware, than his public. He is writing for the readers of the Christian
Leader and therefore has to observe the remnants of the Victorian taboos, but Freud's early work is almost exactly contemporaneous with The Lilac Sunbonnet, and Ralph's involuntary reply to Allan Welsh that the sign of a good woman was "a lilac sunbonnet" is a truly Freudian error.¹

Ralph and Winsome, therefore, intuitively responsive to nature, respond also to one another's physical presence is a frank and direct way that one does not find in Barrie or Ian Maclaren. Ralph first sees Winsome when she is carrying water from the river and is immediately aware of the grace of her movements.

Suddenly there emerged from the indigo shade where the blue spruce firs overarched the bridge, a girl carrying two shining pails of water. Her arms were bare, her sleeves rolled high above her elbow; and her figure, tall and shapely, swayed gracefully to the movement of the pails. . . he could not but be satisfied with the fitness and the beauty of the girl who came up the path, swinging the pails with compensatory sway of lissom body, and a strong outward flex of the elbow which kept the brimming pails swinging in safety by her side.

Ralph never took his eyes off her as she came, the theories of James's Court notwithstanding.²

This is a deceptively simple piece of description containing several layers of effect, and written by someone who knows all about the stresses and strains of carrying pails full of water. It tells us that Winsome appears suddenly with a pail in each hand and walks towards the black pot. Her

¹ The Lilac Sunbonnet, II, p. 28.
emergence from the dark blue shadow of the firs gives her a quality of brightness by contrast which is reinforced by the "shining" of the water in the pails; but the brightness is implied, not stated, because she is first and foremost a figure of daily reality, sleeves rolled up to free her arms for work, using strength and balance skilfully interacting to keep her pails steady as she moves. Her body, her arms, the "strong outward flex of the elbow" are all controlled by her instinctive understanding of her task, which she performs lightly and easily in spite of its difficulty. Ralph watches her, fascinated by her unconscious grace; "satisfied", "lissom" and "brimming" convey the pleasure his senses feel, and the combination of "fitness" and "beauty" sums up the unique impression which Winsome makes of strength and competence allied with "tall and shapely" loveliness. The sound of the words suggest the rhythm of her movements; "swayed" . . . "swinging" . . . "swinging" . . . "sway" cunningly placed in the description govern its movement with an accompaniment of consonants that do not come to rest until they reach the static "safety by her side". One can even detect an intensification of rhythm as she approaches Ralph; at a distance she "swayed gracefully" but as she comes nearer "sway", "swinging" and "brimming" convey the sway itself. The sensuousness of the ideas and the graceful power of Winsome's body gain force from the flat mention of their antithesis, "the theories of James's Court" which retreat into the background of Ralph's mind.
Next comes a description of her hair in terms of living colour and line, unruly, individual, identified with sunshine and used here as elsewhere as the physical symbol of Winsome's femininity.

Fair hair, crisping and tendrilling over her brow, swept back in loose and flossy circlets till caught close behind her head by a tiny ribbon of blue — then, again escaping, it went scattering and wavering over her shoulders wonderingly, like nothing on earth but Winsome Charteris's hair.¹

Crockett here is writing for the taste of a public that liked girls to be dainty and sweet as in a lacy old-fashioned Valentine, but in spite of our prejudice, the participles, adjectives and adverb he chooses are clearly directed by the idea of freedom. Her hair "crisps" and "tendrils" in fresh living abundance, the verbs active in movement; it is "swept back" and "caught", both participles implying force and purpose; it is "flossy" and in "circlets", gleaming and curling in natural vigour; when it escapes it does not merely fall on her shoulders but "scatters" and "wavers" in riotous life; and it does so "wonderingly", in a manner unique, astonishing and like nothing but itself. Her fair hair, in fact, is an epitome of her personality and the part she is to play in freeing Ralph from restricting theology. Out of date the description may be, but it has function and control beyond mere prettiness.

To counter the over-sweet impression, Crockett lets us see her at work; she

set her pails as frankly and plumply on the ground as

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, 1, p. 18.
if she were plain as a pikestaff\(^1\) and pours water into the pot, swinging them upward "with a single dexterous movement". She whistles to her dogs like a boy and sends them to drive the straying cows. When Meg Kissock arrives and gets into one of the tubs to tramp the blankets, Ralph realises that this is an ordinary blanket-washing such as he has seen by the Water of Leith, but he finds himself in an impossible situation. Meg had been barefoot and he has not been embarrassed by her climbing into the tub, but when Winsome takes off her shoes the hot blood surged in responsive shame to Ralph Peden's cheeks and temples.\(^2\)

The prospect of spying on her as she removes her stockings fills him with intense sexual fear and he flies toward the manse, in symholic retreat. Winsome looks just in time to see the black figure disappear.

This is their first encounter, and for all its triviality it enmeshes them irrevocably with one another, its very slightness arousing their sexual curiosity. Ralph remains uneasily with Mr Welsh in the manse, and from their discussion we find that he has been studying and making notes on the opinions of King Lemuel's mother about women. The irony is obvious. The student who is book-learned on this topic is so shy, so inexperienced, so inhibited that he has

\(^1\)The Lilac Sunbonnet, 1, p. 19.
\(^2\)The Lilac Sunbonnet, 1, p. 24.
been terrified by two girls performing a domestic task. Moreover, the remembrance of the girls creeps into what he says; he cannot keep the scene by Loch Grannoch out of his mind because its vivid sense-impressions have blotted out the pages he has so laboriously read.

Winsome in turn finds the books he has left behind. "Her heart beat faster"¹ as their strange lettering builds up in her mind a curiously attractive picture of their owner. The notebook "with writing upon it in the neatest and delicatest of hands" is the most personal of all and appeals at once to her senses, especially when the neat strictures on the nature of women in Ralph's script, as neat and tidy as his ideas, have been reduced to absent-minded scribbles in pencil about lilac. She gathers up the books gently, ties them in the kerchief from her neck and takes them home with her thoughtfully.

She entered the dreaming court-yard, and walked sedately across its silent sun-flooded spaces without a sound. She passed the door of the cool parlour where her grandfather and grandmother sat,... Into her own white little room Winsome went, and laid the bundle of books in the bottom of the wall-press, which was lined with sheets of the Cairn Edward Miscellany. She looked at them some time before she shut the door.²

This is cunning in what it suggests but does not say. The courtyard is "dreaming" because as yet nothing has happened to disturb it, but dreaming implies awakening. "Silent" implies the possibility of sound. Winsome walks "sedately" —

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, III, p. 29.
²The Lilac Sunbonnet, III, p. 32.
in such a different manner from the strong controlled
movements with which we have seen her move earlier -- by
deliberate effort concealing the fact that she is mischiev-
ously happy in playing a trick; she is pleased with
herself and quietly gleeful "without a sound". She passes
from the "sun-flooded" courtyard -- and "sun-flooded"
holds a hint of the latent emotion which is soon to sweep
over her -- and carefully avoids the "cool parlour" of the
old couple. When she reaches her room she does not put
down the books but "lays" them gently in the wall-press,
showing the interest they hold for her by the softness of
the gesture and her long look at them; the newspaper lining
the press brings it sharply before our eyes. She is aware
of her involvement with the strange young man but as yet with
mere mischief and amusement and only a slight hint of some-
thing more deep and tender.

To us Ralph's terrified flight may seem overdone. To
the impatient George Blake it appears "monstrous":

This is a case of the nearly impossible, the flagrantly
arbitrary arrangement of fact to meet the need for
prettiness.¹

But Ralph, one must remember, is an exceptionally naive
young man, little more than an adolescent thrust into
sudden propinquity with an unknown young woman of great
attractiveness, and such sexual embarrassments are part of
the initiation of growing up even today. In 1894 his

¹George Blake, Barrie and the Kailyard School (London 1951)
p. 50.
flight would seem both natural and a measure of his innate delicacy, something for sympathy as well as laughter. Crockett finds no strain or improbability in it, for he returns to the incident later and makes use of it to show how Ralph has in the meantime developed in poise. During their first day together, Winsome asks him why he had run away and Ralph replies frankly that it was because he thought she was going to take off her stockings. Winsome laughs.

"Poor fellow," she said, "you must indeed have been terribly frightened!"

"I was," said Ralph Peden with conviction. "But I am not so sure that I should feel quite the same about it now!"  

This places the incident in realistic perspective; their ease together shows how close their relationship has grown. They recognise the foolishness of the incident as clearly as George Blake does and can speak of its implications without embarrassment at all -- with shared amusement. Ralph can pick up and throw back Winsome's challenge and issue his own in return, looking forward to being a great deal bolder if occasion offers again.

Ralph's flight, the first instance of his sexual disturbance, is in the later chapters recognised and acknowledged for what it is by the two lovers. The books also have their part to play as sexual images. Left behind by Ralph, they are taken home by Winsome tied in her kerchief.

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and brought back the next day in her expectation of meeting their owner. But she has forgotten the notebook, so much lighter and more intimately Ralph's than the Hebrew Bible and Lexicon and the Luther Commentary which lie on the grass as he comes upon her.

Like a surge of Solway tide the remembrance came over her that, when she had plucked the dandelion for her soothsaying, she had thrust it carelessly into the loose bosom of her lilac-sprigged gown. Indeed, a corner of it peeped out at this moment. Had he seen it? -- monstrous thought! She knew young men and the interpretations that they put upon nothings! Winsome is by no means as innocent as Ralph; she has had her secret thoughts about the notebook and knows what they signify. Time and again Crockett refers to the notebook privileged in its position "where it could be stirred by the beating of her heart" and makes clear its function in the sexual encounters. Winsome confesses that she still has the notebook, pretending to be afraid;

But if Winsome wanted a new sensation she was disappointed, for Ralph was by no means angry.

"So that's where it went?" said Ralph, smiling gladly.

"Yes," said Winsome, blushing not so much with guilt as with the consciousness of the locality of the notebook at that moment, which she was not yet prepared to tell him. But she consoled herself with the thought that she would tell him one day.

The notebook has become a pawn in the light-hearted sexual

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1 *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, V, p. 47.
2 *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, VI, p. 57.
3 *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, XXXIV, p. 287.
game the lovers are playing now that they are sure of one another.

The lilac sunbonnet itself is the next and strongest sexual symbol. Ralph becomes obsessively aware of it, and Winsome flaunts it in his presence, after forbidding him to accompany her to John Scott's house or to kiss her hand, "swinging her bonnet by its strings".

But she had presumed just a hair-breadth too far on Ralph's tenderness. He snatched the lilac sunbonnet out of her hands, tearing, in his haste, one of the strings off, and leaving it in Winsome's hand, from which it fell to the ground. Then he kissed it, once and twice outside where the sun had shone on it, and again inside where it had rested on her head.

"You have torn it," she said, complainingly, yet without anger.

"I am very glad," said Ralph Peden, coming nearer to her with a light in his eye that she had never seen before.

Winsome dropped the string, snatched up the bonnet, and fled up the hill as trippingly as a young doe towards the herd's cottage. At the top of the fell she paused for a moment, with her hand on her side, as if out of breath. Ralph Peden was still holding the torn bonnet-string in his hand.

He held it up, hanging loose like a pennon from his hand. She could hear the words come clear up the hill.

"I'm very -- glad -- that -- I -- tore -- it, and I will come and -- see -- your -- grandmother!"1

This is very close to the kind of situation Lawrence used to express the tension between the sexes. The swinging of the sunbonnet pushes Ralph's control beyond the safe stage

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1 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XIII, pp 120-121.
of tenderness; he shows violence, not only taking the sunbonnet from Winsome — "snatching it" — but tearing it in the process, metaphorically violating her. Her statement of what he has done — "complainingly, yet without anger" — might have come from Lawrence's Miriam herself, the tone and words are so similar; it can be interpreted as an unconscious willingness to be mastered. Ralph kisses the bonnet outside, where the sunshine, the symbol of life, has been shining, and inside, where Winsome's hair, the symbol of her femininity, has touched it. After this he is triumphant, showing masculine strength. "I am very glad!" he says twice, with the "light in his eye that she had never seen before", an image exactly the same as Lawrence's description of "the wide young eyes blazing with light".¹ Ralph retains the bonnet-string and holds it up as a pennon, a flag carried in battle, meaning in this case victory and capture. Winsome looks at her ravaged bonnet "wistfully"; of the string

"I can easily sew another on anyway;" she concluded, after some thought.²

But the conclusion is reached only after thought; the wistfulness and the pause show that something irrevocable has happened and that the sunbonnet, and by inference Winsome, will never be the same again.

²The Lilac Sunbonnet, XIII, p. 122.
Nature, therefore, in three distinct ways, serves Crockett's purposes — by representing the disturbing beauty of life which overthrows Ralph's priggish coldness, by echoing, accompanying and interpreting the emotions of the lovers in varying situation, and by rendering vividly the excitement which runs through them in one another's presence. The minor characters, as well as fulfilling their parts in the plot, are grouped so as to accord with or contradict nature in clearly defined ways. The imagery in which they are depicted ranges Gilbert Peden and Allan Welsh on the side of cold, narrowness and darkness. Walter Skirving, brooding silently on the past, is part of these things too until he suddenly acts in contradiction; he sends Winsome to Allan Welsh with a packet containing Welsh's letters to his dead wife and a miniature of her, and the imagery here implies the bursting out of water into the parched desert of Welsh's life:

. . . his own letters, breaking from their brittle confining band, poured in a cataract of folded paper and close-knit writing which looked like his old self of long ago, upon the table before him.\(^1\)

On the other hand, Mrs Skirving and young Andra Kissock are on the side of freedom and natural joy in life. Mrs Skirving sends Ralph and Winsome out into the summer sunshine, and in her chatter about her own past life sets an example of uninhibited amusement and gladness; moreover she has her gleeful comment to make on Gilbert Peden as a

\(^1\)The Lilac Sunbonnet, XL, p. 338.
"When I kenned yer faither," said the old dame, "he wad hae been nocht the waur o' a pickle mair o' the auld Adam in him. It's a rale usefu' commodity in this life." 1

Andra's comments on Ralph's awkwardness echo the same thought.

"Ye guddle troot!" he cried, scornfully, "I wad admire to see ye! Ye wad only fyle yer shune an' yer braw breeks!" 2

Both old age and youth realise and express the natural goodness of abundant life and mock the inadequacy of those who deny it.

The other pairs of lovers are arranged to contrast with Ralph and Winsome. Saunders Mowdie's views on marriage and besomshanks are as grotesque a caricature of marriage, as his mother's views on the church are a caricature of religion. Meg Kissock and Jock Forrest the ploughman examplify an undemanding undemonstrative love, as wholesome and straightforward as Meg tramping the blankets and singing with all her might or teasing Winsome with Ralph's poem rescued from Saunders' pipe. Meg is the devoted servant, and friend, sharp-tongued but faithful; she looks at Ralph keenly in case he may be unworthy of Winsome, but once satisfied she is on the side of the lovers. It is appropriate, therefore, that Meg's understanding with Jock, less imaginative than Winsome's love for Ralph, as Meg recognises herself —

"0 I 'wush it was me!" she said, pushing Winsome from the room. 3

1 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXIII, p. 186.
2 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXIV, p. 193.
3 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXXIV, p. 280.
to go and meet Ralph -- should nevertheless be worlds away from Jess's passionate covetousness of the young divinity student the moment she sees him. Meg and Jess are contrasts in colour and temperament, each setting off the uniqueness of Winsome. Meg is buxom, ruddy-cheeked, contented and practical, a creature of daylight and commonsense; Jess is dark, gipsylike, graceful and ambitious, both devious and politic, intercepting letters without scruple and retiring to the dark byre to read them,

with her candle in the lantern throwing patterns on the cobwebby wall from the tiny perforations all round,¹ an image which sums up the complex impression she is intended to make. Crockett depicts these characters surrounding his principals with great care and enjoyment, and inserts what amount to short stories built round them -- Saunders and the Kirk Session, Andra Kissock and Jock Little playing Red Indians on their way to school, Jock Gordon's machinations as he escorts Ralph to Edinburgh, John Bairdieson and the Synod of the Narrow Kirk. These are Stickit Minister elements being used as realistic adjuncts to a more imaginative central story. The theme which unites them all is the opposition of natural scenes and affections to the straitened attitude of dogmatic religion, a theme expressed in the shrewd humorous talk of Galloway people busy in their everyday activities as well as in the sensuous natural flow of the love-affair. But

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, XX, p. 162.
if this were the whole of the theme, *The Lilac Sunbonnet* could be dismissed as a pleasant romantic tale of young love triumphing over old hatred and harsh theology, with the author's affectionate laughter as benign accompaniment -- a conventional escape to happiness distinguished only by particular deftness in natural description. But Crockett takes the theme much further; he does not merely allow his hero and heroine to escape from their complex inheritance of Calvinist dogma into the carefree Cavalier gaiety which is the other half of their background, but shows them as aware of a strong religious alternative to both extremes. Just as they are closer to one another out of doors, so are they closer to God in the beauty of nature. They meet in the freshness of early morning and quietly exchange thoughts which have a mystical quality.

"I too --" she began, and paused as if startled at what she was about to say. She went on, "I never heard any one say things like these. I did not know that any one else had thoughts like these excepting myself."

"And have you thought these things?" said Ralph, with a quick responsive joy in his heart.

"Yes," replied Winsome, looking down on the ground and playing with the loose string of the lilac sunbonnet. "I used often to wonder how it was that I could not look on the loch on Sabbath morning without a feeling as if I were about to cry. It was often better to look upon it than to go to Maister Welsh's kirk. But I ought not to say these things to you," she said, with a quick thought of his future profession.

Ralph smiled. There were few things that Winsome Charteris might not say to him. He too had his experience to collate.

"Have you ever stood on a hill-top as though you were suspended in the air, when you seem to feel the
earth whirling away from beneath you, rushing swiftly eastward towards the sunrise?"

"I have heard it," said Winsome, unexpectedly.

"Heard it?" queried Ralph, with doubt in his voice.

"Yes," said Winsome calmly, "I have often heard the earth wheeling round on still nights when I stood out on the top of the Craigs, where there was no sound, and all the house was asleep. It was as if some Great One were saying "Hush!" to the angels -- I think God himself!"

These are not the opinions of the kirk of the Marrow; neither were they expressed in the "Acts Declaratory", or the "Protests", or "Claims of Right" made by the Faithful Contending Remnant. But Ralph would not at that moment have hesitated to add them to the Westminster Confession.¹

Here we see the peculiar solitariness of the lovers meeting and blending, or rather each perceiving in the other a mind which has shared sensations until then thought of as unique. They are both intuitively aware of the same things, the "quick responsive joy", the direct perception of God in His universe felt through the magnificent movement of earth through space. Crockett lays bare his intimate feelings about religion, whatever the duller institutionalised Robertson Nicoll may have thought, and once he has affirmed the mystical experiences of his principal figures he has established a base from which he can mock Sessions and Synods to his heart's content. The Lilac Sunbonnet may through ridicule of the trivial side of religious organisations seem to question their value, but at the same time it quietly and confidently asserts the validity of deeper, more

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, XIII, pp 114-115.
genuine religious experience. The assertions are not intrusive; they may -- they do -- last only for a sentence or two before Crockett returns to his humorous ironic realism, but they occur so often that they have a cumulative effect and one is perpetually aware of their presence in the background, gentle asides and comments combining the prosaic and the mystic, the Christian and the natural, in a way which has its closest and possibly only exact parallel in the Scottish novels of George MacDonald.

It was a marvellous dawning, this one that Winsome waited for. Dawn is the secret of the universe. It thrills us somehow with a far-off prophecy of that eternal dawning when the God That Is shall reveal Himself -- the Morn that shall brighten into the more perfect day.¹

Winsome turned the bewildering calmness of her eyes upon him. A gentleman, they say, is calm-eyed. So is a cow. But in the eyes of a good woman there is a peace which comes from many generations of mothers -- who, every one Christs according to their way, have suffered their heavier share of the Eden curse.²

Up through the orchard comes a girl, tall and graceful, but with a touch of something nobler and stiller that does not come to girlhood. It is the seal of the diviner Eden grace which only comes with the after-Eden pain.³

Passages such as these remind one of George MacDonald's longer fuller statements of the same kind -- the insistent commentary on events and characters, the kindly but inexorable sermonising, the mood of quiet description that turns to

¹ The Lilac Sunbonnet, X, p. 89.
² The Lilac Sunbonnet, XIII, p. 112.
³ The Lilac Sunbonnet, XLV, p. 387.
Christian meditation. Crockett does not have the slowness, the denseness of detail or the expository preaching of MacDonald's Scottish novels, but he catches at times the same manner.

A minor character, for example, Ebie Farish, the rough unimaginative ploughman from Craig Ronald who flirts ponderously with Jess, is used to express the idea of the divine in nature which Ralph and Winsome have expressed already. He stands on the bridge looking at the dark river.

He looked over. He saw the stars, which were perfectly reflected a hundred yards away on the smooth expanse, first waver, then tremble, and lastly break into a myriad delicate shafts of light, as the water quickened and gathered. He spat in the water and thought of trout for breakfast. But the long roar of the rapids of the Dee came over the hill and brought a feeling of stillness with it, weird and remote. Uncertain lights shot hither and thither under the bridge, in strange gleams and reflections. The ploughman was awed. He continued to gaze. The stillness closed in upon him. The aromatic breath of the pines seemed to cool him and remove him from himself. He had a sense that it was the Sabbath morning, and that he had just washed his face to go to church. It was the nearest thing to worship he had ever known. Such moments come to the most material and are their theology.1

This paragraph, part of a long exposition of the idea which it contains, could have come from George MacDonald.

Consider, for example, this extract from Robert Falconer.

He lay gazing up into the depth of the sky, rendered deeper and bluer by the masses of white cloud that hung almost motionless below it, until he felt a kind of bodily fear lest he should fall off the face of the round earth into the abyss. A gentle wind,

1The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXI, p. 167.
laden with pine odours from the sun-heated trees behind
him, flapped its light wing in his face: the humanity
of the world smote his heart; the great sky towered
up over him, and its divinity entered his soul; a
strange longing after something 'he knew not nor could
name' awoke within him...

Strange as it may sound to those who have never
thought of such things save in connection with Sundays
and Bibles and churches and sermons, that which was
now working in Falconer's mind was the first dull and
faint movement of the greatest need that the human
heart possesses -- the need of the God-man. There
must be truth in the scent of that pine-wood: some
one must mean it.¹

The concept of nature as part of the divine, of the natural
and instinctive as part of God's working, is axiomatic in
MacDonald's Christian mysticism. Consider also Ralph's
confrontation with Allan Welsh.

"It is true what you say," said Ralph; "I mourn
for it every word, but I cannot and will not submit
my conscience and my heart to the keeping even of the
Marrow Kirk."

"Ye should have thought on that sooner,"
interjected the minister, gravely.

"God gave me my affections as a sacred trust,
This also is part of my religion. And I will not,
I cannot in any wise give up hope of winning this girl
whom I love, and whom you above all others ought
surely to love."²

Crockett's assumption and continual mention of the
divine spirit which dwells in the Galloway hills and
countryside may therefore be regarded as a fourth use to

¹George MacDonald: Robert Falconer (London 1868) Vol I
XVIII, pp 243-244.

²The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXXII, p. 268.
which he puts nature in The Lilac Sunbonnet, under the influence of MacDonald. Once the link with the older novelist is adumbrated, debts to him appear on every side. In Chapter V of Malcolm, Lady Florimel putting on her stockings reminds us of Winsome taking hers off. Malcolm's power over the wild stallion in The Marquis of Lossie may have some relationship to Ralph's power over the colt. The mouldering Gothic antiquity of Greatorix Castle may owe something to Castle Warlock. The unreal melodramatic plot played out by real characters, and more convincing on grounds of symbolism than on grounds of literal truth, could be derived from MacDonald. Above all, Jock Gordon the local "daftie", the privileged foot of the parish with his

strange elr with quavering voice -- the voice of those to whom God has not granted their due share of wisdom is a character after MacDonald's heart. In spite of his wild fits of frenzy, Crockett treats him with sympathy and gives him an important part to play in the action, melodramatic though that be and reminiscent of Mad Sir Uchtred. It is he who saves Winsome from Agnew Greatorix as she lies at the insulter's mercy; Greatorix


3 The Lilac Sunbonnet, IX, p. 73.
struck wildly at his assailant, but, lying on his back with the biting and strangling thing above him, his arms only met on one another in vain blows. He felt teeth as of some great beast meet in his throat, and in the sudden agony he sent abroad the mighty roar of a man in the grips of death by violence. But his assailant was silent, save for a fierce moaning growl as of a wild beast greedily lapping fresh blood.

Also it is he who guides Ralph over the hill tracks to Edinburgh, contributing his part to the central theme by stressing the evil of city life compared to the countryside.

"Na," said Jock, "an' thank ye kindly a' the same. There's muckle cankersome loons there that micht snap up a guid-lookin' lad like Jock, an' ship him ontill their nesty ships afore he could cry 'Mulwharchar and Craignell!' Jock Gordon may be a fule, but he kens when he's weel aff. Nae Auld Reekies for him, an' thank ye kindly. . . ."

Grotesque and uncanny he may be, with his eyes shining like a cat's out of the dark of the manger where, like an ape, he sat all night cross-legged but he is shrewd, quick and individual, one of God's innocents, "the instrument of God" and is used seriously, without mockery. We feel very strongly in him a borrowing from George MacDonald.

However, although George MacDonald undoubtedly had his part in forming the symbolism of The Lilac Sunbonnet, he cannot be said to have improved its quality as a mystery story. There is no sharp denouement with the wicked defeated and punished. Instead the general reconciliation

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1 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXX, p. 252.
2 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXXVII, p. 318.
3 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXI, p. 172.
4 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XXXIII, p. 273.
produces an effect of anti-climax. Everyone is understood and forgiven — Jess, Allan Welsh, Agnew Greatorix; even Gilbert Peden is reconciled to his son, and we are told that in a letter he has reported that the Marrow Kirk "had a repeating tune the other day",¹ a considerable concession in that austere body. Universal happiness and salvation, though a tribute to the goodness of Providence, is disappointing to readers who are only human; D.H. Lawrence would have been affronted to discover the tension between the sexes dissolved into a happy, humour-laden truce. Ralph is perhaps even a disgrace to male dignity, happy with the happiness of a cherished pet, his wife still managing the affairs of the farm and glad that she had made him wear a beard, regarding him with amused affectionate tolerance.

The lilac sunbonnet, the erstwhile sex symbol, has dwindled to a frayed and faded adornment on the head of one of his two children. Crockett is ironically resigned to feminine domination in a household:

The love of the after-years depends chiefly on the capacity of a wife to be amused by her husband's peculiarities — and not to let him see it.²

This may be regarded as realism or not according to the gender of the reader, but it brings the final chapter to a neat controlled ending with no loose ends. Meg is married to Jock Forrest who has become Winsome's grieve; Jess is

¹The Lilac Sunbonnet, XLV, p. 372.
²The Lilac Sunbonnet, XLV, p. 349.
married to Agnew Greatorix, managing him firmly and allowing him just one glass of sherry at dinner; and Ralph and Winsome at harvesting time in the autumn sunshine are surrounded with contentment and harmony and two mischievous children. The last scene has a warm realistic gossipy strain of everyday domesticity which brings the story to an individual but satisfactory anchorage.

There is no other of Crockett's books quite like The Lilac Sunbonnet. It is the nearest thing he ever achieves to a novel of ideas. From this time on he concerns himself almost entirely with tales of adventure, of action, of vigorous lively incident. Even his Covenanting novels centre on what happens; the beliefs are taken for granted and merely trigger off the events. The Raiders in this same year 1894 is something so new and different in his writing that it demands to be examined in a separate chapter, along with Men of the Moss Hags, The Grey Man, The Black Douglas and the other historical novels which it heralds on the one hand, and on the other Cleg Kelly, Kit Kennedy, Kid McGhee and the semi-autobiographical domestic novels which, although they deal with his own times, resemble The Raiders more than The Lilac Sunbonnet.

Its uniqueness may be due to several factors. It gestated slowly, growing in his mind over years instead of, like so many of the others, over months. It related intimately to his freshest memories of Galloway and to the places in which his first two decades were passed -- the blanket-washing takes place at Loch Grannoch, the old name
of Woodhall Loch just across the road from Little Duchrae, and Craig Ronald is Little Duchrae itself, made larger and more prosperous. He was able to dwell slowly and lovingly on these familiar places because he had made Ralph Peden a stranger on whose mind they were to have a vital influence; in other Galloway books, the background is there but the characters are native and to the manner born. His own personality permeates the book, gently amused at the lovers and their ways, laughing at the Marrow Kirk but ironically, without malice, enjoying the talk at the end of the day, repeating stories that had been familiar to him and the countryside, remembering himself and his youthful games in the antics of Andra Kissock and Jock Little. The detail of houses and byres, milking-time and evening trysts is found more generously described here, and perhaps more vividly because for the first time; he will use it again and again but never so lavishly in one book.

Possibly, however, what makes The Lilac Sunbonnet so carefully meditated and -- for Crockett -- so intellectually planned is its relationship to his own development. It is by no means a literal account of his mental pilgrimage, but there are discernable parallels. His marriage to Ruth Milner can be laid beside that of Ralph to Winsome; she and her well-to-do Manchester background were as different to his Castle Douglas one as the rich ménage of Craig Ronald was to that of James's Court, and he had to adapt to her life-style. The fact that, in the story, town and country elements are turned the other way round need not obscure the
likeness. Moreover, Crockett was moving in the same direction as Ralph with his writing. Ralph reacted violently against the Marrow Kirk in favour of poetry and had to rebel in order to be free; Crockett in January 1895, three months after the publication in book form of The Lilac Sunbonnet, gently but firmly laid down the ministry of the Free Church in favour of full-time writing. In his position and in his time, it was as courageous a decision, though less spectacular. While writing The Lilac Sunbonnet he must already have been balancing the Free Church ministry against the greater range and freedom of a career as a man of letters, and the success of The Stickit Minister and The Raiders must have intensified this interior debate. He could have been convincing himself as well as Ralph that one could be a sincere Christian outside any religious office or religious denomination; his turning to George MacDonald, who had to free himself from dogmatic institutions and creeds in order to serve God in his individual way, may have been as much for a practical as for a literary example. The process implied by the symbolism may have been debated between Crockett and his wife, as well as between Crockett and his own desire to be more his own man than a Free Church minister could ever be. At any rate, the decision was made, and Crockett, although still a member of the Free Church, ceased to be a minister. For Craig Ronald read Bank House, Penicuik, and the similarity is obvious; one can only regret, for Crockett's sake, that the two generous legacies of goods and property were only
in the fiction.

Having externalised his own dilemma in the form of a story, having used Ralph Peden as a convenient substitute for himself, he reveals in The Lilac Sunbonnet a great deal of his own feeling and thinking and motivation; it is, in advance, a kind of Apologia Pro Vita Sua. And once the book has been written, once the ideas have been thought out, once the decision has been taken, it is wholly in keeping with his personality that he should put it behind him and never again write anything so completely concerned with ideas. The crisis over, he loses interest. He has examined the problem at length and solved it according to his own lights, first in terms of fiction and then in terms of fact and action. From now on he is free to follow his imagination, and The Raiders is the first splendid, hopeful, invigorating result.
Judged by Crockett's own standards, *The Raiders* is his best book; his personal tastes and values are more fully expressed in it than in anything that followed, and he was writing moreover with that happy trust in his own abilities that must come to any author whose first efforts have found high favour. It is a "yarn" with no strong moral, merely the simplest everyday ones of courage and fair dealing implied rather than stated. There is no purpose but to tell the story well, with as much varied excitement as can be crammed into its forty-eight chapters. Thrilling events, not static self-questionings, are the mainsprings of its plot; Crockett is pleasing himself and writing colourful adventure such as he enjoyed in Scott and Stevenson. One would expect this type of story to be simpler and more extrovert than *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, and so it is, but by the irony of Crockett's temperament *The Raiders* works by implication in the opposite direction. In *The Lilac Sunbonnet* he had used nature's beauty and energy to free his over-prudent hero from the constrictions of puritanical religion; in *The Raiders* a thoughtless irresponsible hero through conflict with evil outlaws and the terrifying majesty of nature against which it is played turns gradually towards fairly conventional religion, though not in its narrowest form.

There is little explicit history in *The Raiders* in
spite of its period setting. Here and there Crockett hooks his narrative on to events and personages; George I is on the throne remotely in London and his customs officers play a part in the early chapters, since one of the consequences of the 1707 Act of Union had been to stimulate the contraband trade on the Solway. Authorities in Edinburgh are distantly active in the same way, though Sheriff Agnew of Lochnaw is mentioned only to show how little his power was respected by wild Galloway families like the Maxwells. The Faus and the Marshalls, the hill gypsies who formed a large part of the raiders, are regarded as akin to and to some extent direct continuations of the Highland Host that was marched down into Galloway against the Covenanters in the late 1670s, before the Killing Time. The 1715 rising is only recently over, and two branches of the Maxwell family have been on opposite sides; Richard Maxwell of Craigdarroch, the heroine's father, is a Whig and as he dies shot by the smugglers utters curses and Biblical texts alternately, whereas Lady Grizel Maxwell of Earlstoun, her elderly cousin, is of the old religion and makes her first appearance in a coat whose velvet collar is "a wee rusty" because her father the Earl was wearing it when beheaded for his part in the Jacobite cause.

1 XXXVI, pp. 309-310.  
2 XXXIX, pp. 331-332.  
3 VIII, p. 81; XIV, pp. 131-134.  
4 XXXII, p. 272.
These particular Maxwells are fictitious, but the situation is true; Kenmure and Derwentwater, the leaders of the rebellion, were executed, and Nithsdale, another Maxwell, would have gone the same way had he not escaped.

The Killing Time, when the Covenanters were persecuted by the Royalist dragoons under men like Claverhouse and Grierson of Lag, lies heavily in the memories of the older characters. Patrick Heron's father and Silver Sand, the mysterious pedlar, have each ridden with the king's troops against the Covenanters, and then through disgust at the cruelties committed under orders have changed sides and been hunted in their turn along with the persecuted saints. John Macmillan, the minister of the parish of Balmaghie, is mentioned several times, and it is to him that Patrick the hero proposes to go for counsel about the state of his soul.\(^1\) But historical events and personages are like twigs and branches supporting the spider's web of the narrative; they give a framework of actuality to Crockett's plot which he constructs with imaginary characters passing through experiences he has read of in places with which he is familiar. From local traditions and from local sources like Nicholson's *Historical and Traditional Tales*,\(^2\) the

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1. XXXV, p. 296.

Castle Douglas Miscellany, the Scots Magazine and Simpson's Traditions of the Covenanters he draws his knowledge of smugglers and pirates, of gypsies and hill folk, of the Murder Hole and the evil house of Craignairney, and weaves them into his tale.

1 Letter from S.R. Crockett, December 4th 1893, to his cousin William Crocket, asking him to lend him "the copy of the Castle-Douglas Miscellany which I know your father bought at Joseph Train's sale... There are many of Train's articles in it and it would be a rich treasure trove for me". The letter was lent by Professor J.C. Smyth. The Joseph Train mentioned was the Castle Douglas Excise Officer and antiquary who was the friend and correspondent of Sir Walter Scott and provided him with much material about Galloway history and suggested the use of William Paterson, "Old Mortality", as the focus for a novel about Claverhouse and the Covenanters.

2 Letter from S.R. Crockett, December 4th 1893, to his cousin William Crocket, in which he says that "I got a set of the Scots Magazine (1728-18??) at Stillie's sale and a copy of Train's History of the Isle of Man". The letter was lent by Professor J.C. Smyth.

3 Robert Simpson: Traditions of the Covenanters, or, Gleanings among the Mountains (Edinburgh n.d.).
The plot is of elementary simplicity, one incident following another with untiring gusto. Because of an old quarrel, Captain Yawkins and his smugglers burn down Craigdarroch, the homestead of the smuggling Maxwells and their sister May. Hector Faa, one of the leaders of the gypsies, takes the opportunity to carry May off to make her his wife, according to Faa custom; her father is killed in the fighting. Patrick Heron, laird of nearby Isle Rathan, and his friend Silver Sand set off to rescue her while the Maxwell brothers pursue their stolen cattle. At Clachanpluck (Laurieston village, where Crockett was at school, before it received its modern name) the hero and Silver Sand separate, and Patrick makes his way to the bridge of Dee just in time to be involved with the terrified cattle as the gypsies drive them up into the hills.

Tired and bruised, he seeks shelter at the small farm of Mossdale and is befriended by Sammle and Eppie Tamson; after a night's rest he is guided by Sammle over the hills towards the outlaws' lair, hearing as he goes of the disappearance a few years back of Sammle's little daughter Marion. Sammle leaves Patrick to complete his journey alone and make his way through the Wolf's Slock, the pass which leads through the hills above Loch Enoch to where the outlaws may be found. He is overtaken by mists and a storm and seeks shelter in what he takes to be a shepherd's cottage. In fact, it is one of the robbers' headquarters and he is taken prisoner. Just as he des pairs, he discovers
that May Maxwell is also a prisoner there, along with a little girl who is Sammle Tamson's lost Marion. May and Patrick escape, but are pursued by the outlaws and two bloodhounds. They are run to earth beside the dreaded Murder Hole in Loch Neldricken, where Silver Sand and his dog Quharrie arrive in the nick of time to save them.

Down in the lowlands again, May is welcomed by her cousin Lady Grizel to the Great House of Earlstoun and Patrick returns to Rathlan, where he lies ill for a time, tended by Silver Sand and the Tamsons, who have moved there from Mossdale for fear of the outlaws. An attack by the outlaws and their friends on Earlstoun in the autumn is beaten off by the Maxwells, aided by local support (Patrick is wounded in the leg), and it is decided that a punitive expedition must go up and drive the raiders away once and for all. Patrick is one of the party, which sets off in December, when the treacherous bogs are frozen and can be traversed safely. After the outlaws have tried to destroy them by engulfing them in the waters from Loch Valley whose dam they destroy, Patrick volunteers to go forward and spy out the land on his skates. He finds the enemy encamped on the island in Loch Enoch, and Silver Sand is with them. To his surprise, he discovers that Silver Sand is really John Faa, Lord and Earl of Little Egypt, the king of the Faa clan. But he is nevertheless Patrick's friend; after warning the gypsies of their danger both from the lowland party and an approaching storm, Silver Sand takes Patrick to an old Covenanting hiding-place
where they shelter from the storm, having rescued little Marion Tamson from her captors. For sixteen days they are snowed in and pass the time in explanations; when they emerge they find that only the Faas have escaped destruction; the remainder of the outlaws lie dead in a great pit of snow. All that remains is for the three of them to make their way down to the House of Earlstoun and the happy ending.

This is very ordinary stuff, reminiscent of the Boys' Own Paper, yet it swept Crockett up into the best-seller list even more thoroughly than before and went into edition after edition. Possibly even his publishers were taken by surprise; in T. Fisher Unwin's regular advertisements in The Academy and The Bookman the first appearance of The Raiders announces that the second edition is now ready, the first having been sold out on the day of issue. Clearly it was not the subtlety of the plot that brought this about, but some unique attractiveness in the characters and the writing. At present we are concerned with the characters; the writing will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Patrick Heron, the lad who tells the story, is a mere bonnet laird, his Isle Rathan a not very useful island in the Solway Firth, in actuality the island of Heston in Auchencairn Bay. Crockett may have deliberately placed him in this rather middling position in society so that Patrick can express a social point of view near his own. Patrick
is a small land-owner, on friendly terms with the sons of Dumfries shopkeepers, ordinary Galloway herds like Sammle Tamson, and a pedlar like Silver Sand, and yet sufficiently secure in status to be recognised by Lady Grizel Maxwell (who had known and liked his grandfather) and to be acceptable as a brother-in-law to the Maxwells of Craigdarroch. His is a democratic outlook, independent but integrated into the social pattern of Galloway life; he is educated enough to understand why things are arranged as they are but has no desire to alter them; he respects himself but does not think himself far above the Tamsons who are his friends as well as servants. Crockett is a fatherless peasant from a small farm who by his talents has made himself known and respected in the community and has a secure status as a Free Church minister but does not think himself far above the members of his congregation. There is sufficient of a parallel to suggest that Patrick is largely a projection of Crockett's own personality -- Patrick's clumsiness and naiveté represent stages through which Crockett is aware of having come himself as he has risen in the social scale. When he allows Patrick to give himself away in his narrative so that we laugh at his slowness, he is actually laughing a little at his own younger self. In this sense, Patrick is Crockett; but in another sense Patrick is not Crockett because in the course of the book we see Patrick grow into a conventional Galloway landowner, unimaginative and respectable, accepting the social pattern more thoroughly than Crockett ever did.
Patrick is Crockett minus because although for the purposes of the story he has Crockett's intensity of sensation and sharpness of impression, he is duller and more ordinary than his author. Part of Crockett's temperament responded eagerly to the strange and the bizarre, things which Patrick instinctively distrusts; this part of Crockett is expressed through the free and mysterious gypsy Silver Sand who has a charm, a dignity and an authority which Crockett aspired to but never acquired. Silver Sand is Crockett plus, a kind of wish-fulfilment figure of impossible pedigree and exotic foreignness, sophisticated as Crockett would have liked to be but never was.

The full title of the book suggests the importance of Silver Sand in Crockett's mind: The Raiders, being Some Passages in the Life of John Faa, Lord and Earl of Little Egypt, and to underline this he gives us an abbreviated form of the writ of the Scottish Privy Council by which James V in February 1540 conveyed this exalted title upon the John Faa of his time. After this small show of learning, we move into the Foreword, supposedly written by Patrick in his thirty-seventh year¹ (although he sounds decades older, just as Crockett sounded a wise old man in the Prefaces and Introductions he furnished for the books of others when he was still comparatively young). Patrick looks back on his adventures with quiet satisfaction that they are over, and then begins to tell his story in the

¹II, p. 22.
style of the young Patrick about to plunge into them.

These two voices are a useful device; the Foreword gives us a picture of a canny rather prosaic man settled solidly into material prosperity and thankful to Providence for it, but the younger Patrick has a naiveté, a clumsy innocence, a simplicity that comes of raw inexperience. The two at first sound very different, but Crockett skilfully manipulates young Patrick's words telling the story so that we can see right from the beginning elements of the older man he is to grow into; gradually as time goes on he changes and becomes more and more like the person who wrote the Foreword. Reminders along the way neatly plot this progress -- young Patrick thriftily picking up the candlestick which Silver Sand has thrown away and preserving it to stand on the stone shelf of the milkhouse at Rathantower "to this day";¹ young Patrick telling Silver Sand priggishly that "I did not care for wine, and indeed never used it";² young Patrick announcing to Silver Sand at the beginning of their adventure that "as for me, I am at all times on the side of the law" but admitting with the older Patrick's voice that he must have spoken "with a self-righteousness that I wonder Silver Sand did not kick me for";³ young Patrick having his meal with the Tamsons and

¹XV, p. 143.
²XVI, p. 149.
³XVII, p. 152.
noting with approval that his coat had been neatly brushed and a patch put on the hole where the bullet had cut through it the night before. Noting with approval that his coat had been neatly brushed and a patch put on the hole where the bullet had cut through it the night before. Crockett means us to notice the counterpoint of the one Patrick playing against the other and relish it as part of the comedy running through the adventures.

The Foreword is pious and prosy, fixing the story in a realistic setting of comfort and security. The writer thanks God for the good harvest; one can feel his hearty satisfaction in his comfortable fat phrases:

> throughout all this realm, both hill-land and valley-land, the crops of corn, Merse wheat, Lowden oats, and Galloway bear are in the stackyards under thack and rape by the second day of September.

Things are very different now from what they were at the time of the outlaws; his mind is at ease and "prices rising", an illuminating detail, and he has time to write his account of those strange years when the hill outlaws colloqued with the wild free-traders of the Holland traffic which were for him the time of wild oat sowing when the blood ran warm — though the Laird of Rathan must defend his youthful self and point out that these days were the graceless, unhallowed days after the Great Killing, when the saints of God had disappeared from the hills of Galloway and Carrick, and when the fastnesses of the utmost hills were held by a set of wild cairds —

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1XXII, p. 195.
cattle reivers and murderers, worse than the painted savages of whom navigators to the far seas bring us word.1

A masterly touch of respectable middle-age comes in his concern for decorum:

now in any talks of the old days and of all our ancient plays there are the bairns to be considered;2 this sinks us deep in eighteenth-century Scottish domesticity. Then suddenly comes Chapter I and the change of voice.

It was upon Rathan Head that I first heard their bridle-reins jingling clear. It was ever my custom to walk in the full of the moon at all times of the year.3

Unknown riders passing at night with their harness ringing in the silence, a hero who strides out at night in the full moon's beauty, a headland above waters -- the picture with its light suggestion of sound has the magic quality of a ballad:

About the middle o' the night
She heard the bridles ring. . . .4

Crockett was pleased with his opening; he repeats it with slight variation farther down the page:

So it was in the height of the moon of May, as I said, that I heard their bridle-reins jingling clear and saw the harness glisten on their backs.

We are off, it seems, into the land of glamour, with perhaps a hint of Keats:

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1 Foreword, p. 11-12.
2 I, p. 13.
magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn
to speed us on our way. Even the slight touch of Patrick's
pomposity blends with the heroic setting: "It was ever my
custom to walk in the full of the moon at all times of the
year" — how delightfully romantic!

But Crockett is just playing with us. He has given
us a first static scene which appears splendidly like a
setting for an old romance, until we notice the staginess,
the contrived conscious simplicity and brightness which
remind us of an old-fashioned musical comedy's painted
backcloth, or of a nineteenth-century transfer-printed blue
and white plate with one or more figures in the foreground,
one lake, one moon, one romantic building, one group of
elegant trees, and improbable mountains in the shadowy
distance. He has with his tongue in his cheek built up
the beauty and moonlight; thereafter he just as carefully
demolishes it as soon as movement begins.

Patrick indulges in boyish dreams about the smugglers
and how splendid it will be to

go out to the Free Trade among the Manxmen like a
lad of spirit.¹

He lies back in his little boat and thinks, then all of a
sudden his illusions are shattered. The smugglers begin
to use him for target-practice and he has hastily to row
into the shadow to escape. His first reaction is to think

of going home in righteous indignation — the older Patrick is felt behind this thought — then curiosity makes him follow the scoundrels to the ruined churchyard of Kirk Oswald to see what they are up to. They are hiding their cargo in one of the graves. Just in time to stop him from striding foolishly into the revealing moonlight, the heroine appears, May Maxwell of Craigdarroch, who is fully as curious as Patrick and more cautious.

I had almost set my foot on the edge of this white patch of moonlight to strike across it, when, with a rustle like a brown owl alighting swiftly and softly, some one took me by the hand, wheeled me about, and ere I had time to consider, carried me back again into the thickest of the wood.¹

Together they watch the men at work and listen to their coarse jests until

From the waste came the baying of a hound — long, fitful, and very eerie.²

These are the "Loathly Dogs", the "Ghaistly Hounds", as the smugglers call them.

"The Black Deil hunts himsel' the nicht. I'm gaun hame."³

declares one of the men, and soon the group are up and away in a great clattering of stirrup-irons. Even May is afraid.

Over the wall at the corner farthest from us there came a fearsome pair. First a great grey dog, that hunted with its head down and bayed as it went. Behind it lumbered a still more horrible beast, great as an ox,
grim and shaggy also, but withal clearly monstrous and not of the earth, with broad, flat feet that made no noise, and a demon mark in scarlet upon its side, which told that the foul fiend itself that night followed the chase. May Mischief clung to my arm, and I thought she had swooned away. But the beasts passed some way beneath us, like spirits that flit by without noise, save for the ghostly baying which made one sweat with fear.

The tension slackens, and May and the hero are left to let go of one another's hands. He can think of nothing to say, though May is waiting for something. She gives up in the end.

"Guid e'en to ye," she said, dropping me a curtsy; "virtue is its ain reward, I ken. It's virtuous to do a sheep a good turn, but a kenmin' uninterestin'. Guid e'en to ye, Sheep!"

With that she turned and left me speechless, holding by the wall. Yet I have thought of many things since which I might have said — clever things too.

Off May goes, leaving Patrick to row home and decide that he dislikes her even more than he had thought before this incident.

The splendid smugglers with their ringing bridles turn out not to be romantic figures as in Kipling's "Watch the wall, my darling, while the gentlemen go by!" but coarse, rough scoundrels. The hero is foolish in his romantic imaginings about them and imprudent in his failure to keep well out of sight; if it had not been for the

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1I, pp. 19-20.
2I, pp 20-21.
heroine, he would have revealed his presence without thinking. He is distinctly unheroic, several times.

Some of them went down by the corner of the kirkyard opposite to us. May Maxwell, who had kept my hand, fearing, I think that we might have to run for it again round the circle of shade, plucked me sharply over to see what they were doing.

They were opening a grave, singing catches as their picks grated on the stones. I shivered a little, and a great fear of what we were about to see came over me. I think if May Maxwell had not gripped me by the hand I had fairly run for it.

In most romantic stories, the heroine is a timid trembler seeking protection; here she is the decisive one, the one with the brains who keeps hold of the hero in case he does not have the sense to know when to run, and pulls him nearer to the smugglers to see what they are doing. She knows what she is about, very much in the tradition of Leeb M'Lurg. May is a very Scottish heroine, full of common-sense; the frank comradeship she offers to the slower-witted boy, her later mockery and the boy's hostility are in the tradition of a Scots wooing. The only truly romantic trapping which is left to our imaginations is the eerie vision of the "Loathly Dogs", and they are part of the puzzle; if we remember the details, especially the "demon mark in scarlet", we will guess who they are later when we meet Silver Sand who sells raddle in winter to mark sheep in red, and has a huge wolf-hound Quharrie as his constant companion. We have been given a

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1I, p. 18.
fair clue to their identity.

However, in case the romance should still not be sufficiently countered by reality, Crockett supplies us with two additional counterweights before swinging into the heart of his story -- the personality of Patrick's father, and the little community of boys on Isle Rathan when Patrick is left his father's heir. On first reading, these two elements seem an unnecessary hindrance; we have been lured into the story by smugglers, supernatural apparitions and the boy and girl who are to provide the love interest, and are all agog to get on with the plot. Instead we are treated to five chapters of rambling disquisition -- but at the end of them the Galloway background has been filled in with affectionate completeness and we know Patrick very well indeed. Their very rambling garrulousness is part of Patrick's character.

Patrick's mother has died long before the beginning of the story; she had been a Galloway girl, strong and sensible, who had been carried off by one of the visitations of plague which ravaged Dumfries from time to time. Patrick, like Ralph Peden, has been brought up by his father alone on Isle Rathan, their family inheritance, and knows little of women. His father John Heron plays no part in the story; he is introduced in one chapter merely to die at the end of it and make way for his son. The idea of a dying father may have been suggested to Crockett by the death of Jim Hawkins' father at the beginning of Treasure Island and of David Balfour's at the beginning of Kidnapped,
but he utilised the father figure to much greater purpose, perhaps to compensate for the father he himself had never known. John Heron is "humorsome" and whimsical, with values that reflect Crockett's and apt, memorable sayings which all tend to uphold a philosophical acceptance of the weaknesses and inadequacies of man and his world. He has been shrewd as the father of Robert Burns was shrewd, and has taught his son surveying and land measuring, foreseeing how important these skills are to be in the future, as well as Latin, English and Euclid. He has led an active life, going out with the smugglers in his wild youth but not with the Black Smugglers of Yawkins' band, "with whom, as my father used to say quaintly, no honest smuggler hath company."¹ He had ridden with the royalist forces in the Killing Time, and had also been one of the hunted:

I hae lain snug an' cosy in Peden's cave with the auld man himsel' at my back.²

But he is not a deeply religious man; he sympathises with the Society men and encourages Patrick to attend their meetings, but he himself doubts whether the truth can be found in any one religion or any one minister.

My advice to you, Patrick, is no to be identified wi' ony extremes, to read yer Bible strictly, an' gin ye get a guid minister to sit under, to listen eidently

¹IV, p. 37.
to the word preached. It's maif than your faither ever got for ony length o' time.

The burden of his advice is caution, scepticism, moderation in all things -- almost the balanced philosophy of the Enlightenment, of Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* which was one of Scott's favourite poems, the outlook of a man whom life has disappointed but who has thought his way through to a whimsical wisdom; seeing a gull flash down to the water from the blue sky he declares

> Even thus has my life been, Paitrick. I have been most of my time but a great gull diving for herring on an east-windy day. While I have gotten a bit flounder for my pains, and whiles a rive o' drooned whalp, but o' the raie herrin' -- desperate few, man, desperate few.\(^2\)

> We canna compass godliness ... try as we may, Paitrick. But cleanliness is a kindly, common-like virtue, and it's so far on the road, at any rate.\(^3\)

He feels that he has handed on to his son, if not a rich inheritance, at least "a pickle siller" and a quality of mind worth having:

> ... gin I can leave ye the content to be doing wi' little, an' the saving salt o' honour to be kitchen to your piece, that's better than the lairdship o' a barony.\(^4\)

Above all, he leaves him his freedom, the chance to "try all ways o't". His intention, as expressed to and carried out by Matthew Ershine the Dumfries lawyer, is that Patrick

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\(^1\)II, p. 26.  
\(^2\)II, p. 24.  
\(^3\)II, p. 25.  
\(^4\)II, p. 27.
should, in his own words,

neither be hampered in well-doing nor in ill-doing, but do even as it seemed good to me.

All this, from the point of view of Crockett, is most interesting. His growing doubts about the narrowness of any one belief — the narrowness which gives the illusion of height — are strongly echoed by John Heron, and the negative constrictions of religion are lifted for Patrick, as they had been for Ralph Peden. His father makes this clear.

"When I was a lad," he used to say, "I was sore hampered in coming and going, and most of the evils of my life have come upon me because I was not early left to choose right and wrong, nosing them for myself like a Scent-Dog after birds. So I will even leave you, Paitrick, as says the Carritches, to 'the freedom of your own will'".²

This seems like Crockett awarding to his hero what he himself in his Cameronian upbringing had not received except through the connivance of kindly uncles but later had won by his own experience in his years of writing and travelling. It forms only one chapter in The Raiders, but it is significant that it is there at all.

The second counter-weight to the romantic setting is the lively inconsequential description of life on Isle Rathan after John Heron's death, when Patrick is putting "trying all ways o’te" into tentative practice. He has imported four young cronies to share his life in the old

¹III, p. 28.
tower; their youthful squabbling and horseplay are based on Crockett's own holidays at the Scaur and Colvend with Andrew Penman and William MacGeorge, made more splendid perhaps by a conscious or unconscious remembrance of R.M. Ballantyne's boyish trio Ralph, Peterkin and Jack from the clear seas and sunlit rocks of The Coral Island. He admits he alters facts; in The Raiders it is May Maxwell who brings them the splendid pie to eke out their provisions but in reality it was one of their kindly mothers.

Here Crockett is perhaps indulging himself in happy reminiscence for its own sake, allowing it to go on for a little too long simply because he likes to remember the old days, but these chapters fulfil two functions -- they bring us down from the dying father's philosophical observations to homely ordinariness, and they show us that Patrick is just an irresponsible, high-spirited boy, fond of his own way, given to bullying his friends (as Crockett was himself if we are to believe Andrew Penman), contented with his carefree existence, tramping flounders for breakfast when he can afford nothing better, oiling the firearms at Rathan because he likes to see them clean and shining, not because he has any intention of using them, aware of the smugglers up and down the Solway but not in the least concerned to interfere. He is a pleasant idle young man with no harm in him, whose greatest pleasure is to tease the angry mothers of his fellows when they row out -- teasing them.


2 Raiderland, p. 115.
according to his father's recipe taken from Scripture --

"Mind ye, a soft answer's aye best. It's commanded --
and forbye, it makes them far madder than anything
else ye could say."¹

-- which sounds remarkably as if it might be Crockett's own.
And the appearance of May Maxwell with the indignant mothers
links these rambling chapters and the sharply-defined
incident in Kirk Oswald churchyard with which The Raiders
opens; May Maxwell in Chapter V and Silver Sand in Chapter
VI herald the beginning of the adventure.

Mystery was a popular feature of light literature in
the 1890s, and Silver Sand provides it in The Raiders;
he is in Patrick's own words

a problem like those they give to the collegers at
Edinburgh, which the longer you look at, grow the
more difficult. To begin with, there seemed nothing
uncanny about Silver Sand more than about my clogs
with their soles of birk. But after you knew him a
while, one strange and unaccountable characteristic
after another emerged and set you thinking.²

Silver Sand is a pedlar, selling sand for sharpening
scythes in summer, sand from Loch Skerrow, from Loch Valley,
and the silver sand from Loch Enoch which gives him his name.
In the winter he sells keel, or raddle, for marking sheep
with red. This second trade of raddle-seller or reddleman
may have been suggested to Crockett by Thomas Hardy's
reddleman Diggory Venn in The Return of the Native;³ it

¹IV, p. 40.
²VI, p. 61.
seems an ordinary enough occupation but as Hardy presents him Venn leads a strange wandering lonely life, held in superstitious awe by the villagers -- he is a "red ghost", a "fiery mommet" who reminds them of the devil and fills them with fear. Hardy had originally conceived him as a sort of benevolent, mysterious spirit, who appears, from no one knows where, to save Thomasin at the crises of her fortunes, and then, once more, vanishes into obscurity. 1

In the end, on the advice of his publishers, Hardy provided a happy ending for Diggory and Thomasin, but the reddleman's weird trick of appearing just when wanted and then quietly disappearing certainly belongs also to Silver Sand; he flits in and out of Patrick's fortunes for the first forty-one chapters of The Raiders, coming and going throughout all Galloway and Carrick unhindered either by gypsies or outlaws with a mysterious power which puzzles the reader and baffles Patrick, and he is not finally identified as John Faa until Chapter XLII.

It has been suggested 2 that the original of Silver Sand was Johnny Morgan, a pedlar of Irish origin who travelled as a rag and bone man in Galloway and Ayrshire during Crockett's youth, with a donkey called Tommy and a dog called Quharrie, dealing in rabbit skins, gossip and scythe sand; he died in 1901 and is buried in Morton


churchyard. The donkey and Quharrie may have been borrowed from him, but the photograph of this drab and uninviting Johnny Morgan shows how far Crockett's imagination had transformed him. No rags and bones for his wandering enigma; Silver Sand is proud and cryptic, knowing all and foreseeing all, talking Galloway Scots but with overtones of wider experience, and a knowledge of men and affairs undreamed of by the most gossiping of Johnny Morgans. He can produce a bottle of wine and sweet cakes to cheer Patrick — wine "that comes from whaur the swallows gang in the winter time"¹ — and a purse of golden guineas such as Patrick had never seen in his life. He is a solitary figure, coming and going as he pleases:

all Silver Sand's movements were so still and secret that no one would have been much astonished at any hour of the day or night had he appeared at their door or suddenly vanished from their sight.²

He dislikes boys, but Patrick has won his affection by rescuing his donkey from the cruelty of thoughtless village youngsters from Orraland — an affection of which Patrick is rightly proud;

In these troubled times to be a third with Silver Sand and Quharrie, was better than to be the Pope's nephew,³

a comparison which in its suggestion of sophistication is oddly vivid. He has a strong gypsy element in his

¹XVI, p. 149.
²VIII, p. 80.
³VI, p. 63.
character but one from which all squalor and lowness are removed; his skills are many and conveyed in imagery which has dignity and sometimes beauty.

Whenever I think of Paradise, to this day my mind runs on gypsy poles, and a clear stream birling down among trees of birch and ash that cover in the hollow of the glen from the south-west wind, and of Silver Sand frying Loch Grannoch trout upon a skirling pan or else perhaps

a red speckled trout fresh out of the pan, which the night before had steered his easy way through the clear granite-filtered water of Loch Skerrow. It was hardly food for sinful mortals.

He has "a queer, smileless humour of his own" and an authority over Patrick and the others which he exercises quietly or sharply as seems appropriate to the moment, without any question of being disobeyed. Rather than any itinerant Johnny Morgan, it seems likely that in the back of Crockett's mind was the ballad of "The Gypsy Laddie" and the countess, the high-born Lady Cassilis who is said to have run off with a sweetly-singing Egyptian, forsaking her horse and her feather-bed for the joys of a roving life.

Sae take from me my silk mantel,
And bring to me a plaidie,
For I will travel the world owre
Along with the gypsie laddie.

I could sail the seas with my Jockie Faa,
I could sail the seas with my dearie;
I could sail the seas with my Jockie Faa,
And with pleasure could drown with my dearie.

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1 VI, p. 64.
2 VI, p. 65.
3 VI, p. 64.
4 Child, 200 B. 5-6, Vol. IV, p. 66.
As the story proceeds we are given clue after clue to Silver Sand's identity; Patrick puts them down without comprehending them (in keeping with his guileless honesty of character) but the reader picks them up as he is intended to and long before Patrick does, we realise that Silver Sand is in fact John Faa, leader of the most powerful and aristocratic of the gypsy tribes, and that he has chosen to be a pedlar rather than condone the crimes of his conscienceless mother and brother Hector Faa.

Picking up the clues is part of the pleasure of the narrative, whether they be verbal, as Sammle Tamson's description of John Faa as he guides Patrick up towards the outlaws' country —

He's a kind o' pope among them. . . Faith, they say that Billy Marshall is feared o' the Faa himsel'. Johnny Faa is no canny. He comes an' gangs like a wraith, or like the wind -- no man knoweth whither he goes or whence he comes.1

-- which echoes precisely those things which Patrick himself has earlier written of Silver Sand; or part of the action, as when Lady Grizel Maxwell's servant recognises Silver Sand's horse as John Faa's,2 and when in quick surprised words Lady Grizel herself first speaks to him.

1XXIV, p. 217.
2XXXI, p. 270.
It was at Silver Sand she looked first.

"Preserve us, man!" she said; "surely hemp's no sae dear that ye can afford to risk the tow. What do ye in this country?"

Silver Sand was manifestly put out.

"I think your leddyship is mistaken," he said.

"Mistake here! -- mistake there! -- Grizel Maxwell kens a --"

"Wheesht, wheesht, my Leddy! There's names that's no for cryin' at ilka lodge-yett." ¹

Silver Sand is thus a splendid figure, weaving in and out of the story with mysterious omniscience; he is John Faa, Lord and Earl of Little Egypt by the patent of King James V bestowed on his ancestor; he may choose to be a pedlar but that is his own business, and he defends the Faas every time they are criticised — they are aristocrats among the gypsies, far above canaille like the Macatericks and the Marshalls. It is easy for Crockett to convey this side of his character, the strangeness, the kissing of hands, the way he

never was comfortable inside a room for more than half an hour together. The wide lift was his house, and sun or shine, rain or fair, made little difference to him. ²

Hardy's Diggory Venn may have suggested the superstitious reverence in which he is held; Stevenson's incident of the Black Spot in Treasure Island ³ probably suggested the metal

¹XXXII, p. 271.
²VI, p. 65.
³(London 1883), III and IV.
token which Silver Sand is so mysteriously startled to find among his Loch Enoch sand;  

Scott's Meg Merrilies and Rob Roy provide a few hints, and there may even be a dash of Robin Hood. But Crockett does more than make him a romantic gypsy leader: he knits him firmly into the religious life of Galloway as well as its social structure.

Early in the story, just after the death of Richard Maxwell, a quiet paragraph brings out a side of Silver Sand that we had not expected, at the same time showing Patrick unconsciously revealing his solid down-to-earth realism.

On the sandy knowe behind the cave at the farthest end of Rathen we laid Richard Maxwell to rest. As we came out the seagulls clanged about, and a rock dove flew down and perched on the prow of the boat above the dead body, which was strange, and mightily admired, for never did any of us see such like before. But the Maxwells took it as a sign not of this world, so they all of them took off their bonnets and put them in the bottom of the boat; for which I thought none the worse of them, though I kept mine on (for, indeed, it was but a pigeon and a young bird that was tired flying, which presently was gone), and so we drew to the shore. We buried him with haste and without ordered preparation, but with all reverence, and Silver Sand put up a prayer that moved me strangely, for I knew not even that he was a man who held religion in honour. Then I bethought me on many things I had said to him that were no credit to me to say, and I wished that I had not said them. Yet I remembered that he had never rebuked me as a strict professor would have done.

This is delicately composed in contrast to the noise and tumult of fighting which had gone before; Silver Sand's prayer stands out with dignity and simplicity, emphasized by the comic schoolboy chagrin which seizes Patrick as he

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1 XXXV, p. 298.

2 XV, p. 137.
remembers past indiscreet remarks, but we can believe that Silver Sand is "no strict professor" and yet a man of faith in his own way.

The relationship between Patrick and Silver Sand is finely worked out in the course of the story. It may remind us of that between David Balfour and Alan Breck in Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, which could initially have been in Crockett's mind in portraying a friendship between a young man and an older one, but it has much more variety and subtlety than the alternate sulkiness and sentiment of that tiresome pair. Silver Sand has none of the childish vanity of Alan Breck and Patrick has none of David's weak selfishness; the two are held together by a strong attraction of opposites which holds even in the moment when Patrick at last realises who Silver Sand really is and with a sore heart believes him to be an enemy.

Silver Sand has no illusions about Patrick; he makes fun of his mental slowness:

"Preserve us a', Paitrick, but ye mauna pit sic a strain on your uptak. It's no human to understand a' that. Aye, as ye say, it's the cave, and nocht else but the cave."¹

He makes fun of his worldly pretensions:

"Ye needna turn up your een at me like tea-dishes. I am neyther thief nor robber, though I bena a laird wi' an island that I can cover wi' my breeks when I sit doon on it."²

¹XI, p. 99.
²XVI, p. 146.
-- showing, incidentally, how clearly he realises what Patrick is suspecting about him. Yet he has a delicacy which understands why Patrick stands on his dignity when May Maxwell is spoken of; he is able to explain that there is no need for desperate hurry in pursuit of her, and accords Patrick his full title in affectionate amusement -- the mocking amusement of an older man at a young lover.

"Silver Sand, I ask ye no to speak o' the young lass like that."

"Aweel, aweel, Rathan, then I'll no; but dinna fret, I'm kinna sib to the gypsies mysel', an' I can tell ye that till the marriage is by at the end o' the three days o' feastin', May Maxwell will be attended and 'kuilted' like a leddy -- an' after that mair nor ever, for she'll be a Faa hersel'."

"God forbid!" said I fervently.

"Amen to that!" said Silver Sand. "We'll e'en make her a Heron, though the Herons are but lang- nebbit paddock-dabbers to the Faas."\(^1\)

The emotion which perpetually zigzags between the two suddenly comes to the surface after this exchange. Patrick in his relief that they have three days in hand feels impulsive gratitude; he looks at Silver Sand's twisted arms, with a stab of quick compassion, seeing

the joints . . set the other way, either naturally or through some extraordinary torture\(^2\)

and asks his forgiveness for "O man, I like ye -- I like ye!". For a moment Silver Sand holds back in angry pride,

\(^1\) XVII, p. 154.

\(^2\) XVII, p. 155.
but it is so honest, so boyish and affectionate, that his heart is touched; he suddenly laid his face between his hands and sobbed as if he would tear his throat. It was terrible. I knew not what to do in that lonely place, but I laid my head on his shoulder to see if that would comfort him.

"O man Paitrick!" he cried out at last, "ye hae given me back my manhood. I have been treated like a beast. I have been a beast. I have lived wi' the beasts, but you are the first that has drawn close to me for thirty years. Paitrick, ye may want a friend for you and yours, but it shallna be as lang as Silver Sand can trail his auld twisted banes after ye. Man, I wad gang for ye into the Ill Bit itsel', that's fu' o' brimstane reek, the reed lowe jookin' through the bars, and the puir, puir craitters yammerin' ahint."¹

This outburst of emotion between the two friends could have been embarrassing. But Crockett needed to make clear how deep the relationship was between the two so that later, when the two are sheltering in the Cave of the Aughty, it will seem natural that the proud Faa should humble himself to this lad of so much less experience and understanding and tell him in anguished confession the story of his involvement with Grierson and the persecutors.

Already this passage foreshadows it; the mystery of Silver Sand deepens as he talks of having lived like a beast and been a beast, and his picture of the hell through which he will follow his friend if necessary is a Covenanting hell, aflare with brimstone and the nether pit with the damned crying behind the glowing bars. We feel that whatever dark past lies behind the gypsy pedlar is in

¹XVII, p. 155.
some way connected with the religion which we already know him to revere. Any embarrassment we may feel at his sudden breaking down into tears is dispelled because Patrick himself shares it; "It was terrible." he says, in frightened uncomprehending dismay; he does not know what to do, and tries to comfort the anguished man with a child-like moving closer to him, like a small boy comforting any grown-up whose grief he cannot understand or share: "I laid my head on his shoulder to see if that would comfort him." The simple intimate gesture is so natural that the moment achieves firm reality, and Silver Sand quickly recovers his poise in a way which we find equally convincing.

"But this is no what we are here for," he said, with one of his quick changes. '1

and they are back with their plans for May Maxwell's rescue. Silver Sand has been shown to have deeper roots than those of a mere gypsy figure of romance, and his love for Patrick comes because Patrick is the only one who has reached out to him in friendship without fear.

He remains for Patrick a figure of mystery.

a man with more secrets of his own, and dangerous ones to boot, than I had cared to carry about without a steel jacket over, 2

but Patrick only occasionally questions and wonders about his timely appearances and disappearances, until on the

1XVII, p. 156.

2XXXV, p. 298.
second expedition up towards the outlaws' country there comes the sudden shock of finding Quharrie and Silver Sand among the gypsies and outlaws, apparently a leader among them. It is for the sake of this moment that Crockett has kept Patrick from realising the truth. He must think himself betrayed and deceived by his friend so that his simple personal courage can be emphasized. Crockett expresses this moment through anti-romance by making Patrick slip into a theatrical pose like an operatic hero. Silver Sand seems large and strong as he strides towards Patrick with the lantern, the other men giving way to him, but Patrick is more angry than afraid.

I took the dagger by the point, and offered it to him, saying, "Silver Sand, true friend, here is a knife; strike quickly at my heart and make a swift end. Thou knowest where to strike, for thou has lain against it many a time."

This I thought mighty fine at the time, and original; but now I know that I had heard my father read somewhat like it out of an old book of stage plays.¹

To these heroics, in falsetto and fustian English, Silver Sand has but one word to say.

"Patrick!" was all he said.

and following that the businesslike

"Can you walk?" he said, briefly.²

The moment of high drama which another author might have

¹XLII, p. 357.
²XLII, p. 358.
treated with solemnity is turned by Crockett into yet more comedy, funny and touching -- funny because of the stilted heroics which the older Patrick can see as ridiculous, looking back, and touching because we can admire his squaring up to his fate and saying these brave things in what he thinks is the hour of his death. It is a delicate, original and delightfully surprising treatment of what could have been conventionally romantic.

John Faa in the speeches he makes to his followers is eloquent and oratorical, as one would expect of a gypsy earl, rounding on them with scorn and authority in splendid confidence:

"Silence, hound!" said Silver Sand, with consuming vehemence. "Well you know who I am. I am John Faa, of the blood royal of Egypt. Well you remember why I left you: because I am not of them that do murder. Well you know that I have kept free not from the danger, but from the plunder. Now that the plunder is done with, and the danger come, I am here. Is it not so?"

But even this romantic magnificence is explained away by Crockett as the rhodomontade that it is. In the Cave of the Aughty, after the crisis is over, Patrick asks why Silver Sand threatened "warlock threats" to the outlaws.

Silver Sand smiled.

"In Rome I must do as the Romans," he said; which, however, I did not think a very sound exposition or deduction.

"But could you indeed perform these things?" I asked, still doubtfully.

1XLIII, p. 359.
"They believed I could, which is the same thing."¹

With acute realism, Crockett represents John Faa's knowledge of how to handle a dangerous crowd; he knows his people so well that he can manipulate their feelings through their superstition which he is both too sophisticated and too Christian to share, deeming that the end justifies the means. Even at the height of his oratory, Silver Sand is using his wits as a cunning courageous realist — almost a cynic — and by no means a romantic figure.

During the Loch Enoch scene, both Silver Sand and Patrick speak in English, and Silver Sand uses the unScots form of the name Patrick instead of, as usual, Paitrick. It is one of Crockett's peculiarities that in moments of stress characters who are accustomed to speak in Scots turn to the more formal English. In Silver Sand's speeches to his followers, however, the influence is not so much English as Biblical. We have only to listen to the balanced cadences to realise that this man has read his Bible:

> I will hunt you with the Loathly Beasts. I will press on you with the Faa's curse. I will dwine your flesh on your bones, for I am your king, John Faa, and the power is mine, alone and without bound among this people of Egypt. ²

> There shall no assault be delivered by your enemies, but one more sure and terrible by the Almighty. ... Stay nor for pursuer nor turn aside for foe, but scatter over the country as soon as ye have passed the marches!³

¹XLIV, p. 383.
²XLII, p. 360.
³XLII, p. 361.
He sounds more like an Old Testament prophet than a 
gypsy lord. Then, when he and Patrick have left the gypsies and 
taken shelter in the Cave of the Aughty, the old 
Covenanting hidingplace where food and fire are there for 
them, Silver Sand returns to his ordinary speech.

"An' it's as weel!" said he, dropping into the 
Lowland Scotch, "for there's sic a storm brewing as 
has never been seen in your days nor mine." ¹

But this is not the final metamorphosis the speech of this 
many-faceted man is to have; when he opens his heart to 
Patrick, his rough harsh Scots is the ideal medium for 
telling of the brutality of Grierson who forced him to 
join his dragoons.

"He wad ride up to a farmhouse an' chap on the 
doors wi' the basket hilt o' his broadsword.

"Is the guidman in?" says he.

"Deed, he is that!" says the mistress; "he's 
gettin' his parritch."

"Haste him fast, then," says Lag, "for the 
Archangel Gawbriel"(nae less)"is waitin' to tak' 
his fower-'oors wi' him, an' it's a kittle thing to 
keep the likes o' him waitin'!"

Then in ten minutes that wife's a weedow; an' 
gatherin' up her man's harms in a napkin!²

As he continues his narrative and relives the agony he 
suffered as a guilty witness to the murder of the little 
boy at Crichope, sparing himself no detail of the mother's

¹ XLIII, p. 364.
² XLIV, p. 375.
sorrow and dignity, his speech takes on another rhythm, the slower and more measured style of the Covenanters and Patrick Walker.

"So that day," continued Silver Sand, "made me a believing man -- that is, so far as a gypsy and a Faa may be a believing man." He gradually won the trust of the hill men and became a Cameronian, but when the Killing Time was over, every man's hand was against him because the Faas had been attainted and were outlaws.

"So I took to the hills and to the trade of selling the bonny scythe sand and the red keel for the sheep. And though I have not where to lay my head, I am a better and a happier man, than the man who witnessed that sight by the Linn of Crichope ever deserved to be. But I have dwelt with my Maker and humbled myself before Him in secret wood and lonely fell. The men of the hills ceased their hiding in the mosses and moors near forty years agone -- all but one, and he a persecutor, a heathen man, and one whose hand had been dyed in the blood of God's saints. For forty years I have dwelt where God's folk dwelt, and striven with the devil and the flesh in many a strange place -- often not sure whether indeed I had gotten me the victory."

As he continues, we can feel his ironic self gradually returning after the pain of the confession, the whimsical Silver Sand who knows his own cleverness and cannot but delight in it.

"My arms which were twisted in the torture of the Star Chamber before James, Duke of York, have served me in that I can run like a beast, and when we hunt as the Loathly Dogs, Quharrie and I fear the foolish folk out of their wits."

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1 XLV, p. 381.
2 XLV, p. 382.
"Indeed, I think you are no that canny mysel'," I said, with a kind of awe on my face.

"Weel," said Silver Sand, "I doubt not that gin some o' the landward presbyteries got me, I micht burn even at this day, as did Major Weir. Yet is all my magic of the simplest and most childish -- even as simple as keel and scythe sand."¹

The penitent is not so inhuman that he cannot enjoy mischief.

This welding together of the gypsy earl and the sincere Cameronian is the most audacious part of The Raiders; we can guess that Crockett has taken the idea of penance by way of banishment from Mad Sir Uchtred and tried to use it again more credibly, without the supernatural and without the madness. Has he succeeded? To the Scotsman critic, the idea was too far-fetched for belief; "Mr. Crockett overstrains the reader's powers of faith."² The two elements -- gypsy and Covenanter -- seem at first sight incompatible, certainly, but Crockett right from the beginning of the story uses the contrast between Patrick and Silver Sand to make Silver Sand as real as Patrick.

They are excellent foils for one another, and their friendship is the backbone of the book. Patrick is surprised that Silver Sand is a man of religion; so are we, but Patrick's surprise dissipates ours. Silver Sand is frequently linked with Patrick's father; this too helps us to accept him -- he is not the only one who has ridden with the dragoons and then changed sides. Silver Sand, moreover,

¹XLV, p. 383.

is no saint; he is irritable, testy, impatient with the
stupidity of others, at all times insistent on his own way.
Patrick's eager puzzled questions in the Cave of the
Aughty are the very questions we want to have answered, and
Silver Sand answers them stoutly and squarely.

"Content!" said Silver Sand; "what for shouldna
I be content? I ken nane that has mair cause to be.
I look on the buik o' God a' the day under His wide,
high lift for a rooftop, an' often a' nicht forbye
gin the storms keep aff, I hae God's Word in my
exter forbye -- see here!"

He pulled out two dumpy little red-covered Bibles,
with the Old Testament divided at Isaiah, and the
Psalms of David in metre, very clean, but thumbed
yellowish life a banknote at the end.

"What mair could a man want?" he said.¹

Crockett's exact details -- the dumpiness of the two small
volumes so well used familiar to him through his collecting
of Covenanting books -- convey conviction; and Silver
Sand's voice and phrasing come through so authentically, so
naturally, that we have to believe in him. "Content:
what for shouldna I be content? I ken nane that has mair
cause to be... What mair could a man want?" He has the
same stature and reality as Scott's Edie Ochiltree, and the
same delight in fun, telling Patrick how he had so often
played at being the benevolent Brownie to mystify the
country people and give them a helping hand at the same time.

¹XLV, p. 385.
"Wha' was't, do ye think, that cut an' stookit the feck o' the Maxwell's corn in the short days so far in the year, when the lads had to gang awa' to the Isle o' Man for the first cargo for my Lord Stair? . . . An' wha was't that gathered a' yer sheep intil the buchts the nicht afore the great storm o' February-was-a-year? . . . An' wha, think ye, cam' to see her -- this bonny lass that left the braw woors ahint, speaking about the nowt to her daddy?"¹

The homespun reality of this is utterly convincing, making Silver Sand's mystery no more than the wisdom of an exceptional man who keeps his eyes and ears open and knows human nature inside out. The bonny lass is of course May Mischief, who for so long had tried to make an impression on the immature Patrick to no avail; Silver Sand had known all about it, as he knows all about everything (who better than the pedlar who is here, there and everywhere without question?) and speaks his mind to Patrick in the Aughty:

"Whatna cuif was the lad she likit to bide in the Rathan when the bonniest lass in the countryside cam' doon to keep tryst wi' nocht but the bit fardin' candle in the Hoose o' Rathan?"

"But I never jaloosed -- hoo was I to ken?" I say, for I am indeed ashamed.

"Hoot awa', man! Ye surely wore your e'en in the tail o' your coat! Ye micht hae kenned by the way she flyted on ye!"²

As for his Covenanting, Crockett has prepared the way so carefully for it by his prayer over the dead Richard Maxwell, by his "Amen!" to Patrick's "The Lord keep us

¹XLVI, pp 389-390, p. 394.
²XLVI, p. 394.
both! at Clachanpluck, by his gratitude for Patrick's friendship, by his Biblical oratory to his gypsy clan, that coming to it gradually we accept it as completely as we do his kingship over the Faas; the two go together, for if he had not been a sincere if unorthodox Christian he would never have laid down his leadership for a scruple of conscience. And finally, as in the case of John Heron, we find Silver Sand convincing because there is a great deal of Crockett himself in the contented gypsy with his two dumpy volumes in his oxters; if Crockett had not acquired the responsibility of a wife and children and the compelling necessity to write in order to earn a comfortable middle-class living for them, Silver Sand's open-air life and whimsical Christianity, free from churches and conventional ways of doing, are close to what he might have chosen for himself, and may, we can hope, have achieved in his travels abroad in France and Spain.

In contrast to Silver Sand, Patrick is a very simple straightforward character indeed, a reluctant hero who enters upon his adventures with perpetual doubts. Scott and Stevenson had already used this type of unromantic hero thrust into events without understanding them, and to some extent Crockett follows their example, but he adds to their accounts of Waverley or David Balfour the skilful wry humour of John Galt's technique which is to let his

1XVIII, pp 168-169.
principal characters reveal their nature unconsciously by the innocent self-satisfaction with which they chronicle their achievements. The Foreword by the older Patrick has a strong flavour of Galt, whom Crockett greatly admired; in reading the words of the young Patrick we make our own judgement by reading between the lines, as we do with Mr. Balwhidder and Provost Pawkie and Mr. Jobbry. Few adventure stories dwell so carefully on character as The Raiders; in most the characters are subordinate to events and are carried along by them, but Patrick remains a stubbornly down-to-earth young man who never loses his commonplace values. He is never wholeheartedly happy in being a hero; he is never wholeheartedly sure even that he approves of being in love; and the comments that he makes are clues to his character as cunningly placed as the clues to Silver Sand's identity, and we pick them up with the same satisfaction.

His initial remarks about May Maxwell exemplify this technique.

A lad's mind runs naturally on the young lasses, but as yet I had none of these to occupy me. Indeed there was but one of my standing in the neighbourhood -- that Mary Maxwell who was called, not without cause, May Mischief, a sister of the wild Maxwells of Craigdarroch -- and her I could not abide. There was nothing in her to think about particularly, and certainly I never liked her; nevertheless, one's mind being contrary, my thoughts ran upon her as the tide swirled southward by Rathan -- especially on a curious way she had of smiling when a wicked speech was brewing behind hereyes.\(^1\)

\(^1\)I, p. 14.
He has no young lass to think of -- except May Maxwell whom he cannot abide. His mind does not run on any lass -- yet they run on May Maxwell, "one's mind being contrary". There was nothing in her to think about particularly -- yet he thinks about her "as the tide swirled southward by Rathan", an interesting adverbial phrase which could illustrate the ineluctable force of his thoughts running strong as the Solway just as appropriately as they appear to indicate merely the time at which he is thinking them. Freud might have had some comment to make on a double meaning here. He assures us twice that he does not like her, then gives himself away by describing her very exactly -- "a curious way she had of smiling when a wicked speech was brewing behind her eyes"; Patrick may not be aware what state of mind he is in during this half-asleep, half-awake stream of consciousness as he lies in his rowing-boat, but the reader has a good idea.

This brief compressed introduction to Patrick's feeling for May Mischief is more heavy-handed perhaps than Galt would ever have been; but Patrick is off his guard, half-dreamily drifting from thought to thought, and in Crockett's defence we may plead his necessity to establish his principal character rapidly, and also his lack of experience in this first-person method. In The Lilac Sunbonnet he had been able to point out in his own commentary the various ironic contradictions in Ralph Peden's attitudes; in The Raiders for the first time the
commentary must be incorporated in the persona. As the story proceeds he grows more deft and the self-revelatory touches become less obtrusive and more scattered -- small phrases here and there that build up slowly over many chapters to complete the total effect. In the beginning, Patrick, like the painting of the scene, is over-simple; later he is more subtly delineated.

After the burning of Craigdarroch, when the little group are making their way to the great Cave of Isle Rathain -- called Ossian's Hall, perhaps after the hall in Penicuik House, before it was burned down, which was Ossian's Hall because of Runciman's painted ceiling of Ossianic subjects -- Patrick pesters Silver Sand with questions about where they are going and is anxious to know what is to become of his house.

for though I was willing enough to take part in the quarrel of the Maxwells, now that I was in for it, I did not want all my earthly possessions burned within half a mile of me without doing my best to save them.¹

That "now that I was in for it" speaks volumes.

As the boat enters the high narrow entrance to the cave and the greenish glimmer of its darkness, May is quiet and all the mischief has died out of her; when she takes hold of Patrick's arm in fear,

... it made the last remnant of my dislike flee away. Nor do I think now, looking back, that I ever disliked her greatly. In my heart of hearts I aye

¹XI, p. 99.
liked her -- not that ill even when she pursed her mouth and cried "BAAJ!"1

He is gradually learning; and as they climb into the inner cave, he picks some white bell heather for her.

This she took not amiss, for she looked at me with eyes that were full of tears, and said, speaking not at all in her former way --

"Thank you, Patrick; what makes you so mindful of me? I dinna deserve it."

I meant here to have said something exceedingly fine and appropriate, but all that I could get out was just, "Aye, but ye do!"

And even that I stammered. However, I am not sure that I could have much bettered it after a week's consideration.2

For once the roles are reversed and Patrick takes the initiative; May is touched by his small kindness in her desolation and almost apologises for her sharp speeches in the past. Patrick's gaucheness is finely observed. "Aye, but ye do!" is hardly a gracious compliment, especially when stammered in embarrassment, but it is perfectly in keeping with his honest boyishness.

But May Mischief does not remain long subdued. Even in the midst of attacks from Hector Faa and the smugglers, she has her own feminine point of view, to Patrick's disgust -- he is perpetually puzzled by the nature of women. He sees Hector Faa wearing one of Richard Maxwell's shirts, pilfered from Craigdarroch before the burning.

1XI, p. 104.
2XII, p. 107.
When I told this to May Maxwell she ran her ways up to take a peep at the window, and came down main angered, saying "That is the sark that I got ready for my faither to gang to Staneykirk Sacrament in, and to think that that regardirless loon should wear it upon his back!" . . .

"Load the muskets, May" said I. "It's sma' use cavillin' aboot the man rinnin' awa' wi' yer faither's sark, when he wants to rin awa' wi' you yersel'."

But she did not somehow seem to think that this last was nearly so heinous a crime as wearing her father's sark, when he wants to rin awa' wi' you yersel'.

"It took me two hours to do the ruffles," she said. It is a strange thing, but this kind of foolish care for a trifle made me almost angry.

"Maybe ye wadna hae been so very vexed gin he had run aff wi' ye!" I said, with as ill-natured an expression as I could compass, for such superfine care for her father's ruffles was beyond me at such a time.

"I wadna wonder," says she; "it's weel that some folk in the world think somethin' o' me."

The single-minded Patrick, his mind on one issue at a time, cannot away with this apparent frivolity, which to a woman is perfectly natural; any woman who had spent two hours ironing ruffles only to see them on the back of a gypsy thief would understand this, and May cannot resist the temptation to tease her literal-minded lover. But the tiff is soon over in another attack, during which May loads muskets for her father as he fires shot after shot at the smugglers, singing a psalm as he does so, a detail borrowed from John Nicholson's Historical and Traditional Tales.

1XIII, p. 119.
This crisis is passed safely, but at the end of the next attack, Richard Maxwell is dead and May has been kidnapped through a secret exit from the cave of which even Silver Sand had been unaware.

"Up, my man!" cried Silver Sand to me. "Gin ye want yer lass, ye hae nae time to waste. The Faas bides na on priest nor presbyter when they marry or gie in marriage!"

"My lass," he said. May Maxwell was no lass of mine, and at another time I should have said so. But she and I had been friendly during these last days, and I had done her a good turn according to my ability, which always breeds kindly feeling. But "My lass," quoth he. "My faith, that was an over-quick word," I said to myself.¹

There is no knight in shining armour here, but an ungracious lout of a bonnet laird quibbling about words in a mixture of vanity and touchiness which rings comically true — as does his sentimental volte-face a few pages later when they find a shoe on the sand outside the cave.

It was May Mischief's shoe, and it looked so pretty and simple with its little wet silver buckle glinting in the sun that I could not forbear weeping. . . I was glad now that he had said "Your lass!"²

This is indeed the idiotic vacillation of calf-love.

And so the charting of Patrick's unromantic character goes on throughout the book, rooting its most vivid and adventurous passages firmly in his everyday normality. His doubts continue to assail him. Even when he is high above the Dungeon of Buchan and about to negotiate the Wolf's Slock and thoroughly committed, he berates himself:

¹XV, p. 141.
²XV, pp 142-143.
What right had I to be there? — I that might have sat safe and smiling on my Isle Rathan? Had any meddled with me there, that I must go and take up a stranger's quarrel? What a fool to bring myself so to the dagger's point — and that for a girl who had no thought or tenderness for me, but only scoffs and jeers! . . What had I, who might have been sailing in the tall ships to see strange lands (for so my revenues permitted) — eating of the breadfruit and drinking of the coco brew that is as wine and milk at once — to do here on this Hill Perilous on such desperate quest among desperate men?¹

The smooth "sat safe and smiling" is nicely chosen for the sudden picture of warm smug comfort that assails his mind, in contrast to his present eerie windblown loneliness; the sensible young man is remembering that there is perhaps nothing to his profit in the adventure, and it is shrewdly appropriate that the imagined journeys to the south seas which he might have taken — how solid and splendid his "revenues" sound! — come to mind in terms not of excitement but of physical satisfaction in strange new food and drink. Poor Patrick! But the better side of his nature asserts himself; he dismisses this as Satanic temptation.

Whereat I felt mighty manly, and so rose and went.²

But Crockett does not allow him to stay on this theological high horse; Patrick admits honestly that as he went up towards the Wolf's Slock

It was indeed dourness and not courage which took me there... The truth is I was most mortally afraid.³

¹XXV, pp 221-222.
²XXV, p. 222.
³XXV, p. 225.
This comment repeats the philosophising which had concluded the previous chapter.

It is ever the nature of Galloway to share the credit of any victory with Providence, but to charge it wholly with any disaster. "Wasna that cleverly dune?" we say when we succeed. "We maun juist submit," we say when we fail -- a comfortable theology, which is ever the one for the most feck of Galloway men, whom chiefly dourness and not fanaticism took to the hills when Lag came riding with his mandates and letters judicatory.¹

Here the elder Patrick's speaks, intruding into the narrative a grimly humorous summation of Galloway character which reminds us of the sceptical John Heron and represents the heroism even of the Covenanters as made up of unrelenting stubbornness rather than of high-minded religious mysticism. It suits perfectly the down-to-earth temperament of Patrick Heron; one cannot but wonder how far it was Crockett's own secret opinion. It certainly reads as the conclusion of a hard-headed realist.

The love affair between Patrick and May Maxwell proceeds in the most unromantic of styles. They escape together from the evil house at Craignairny -- where, incidentally, Patrick's naive pride in his own cleverness as a circumstantial liar carries him away in needless elaboration so that he mentions that he has money with him and nearly seals his doom -- but the situation at Kirkoswald repeats itself; in headlong flight from the outlaws and their two bloodhounds, Patrick falls and is knocked unconscious, so that it is the heroine who defends the hero;

¹ XXV, p. 224.
May with a knife in each hand kills both the dogs, and is prepared to do more. When Patrick regains consciousness, it is to find her facing the dancing lanterns and bracing herself for the attack.

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 easternmost 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 that 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."

This is a real romantic defiance, albeit from the wrong one of the pair, but realism takes over within minutes. The eerie figures of the Loathly Beasts appear — Silver Sand and Quharrie — and the pursuers disperse in terror.

"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."

This surely is the least romantic plea that heroine ever made to hero!

Nevertheless they are content and happy to be riding down to safety on horses that Silver Sand mysteriously has waiting at the Gairland Burn. As they ride alongside one

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1 XXIX, p. 253.
2 XXIX, p. 254.
another, with May leaning over now and then to wipe
Patrick's brow, Patrick takes the opportunity to kiss her,
while Silver Sand has his back to them:

It can be done if the ponies are good and move
daintily. I, that tell you, know...

Even yet I looked for her to be angry, or at least
to make believe. But for so lively and merry-hearted
a maid she took it exceedingly sedately, which I liked
best of all. Indeed, she kissed me back again fair
and frank, without shame, a good true-hearted kiss,
which I am proud of... Now I vow and declare that
this was all our love-making. Which is strange,
considering the coil that is made about the affair in
verse-books and ballads. When we made love after that
we did it of set purpose, without any pretence that either
of us did not like it, which is not at all which I had
expected from May Mischief. But one never knows!

True to his common-sense principles, Patrick makes an
express disavowal of storybook romance and is heartily
pleased to be able to do so; not for him and May any
nonsense about wooing which wastes so much time and gives
so much trouble. From now on he is confidently possessive.

When May hears that her father is dead, she tries to tell
Patrick he must not think of her as a bride;

"We are not quiet to live with, we Maxwells; and
this, I see, will be but the beginning of trouble and
bloodshed. My brothers will never rest till my
father's murderers are destroyed."

"My lass," I said, "I did not think of marrying
your brothers."²

Patrick has grown sure of himself and speaks with
authority; for once May takes second place and sounds sad
and afraid, and there is no more coyness or teasing. When

¹XXX, p. 262.
²XXXI, p. 266.
Patrick sets off up Glen Trool for his second visit to the Wolf's Slock, with the company of riders from all the countryside who have gathered to root out the raiders once and for all, she bids him farewell with tearful but good advice:

"See an' keep your feet dry. There's a pair of socks in your left pistol holster."¹

The two have grown up in the course of the story and have grown towards one another; their youth is behind them and they are looking to the future -- the refurbishing of the House of Rathan and settling down to their life together there; Patrick's reluctance to set off on this dangerous expedition shows that having "tried a' ways o't" he has chosen a quiet solid domestic life:

Right often did I vow that if only I were once safe home again in the old tower of Rathan (from the chimney of whose kitchen I could see the blue reek go up so homely and friendly yet so far away), I would never wear leather jerkin more, not yet belt the weary broadsword on again.²

Patrick has grown more serious in his thinking, and God and His Providence are strongly present in his mind. But even in this Crockett inserts a touch of comedy; high above the desolate wastes of Loch Enoch, Patrick is moved to examine his conscience in the most exemplary manner.

I blamed myself that I had been so slack and careless in my attendance on religion, promising (for the

¹XL, p. 334.
²XL, p. 333.
comfort of my soul as I lay thus breathing and looking) that when I should be back in Rathan, May and I should ride each day to church upon a good horse, she behind me on a pillion -- and the thought put marrow into me.¹

Who but Patrick would solace himself in a crisis with such humdrum domestic resolutions? Who but Patrick would think of his lady with such solid practicality, sitting firmly behind him on a good horse, on her way with him to church? Who but Patrick would comfort his soul with such sober homespun conclusions? Patrick the narrator is now of the same mind exactly as Patrick of the Foreword, though Crockett allows him in the next two sentences a shrewd appraisal of his own motives:

But whether grace or propinquity was in my mind, who shall say? At any rate I bethought me that God could not destroy a youth of such excellent intentions.

There is an endearing honesty about Patrick which makes him both real and likeable.

May Maxwell is more conventionally the Scottish heroine, charming, tomboyish and teasing, quicker-witted than her lover -- in this she resembles all Crockett's heroines -- and yet tender and vulnerable when off guard;

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

¹XLIT, p. 352.
it was a dream. It could be no other.\textsuperscript{1}

In May Mischief's reported speech there is the same Biblical simplicity as in Silver Sand's rhetoric; she as well as Patrick has been brought up in a tradition which links her with the Covenanters. She is courageous in moments of danger and pain, as when she fights off the raiders' dogs and, less romantically, burns the marks their bites have made in her arm; she is practical in her ability to help Silver Sand bathe and bandage Patrick's head, and matter of fact in the way she settles down without further coquetting or teasing once Patrick has realised that he loves her and has shown her so without the need of words. Her earlier waywardness suggests a trace of Di Vernon; her practical common sense of Jeannie Deans.

As a counterpart to the picture of Patrick in his late thirties that we find in the Foreword, we catch quick glimpses of her as the comfortable Mrs Heron while Patrick writes his narrative; she is the one that looks over my shoulder, without ever speering the leave of me and reminds her husband that those who use to read in tales, love to have a description of the dresses of the heroes\textsuperscript{2} -- judicious and feminine at the same time; she hates remembrances of past violence and takes down from its

\textsuperscript{1}XXIX, p. 252.
\textsuperscript{2}XVIII, p. 159.
prized position over the Rathan mantelpiece the knife with which one of the raiders had tried to kill her in the Earlstoun byre before Patrick killed him -- Patrick by contrast finds it in the cupboard and puts it up again;¹ and she nags at him for writing his tale on her precious empty sugarbags that are needed for her garden seeds.² She and Patrick blend together as an appropriate and convincing match for one another.

These three principal characters have been examined carefully because it is easy to overlook the solidity with which they are drawn. The Raiders is so full of colour and movement and sound that its exhilarating energy tends to remain in the mind as the total impression of the book, obscuring the care with which the characters have been delineated. Yet when even the minor characters are analysed, they have a realistic humour about them which sets The Raiders apart from other historical romances popular during the 1890s and later. Richard Maxwell, for example, dying with exemplary piety and forgiving his enemies because he is dying but exhorting his sons in the same breath not to forgive until they are as near death as he is,³ has an ironic macabre humour which is far removed from the conventional dying victim of Covenanting

¹ XXXVIII, p. 327.
² XLVIII, p. 406: It seems at least possible that in this detail of Patrick writing on empty sugarbags there is a reminiscence of Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh in Sartor Resartus.
³ XIV, pp 131-132.
tradition. Sammle and Eppie Tamson have a vivid voluble grotesque comedy in the same vein as Mowdiewart the gravedigger in *The Lilac Sunbonnet* which we can relish at the same time as recognising their genuine sorrow at the loss of little Marion. Lady Grizel Maxwell, an elderly grande dame in the tradition of Scott's Mrs Bethune Baliol, Cockburn's "singular race of excellent Scotch old ladies"\(^1\) and Stevenson's Lady Allardyce in *Catriona*, with her dog and cat, monkey and parrot and her outspoken servant Jen Geddes, with whom she delights to argue and bicker, provides a sharp-voiced touch of aristocratic independence and eccentricity to match the old House of Earlstoun; what Crockett has to say of his Aunt Janet's relationship to her mistress the lady of Airieland suggests that Jen and Lady Grizel are modelled on them.\(^2\) Indeed one feels that all the minor characters in *The Raiders* are taken from life, that Crockett has met them or people like them and used them to give his story authenticity. The situations in which they are placed -- the burning of Craigdarroch, the siege of the cave on Isle Rathan, the thundering cattle at the Dee Bridge, the journeys up into the distant valleys around Loch Enoch, the wild whirling snowstorm that over¬takess friend and foe in obliterating whiteness -- are

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\(^2\)Raiderland, pp 36-38.
romantic in the extreme and even larger than life, but the people who take part in them are real and human, unromanticised, unsentimentalised, and kept warmly memorable because they are comic, in the sense that we are all comic because we are erring and foolish human beings. In historical romance as well as in domestic love-story, Crockett's sense of the ridiculous is the salt that keeps his tale fresh and alive.

And his central character Patrick combines with his homespun comic honesty and slowness, a sensitivity to sound and colour and movement which makes him the perfect instrument for the vision of Galloway which The Raiders contains. But that is for the next chapter.
CHAPTER 9

1894: The Raiders 2 — Landscape, Imagery and Style

Only on reconsideration and deliberate appraisal do we become aware of the realism and humanity of the characters in *The Raiders*; our first and immediate appreciation derives from the vividness of its scenes and events. We finish reading it invigorated, as if we had ourselves been battling with the wind and the snow and the hard climb through the Wolf's Slock; our minds are full of pictures and visual impressions ranging from the magnificence of the Galloway hills to the tiny details of bell-heather growing among Solway rocks and mountain sheep cropping the short turf among the black marshes. From contemporary reviews it is clear that its first readers reacted in the same way.

"The Raiders" is alive and throbbing with the Gallowegian spirit; the strong and wholesome air of the hills and seas of the Stewartry blow through it.¹

So-called nature description is not much insisted on in "The Raiders," but the whole book is steeped in the open air. However thick may have been the walls of the room that shut in the writer and his manuscript, while he wrote the wind over a moorland county was in his ears, and in his eyes the glory of morning on the Solway.²

"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 (sic) and allied diseases, the public will

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¹: "Books of the Week",*The Raiders,*The Scotsman* March 5th 1894*, p. 2.

eagerly welcome this clean and 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.¹

By telling the story in the first person, by dwelling on what interested him in Galloway and its past, by remembering what the scenes of his early days had looked and felt and smelt like and finding exact words in which to set these impressions down, Crockett had succeeded in conveying to a middleclass public sated with comfort and Oscar Wilde the sheer freshness and excitement of youth. Through the personality of Patrick Heron his narrator he is able still to involve us to an extraordinary degree in the varied physical experiences through which Patrick passes: Patrick may be slow in his intellectual processes but he is acutely aware of the world in which he lives; he notes with vividness the movement of sunshine and shadow, cloud and wind; he feels the textures of rocks and sand and boggy moorland; he catches with sensitive accuracy the many visual, aural and spatial sensations with which his activities provide him. His sensuous response to the

¹: "New Books" -- The Old Romance (The Raiders), St James's Gazette XXVIII (March 29th 1894) p. 5. The sincerity of this most enthusiastic review is evidenced by the fact that two days later, on March 31st 1894, the St James's Gazette began a three-part serialisation of Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills, the second instalment appearing on Monday April 2nd and the third concluding one on Wednesday April 4th, there having been no room for it on Tuesday April 3rd, as an apologetic note announced.
vigour of walking and climbing is as rich as Crockett's own, and without being "poetic" he sets down in words an arrestingly real picture of Galloway landscape and countryside seen by someone moving up and down through it in all weathers and at all times of day. Moreover, as the Bookman critic points out, the description of nature is not "insisted on" in static passages of writing which slow down the narrative but is itself part of the narrative, incorporated into it in vivid and often colloquial comments emerging as Patrick responds to one thing after another. He perpetually notices the quick pictures that meet his eye as he turns, the flashes of feeling that impress themselves on his mind with a change in position or a plunge into a valley, the sudden awe-inspiring thunder of a breaking dam or the sharp "spat" of a bullet against a wall. Everything tends to be movement; as a general rule he has no time to stand and take in the splendour of a view, since he is too busy pushing his way through a bog or struggling over loose stones up a mountain ridge.

Two criticisms may occur. Patrick's quick vivid appreciation of natural beauty and grandeur on the one hand, or bell heather and the sounds made by grazing sheep on the other, may be regarded as out of period for the century in which he is supposed to be living. Crockett may be accused of having transferred his own feelings as a nineteenth century nature-lover to a young man living at a time when such things were simply not felt. Rosaline Masson has a word of praise for Stevenson's Kidnapped
because he did not allow his David Balfour to pay much attention to the splendid scenery of his adventures:

This is perfectly in keeping with the man and the time: perception of scenic beauty does not belong to the eighteenth century.¹

It follows that she would have condemned Crockett for disregarding this psychological truth to history.

Certainly David Balfour notices only the simplest and most obvious features of the lowlands and the highlands, but he has been brought up by careful lowland parents under the eye of Mr Campbell the minister; it is part of his temperament to be cautious, not carried away by nature or anything else. Patrick in contrast is naive, impressionable, sharp-eyed; he has lived all his life close to the Solway, enjoying the freedom of the tides and the open air, and has inherited from his father an instinctive love of his native countryside:

"Lift me up, Paitrick," said my father, "till I see again the bonny tide as it lappers again' the auld toor. It will lapper there mony and mony a day an' me no here to listen. Ilka time you hear it, laddie, ye'll mind on yer faither that loved to dream to the plashing o' t, juist because it was Solway salt water and this his ain auld toor o' the Isle Rathan."²

One must not generalise too harshly; Collins, Cowper and Gray belong to the eighteenth century too, as do the lengthy nature descriptions of St Aubert's idyllic Gascony estate and the dark precipices of Italy in Ann Radcliffe's

Mysteries of Udolpho, and even if they did not, exceptions can occur in any century. Patrick Heron is no Addison, but one would not have expected eighteenth century urbanity in rural Galloway -- Dr Johnson did not always find it in Scotland later in the century than the period of The Raiders. Patrick's father's influence, his rural upbringing, the isolated wild beauty of the landscape and seascape in which his youth has been passed, his freedom to walk and row and tramp flounders just as he pleases, above all the sincere boyish fits and starts with which his nature-impressions are placed in his narrative, all combine to impel belief; he is far removed from the delicate poetry-reading lute-playing twilight-loving sentimental simplicity of Mrs Radcliffe's Emily and her like.

The second criticism which occurs is that a lad like Patrick who is so slow-witted, so stupid in affairs of the heart -- in affairs of all kinds -- cannot possibly be so alive to sense-impressions as Crockett depicts him; if he is dense with regard to May Maxwell, he must be dense about other things also. The inference is that Crockett is cheating; he is using a clumsy, loutish hero for comic effect, but at the same time using him seriously as a brilliant recorder of natural phenomena to which he would by dullness of disposition have been deaf and blind. This is not necessarily so. It is in childhood, when our sophistication is least and our knowledge of the world most limited, that we are most imaginatively aware of our surroundings. As we grow older, "shades of the
prison-house" close in upon us and our response weakens because of custom. Patrick at the beginning of *The Raiders* is still a boy, filled with the relish of childhood; he is seeing the smugglers, the gypsies, the Cooran lane and the Dungeon of Buchan for the first time and therefore with the intensity of novelty; as he grows older his impressions will be less immediate — we see in the Foreword what he has become by the time he is thirty-seven. Crockett has thought of this objection and provided for it. We accept Patrick's vividness of reaction because of his youth.

A more serious question is whether a slow-witted lad, no matter how impressionable, can have the command of language which Patrick shows. "Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits", and Patrick has not travelled far from Isle Rathan, his farthest journey being to Dumfries and the family lawyer. Once again Crockett has foreseen this objection and meets it in two ways. He makes the older Patrick the narrator, the man who has read and thought more and is able to look back over his experience and by reliving it in imagination describe it with the boy's remembered response and the maturer man's vocabulary, thus getting the best of both and an added dimension of irony as the one comments on the other. He also makes scrupulously sure that Patrick's images and descriptive terms accord exactly with his circumstances as an eighteenth century small landowner. His comparisons all lead us back to a young man living in a small tower house on a small island in the
Solway, educated by an intelligent whimsical father who talks to him intimately and guides his reading, such as it is; his metaphors and similes are not exotic, they are not poetic, they are not outwith what we would expect to have been the range of objects and actions with which he is familiar. "Homely" is the important word; Patrick's descriptions are always linked to his daily round of homely concerns.

However, if there still be a difficulty over the too articulate Patrick, the plea can be advanced in Crockett's favour that since his time his technique has been carried much farther; many modern authors have taken far more audacious liberties with literal truth to language and vocabulary. The example that comes to mind is William Faulkner, who in As I Lay Dying has credited the simple-minded and the half-witted with remarkable and varied articulacy, and in The Sound and the Fury has begun by giving a deliberately confusing but clearly recorded narrative to an imbecile whose age is thirty-three but who is mentally still a baby, and deaf and dumb into the bargain.1 If Benjy can be allowed to tell his story in defiance of literal realism, and his creator be commended for skill and artistry, then surely Crockett can be allowed a degree of licence with Patrick, so that he can create the vigour and energy that pulsate through The Raiders.

Through Patrick, Crockett brings to life a vanished world of colour and movement and violence, and does it all the more successfully because the settings are those he knows well from his boyhood or else has just discovered in energetic days snatched from the Free Kirk at Penicuik to go climbing and walking with John Macmillan of Glenhead into the farther hills. To some extent the settings directed the story; John Macmillan makes this clear in what he told Andrew McCormick.1

"Loch Neldricken and its famour Murder Hole rejoined Mr Crockett's hert (sic); but when he reached Loch Enoch he was in a rapture. He tellt me efterhin' that he was fairly stuck wi' the plot o' the Raiders until he saw the Murder Hole and Loch Enoch, and then a' was plain sailin' ... He tellt me efterhin' that before he slept that night he had the whole plot o' the Raiders thocht oot."

The places and the imagined events are tangled in Crockett's mind; once he sees the place he can see the things happening in it. No incident is too ordinary; a tenant of Glentrool Lodge built a small dam to improve the fishing, but it was swept away by the first flood -- this became the furious outpouring of waters from Loch Valley when the raiders break down a dam in the hope that their enemies will be destroyed.2 Conversely when an event needs a particular setting, elements of which he has seen elsewhere, he does not hesitate to take liberties with geography just

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1 Andrew McCormick: "S.R. Crockett's First Visit to the Glen", Words from the Wild Wood (Dalbeattie and Glasgow 1912) pp 72-73.

as Scott had done in Guy Mannering for the exact placing of Ellangowan, Kippletringan and Portanferry.\(^1\) Isle Rathan is Heston Island in Auchencairn Bay, and he replaces the herd's cottage by a completely imaginary Rathan Tower;\(^2\) he needs cliffs worn by the sea into rocky caves large enough to be a refuge for the Maxwells and Patrick when fleeing from the smugglers and gypsies, so he borrows them from the Portowarren and Douglas Hall shores of the Solway a little distance away\(^3\) and models the vast cavern named "Ossian's Hall" on a cave with the necessary two entrances which he has visited in Ireland, on the coast of Co. Antrim near Portrush.\(^4\)

Similarly he adapts the Murder Hole to suit his purposes. It is to be found in Nicholson's *Historical and Traditional Tales*, linked with the story of a pedlar benighted on a boundless moor in a remote stretch of country belonging to Lord Cassilis; he knocks on the door of a lonely hut, is alarmed by the sudden hubbub this evokes,

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\(^2\)Raiderland, p. 141.

\(^3\)Raiderland, p. 143, note

and peers in a window. An old woman is scrubbing the floor and her two sons are hastily hiding something in an immense chest. Caught and taken into the hut by these sinister personages, he is virtually imprisoned in a squalid bedroom, and wakes from sleep to see a stream of blood oozing across the floor and hear a conversation about how easy it has been to kill a goat compared with the cries and struggles of "the old gentleman last night."

"The Murder Hole is the thing for me -- that tells no tales -- a single scuffle -- a single plunge -- and the fellow is dead and buried to your hand in a moment." This gory tale, associated with an area on the borders of Galloway and Ayrshire, between Dalmellington and the Dungeon of Buchan, is exactly to Crockett's taste; he takes it over enthusiastically and makes it one of Patrick Heron's adventures. In order to do so, however, he has to alter its locality; in The Raiders his Murder Hole is not the Ayrshire one known to Joseph Train and by him described to George Chalmers for his Caledonia but a curious spring in Loch Neldricken which never freezes but is perpetually black and bubbling. Its appearance must have caught

1 Nicholson: Tales, pp 48-59.
Crockett's fancy; the manuscript of a talk on Crockett by Marion Macmillan of Glenhead shows how it may have grown; she describes how delighted he was with Loch Enoch and all the wonders of the mountains, and

Loch Neldricken with the wonderful spring in its western arm which bye and bye he created into the Murder Hole. He said the water seemed to have a raised or convex surface like the human eye a most wonderful place. I suppose it needed the eye of the romancer to see it. I know it was the first time I had ever heard of it tho I had been some years in the Glen at that time.¹

One can imagine the glee with which he seized upon this splendid horror which he could link so easily with the Ayrshire Murder Hole and its accompanying dramatis personae, even if it meant perching the hut and its sinister occupants high up near the Wolf's Slock, where it was extremely unlikely that they would have stray passers-by to prey upon. He has had his effect; the "Murder Hole" is marked on Sheet 77 of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain² in the western part of Loch Neldricken where Marion Macmillan describes the spring. He himself made a slip in the first few editions of The Raiders which describe it as "a part of this eastermost end of the loch"³, but in the seventh this is amended to "a part of this

western end of the loch", with the words spaced out more widely to fill the line.

The "famous Sixteen Drifty Days which are yet remembered over all the face of the hill country" may be equally a work of his imagination. The phrase, with the strong definition of "Sixteen" and the softly descriptive "Drifty Days", alliterative, neat, yet ominous, is one on which he would seize, and something very like it occurs in the old Statistical Record for Eskdalemuir in Dumfriesshire, a moorland parish akin to Galloway. In a long note occupying nearly all of the two pages on which it appears, the havoc wrought by bad winters is recorded in some detail; one sentence reports that

In 1674, there were 13 drifty days in the end of February and the beginning of March, O.S., which proved fatal to most of the sheep in the parish.

When the same note, dealing with subsequent bad winters, remarks that

To this day they are looked back on with horror we are entitled to conjecture that the amalgamation of these two items may be the source of Crockett's sentence; the "drifty days" at least can surely not be fortuitous

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2XLIV, p. 372.

3Sir John Sinclair: The Statistical Account of Scotland drawn up from the communications of the ministers of the different parishes, XII, (Edinburgh 1794) pp 610-611 note. I am indebted to Mr E.J. Cowan of the Department of Scottish History, University of Edinburgh, for this reference.
similarly. We know that he read widely to prepare the background for *The Raiders*, and the Statistical Record of Scotland is a likely place for him to find material. No Galloway historian seems to have recorded the "Sixteen Drifty Days".

But although Crockett's Galloway may not have been literally exact in either history or geography, his picture is true in atmosphere, tradition and familiar event; it is instantly alive upon the page. He had good precedent for the liberties he was taking, in any case; Thomas Hardy, finding his native county of Dorset not extensive enough to contain the series of novels he had in mind to write, disinterred the name of Wessex from English history and gave it "a fictitious significance as the existing name of the district once included in that extinct kingdom".

Hardy, being of a more serious temperament, is more consistent than Crockett in creating his half-real, half-imaginary Wessex; natural features like hills and rivers retain their proper names, the towns surrounding the area like Bath, Plymouth and Southampton remain unchanged so as to set it firmly in real unimagined England, and only the places where his characters live and work in the deep interior of Wessex are changed, lightly disguised though recognisable — Casterbridge is Dorchester, Toneborough is Taunton, the Great Plain is Salisbury Plain and so on. In addition to these changes, Hardy makes several arbitrary alterations to suit his stories; for example, under the name of Egdon
Heath he in his own words "unified or typified heaths of various real names, to the number of at least a dozen", and he invented completely the village of Little Hintock for The Woodlanders; "to oblige readers I once spent several hours on a bicycle with a friend in a serious attempt to discover the real spot; but the search ended in failure" — a comment that could have been made by Crockett, even down to the bicycle. Like Hardy, then, Crockett transposed, shifted and incorporated in order to satisfy the dictates of his narrative without in any way detracting from the essential truth of the scenes and people he was depicting.¹

Comparison with Hardy, suggested in the first case by the way in which both men were soaked in the traditions of the countryside about which they were writing so that their books bring to life a specific part of England or Scotland, is fruitful in many ways. The cheerful, hopeful Free Church minister and the sombre English poet, novelist and epic-dramatist of The Dynasts, may seem at first to have little in common but on closer examination their origins are similar. Hardy, like Crockett, was first of all a countryman, interested in country crafts, country customs, country people.

He was the son of humble parents, only just above the rank of labourer, and the first twenty years of his life.

were spent between the village of Bockhampton, which was his home, and the neighbouring town of Dorchester. Rural Dorset is a remote place, and it was more remote in the early years of the nineteenth century than it is now. Feudal and sequestered, centring round church and village inn and squire's manor house, its life — little touched by the changes of the great world — revolved in the same slow rhythm as for hundred of years past. It was an agricultural life. Everyone, except the clergyman and the schoolmaster, lived by the land. And they lived hard. In clay-built cramped cottages men struggled year after year against wind and weather to support a wife and family on 7s. a week. But it had stability and dignity. Every Sunday in the grey old churches the community met together, as their ancestors had done for generations, to hear their joys and sorrows voiced and sanctified in the sublime meditations of Prayer-Book and Authorised Version.¹

For Bockhampton read Laurieston, for Dorchester read Castle-Douglas, (although Dorchester is more than four times the size) and one has a not inappropriate approximation to Crockett's youth, especially when one remembers that after his early schooling in the vissage, Hardy walked daily the three miles to attend the British School at Dorchester and back, so that his Church of England upbringing was tempered with nonconformist education later, and he straddled the two English traditions. "He became bookish to such a degree that everybody said he would have to be a parson. The possibility of ordination was not finally abandoned until he was twenty-five, and he never lost an affection for some of the simple certainties of his churchy childhood".² Later, when apprenticed to

the Dorchester architect John Hicks, he continued his daily walks to Dorchester, usually after two or three hours spent reading in the early morning, and at the office made friendships which stimulated his interest in theology—one with the son of an Evangelical clergyman, another with a young Baptist who turned his mind to the fallacies inherent in infant baptism. The continuity of the Anglican tradition as interpreted in country churches rooted Hardy in the past just as Cameronian history rooted Crockett; Hardy's grandfather and father had played the violin in the gallery of their church, like the Mellstock Quire in Under the Greenwood Tree, and from them he inherited a kind of ecclesiastical connection. His paternal grandmother lived with the Hardy family until her death at the age of eighty-five, and from her he heard stories of her youth and the early years of her marriage, just as Crockett heard old tales from his grandparents and Barrie from his mother. Out of these family traditions came many of his tales and most of the details of his backgrounds in the Wessex novels; out of them too came the knowledge of country people and their ways, their humour and their quaint sayings which he put into the groups of rustics, comic, naive, often grotesque, always unsophisticated, who form voluble and timeless choruses to the main events of his novels. They have queer names—Granfer Cantle, Joseph Poorgrass, Elias Spinks, Timothy Tangs—and often queer ideas, about

life and death, coffins and ghosts; and they express them in the rich Dorset dialect which Hardy loved -- his early acquaintance with William Barnes, the patriarchal Dorset dialect poet, intensified his natural delight in local speech and its idiosyncrasies. In this too he is like Crockett whose Saunders Mowdiewort and Sammle Tamson fulfil the same function; in fact, if one so desired, one could claim Thomas Hardy as the leading member of the English branch of the Kailyard school.

In some ways they differ vastly; Hardy's view of the President of the Immortals heartlessly playing with Tess, of the Immanent Will which ran through all life frustrating and distorting all that was good and natural, of the fundamental indifference and perversity of Fate, is very far from anything in Crockett's experience, and Hardy's style is heavier, more ponderous than Crockett's.

Hardy says somewhere that, in order to improve his style, he made a study of Addison, Burke, Gibbon, Lamb, Defoe -- and "The Times" newspaper. Alas, the only influence I can detect in this passage [from A Pair of Blue Eyes] is that of "The Times" newspaper. It has the heaviness, the stiltedness, the propensity to refined cliché, of serious journalism.²

Even in his best novels one is frequently brought up heavily by a thick paragraph of long words and clumsy sequipedalian locutions. But where he and Crockett resemble one another to a startling degree is in the

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¹A Pair of Blue Eyes (London 1873).
²Cecil, p. 137.
quality of visualisation they both possess -- their ability to bring a sharp detail, a passing effect of light, a sudden brightness, flashing before our eyes. Moreover they both relish a melodramatic disaster and can bring a fire, a storm of rain or snow, a cataclysm of nature to vigorous and memorable life in a few telling paragraphs of noise and tumult.

*Far From the Madding Crowd* is Hardy's fourth novel and the one in which he adopted Wessex as the name of his chosen locality; moreover it is a novel of melodrama and action which nevertheless in spite of varied deaths and disasters ends with the hero and heroine happily united; it was written long before his attitude of mind hardened into the stark fatalism of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, and therefore is appropriate for comparison with Crockett's *The Raiders*. In these two books one can find sentences and indeed whole paragraphs which can be paralleled.

Hardy describes a winter morning in brilliant colour:

... the frost had hardened and glazed the surface of the snow, till it shone in the red eastern light with the polish of marble; ... in some portions of the slope, withered grass-bents, encased in icicles, bristled through the smooth wan coverlet in the twisted and curved shapes of old Venetian glass. ... 2

Crockett's colouring is more restrained because he is

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1Thomas Hardy: *Far From the Madding Crowd* (London 1874).
2I, pp 168-169.
writing of the evening light, but he has noticed the same
things and makes us see them in the same way:

As we went along the pale purple branches of the trees
grew fuzzy with rime, which thickened till every tree
was a wintry image of itself carved in whitest marble.\(^1\)

They describe movement through sound and sound through
movement, and are attracted by the same onomatopoetic word;
Hardy describes Troy's flashing sword-play round Bathsheba's
body in the hollow amid the ferns:

\[\ldots\] she could see the hue of Troy's sword-arm,
spread in a scarlet haze over the space covered by
its motions, like a twanged harpstring, and behind
all Troy himself, mostly facing her.\(^2\)

Crockett describes Patrick skating over the ice of Loch
Neldricken:

\[\ldots\] do as I would, I could not hinder the ringing
of my ice-runners, and the whole loch twanged like
a fiddle-string when one hooks it with the forefinger
and then lets go.\(^3\)

Their descriptions of the cutting of corn are similar
in sound and movement; Hardy first:

The oat-harvest began, and all the men were a-field
under a monochromatic Lammas sky, amid the trembling
air and short shadows of noon. Indoors nothing was
to be heard save the droning of blue-bottle flies;
out-of-doors the whetting of scythes and the hiss
of tress oat-ears rubbing together as their
perpendicular stalks of amber-yellow fell heavily to
each swath.\(^4\)

The heat and oppressiveness is changed in Crockett to
moonlight and clarity, but the sound is the same:

\[\text{---}\]

\(^1\)XL, p. 335.
\(^2\)I, p. 310.
\(^3\)XLII, p. 353.
\(^4\)II, p. 30.
Then... there were nichts on the corn rigs when the shearin' was at its height, and the farms lay sleepin' under the cool, clean air -- nichts when it was juist heaven to work among the sheaves, and hear the crap, crap! of the short-bladed reaping-hook driving through the corn. Every sheaf was like a friend.¹

Both have a delicate eye for colour; Hardy describes a fine January morning, when there was just enough blue sky visible to make cheerfully-disposed people wish for more, and an occasional gleam of silvery sunshine.²

Crockett's morning is even earlier, a quiet dawn on the waters of the Solway:

what of the sea one could observe was of the colour of the inside of an oyster-shell, pearl grey and changeful.³

These have all been gentle effects, static for the most part and under control, but both men can produce sudden dramatic moments in which light and movement blend in one intense experience. Bathsheba going through the fir plantation at night has caught her long dress on something and realises that an unknown man is going in the opposite direction.

"Is that a lantern you have? I fancy so," said the man.

"Yes."

"If you'll allow me I'll open it, and set you free."

¹XLVI, p. 391
²This quotation is from the London 1882 edition, p. 24 and later editions; the 1874 edition has "an occasional sunshiny gleam of silvery whiteness". I, p. 40.
³III, p. 32.
A hand seized the lantern, the door was opened, the rays burst from their prison, and Bathsheba beheld her position with astonishment.

The man to whom she was hooked was brilliant in brass and scarlet. He was a soldier. His sudden appearance was to darkness what the sound of a trumpet is to silence. Gloom, the genius loci at all times hitherto, was now totally overthrown, less by the lantern-light than by what the lantern lighted. The contrast of this revelation with her anticipations of some sinister figure in sombre garb was so great that it had upon her the effect of a fairy transformation.1

Patrick is likewise in darkness, lying high on the joists in the byre at Earlston above the cattle-stalls watching one of the raiders coming in.

He walked stealthily, and the dancing lights without glinted on the blade of the long knife which he carried. He glided within with a bowing slouch that was most unwholesome to see. These things I did not distaste so greatly, but I hated the red gleam of the fired stack which shone in the man's eyes through a narrow wicket of the byre as he looked about. A man has been hanged only for showing a face like that in broad day; but in the dark of a cowshed, and with the whites of his eyes flickering red, and his upper lip pulled high over his gleaming teeth, I thought it had been the devil himself looking for me.2

In both passages there is the same enjoyment of strong flashes of colour against surrounding blackness, the same use of exaggeration to splendid effect in order to convey the exact emotional impact upon the central character, the same melodramatic painting of the scene in strongly visual terms so that it is imprinted on our imagination. At the opposite extreme, when it is a matter of dull colours

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1I, pp 270-271.
2XXXVIII, p. 323.
allied to slow heavy effort, both can convey the very

essence of a bog in two or three sentences.

Bathsheba never forgot that transient little picture
of Liddy crossing the swamp to her there in the
morning light. Iridescent bubbles of dank sub-
terranean breath rose from the sweating sod beside
the waiting-maid's feet as she trod, hissing as they
burst and expanded away to join the vapoury
f firmament above.¹

As I went the ground became wetter and boggier. My
foot sank often to the ankle, and I had to shift my
weight suddenly with an effort, drawing my
imprisoned foot out of the oozy, clinging sand with
a great "cloop," as if I had begun to decant some
mighty bottle. Green, unwholesome scum on the edges
of black pools frothed about my brogues, which were
soon wet through.²

Hardy's description relies on a measure of scientific
impersonality, with "subterranean" air-bubbles rising to
make their way upward to the "vapoury firmament", using
"dank", "sweating" and "hissing" (the last perhaps with
its suggestion of serpents?) to convey the ugliness of the
wet surface and manifesting less concern for the state of
Liddy's feet; this is what one would expect of him since
Liddy is a minor character and the bog is an index to
Bathsheba's troubled mind ---- she has spent the night in the
open after her discovery of Troy's relationship to the dead
Fanny Robin and her dead baby. Crockett is more personal,
reminding us that Patrick is an eighteenth century laird's
son in his simile of a man taking the cork from a huge
bottle before decanting its contents, the size of the bottle

¹II, p. 176.
²XXV, p. 223.
giving a hollow echoing resonance to his "cloop", and adding the unpleasant details of the bog sucking at Patrick's wet brogues. But both men suggest the sound as well as the appearance of their respective quagmires, and without specifically mentioning it add a suggestion of their smell in "breath ... hissing ... burst" and "oozy. . . cloop . . . green unwholesome scum . . . frothed."

When it comes to extremes of bad weather, both men have equal energy and vigour, Hardy in the rainstorm which threatens Bathsheba's rickyard, Crockett in the blinding snowstorm outside the shelter of the Aughty. Hardy's first sentence is impersonal and cosmic but he soon comes to pictorial terms:

Manoeuvres of a most extraordinary kind were going on in the vast firmamental hollows overhead. The lightning now was the colour of silver, and gleamed in the heavens like a mailed army. Rumbles became rattles. Gabriel from his elevated position could see over the landscape at least half a dozen miles in front. Every hedge, bush and tree was as distinct as in a line engraving. In a paddock in the same direction was a herd of heifers, and the forms of these were visible at this moment in the act of galloping about in the wildest and maddest confusion, flinging their heels and tails high in the air, their heads to earth. A poplar in the immediate foreground was like an ink stroke on burnished tin. Then the picture vanished, leaving the darkness so intense that Gabriel worked entirely by feeling with his hands. . . 1

At her third ascent the rick suddenly brightened with the

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1II, pp 81-82.
brazen glare of shining majolica — every knot in every straw was visible. On the slope in front of him appeared two human shapes, black as jet. The rick lost its sheen — the shapes vanished. Gabriel turned his head. It had been the sixth flash which had come from the east behind him, and the two dark forms on the slope had been the shadows of himself and Bathsheba.¹

In a moment we were out facing it. In a step we had lost one another. We were blinded, deafened, blown away. I stood and shouted my loudest. When I got my eyes open I saw a fearsome sight. The darkness was white — above, around, beneath — all was a livid, solid, white darkness. So fierce were the flakes, driven by the wind, that neither the black of the earth nor the dun of the sky shone through. I shouted my best, standing with outstretched arms. My cry was shut in my mouth. It never reached my own ears. So standing, I was neither able to go back or forward. A hand came across me out of the white smother. Stooping low, Silver Sand and I went down the hill, Quharrie no doubt in front, though it was all impossible to see him.²

Hardy and Crockett both stress the way in which the senses are confounded by the violence of the storm — Gabriel at first does not recognise the two reflections thrown on to the slope by the lightning, Patrick is "blinded, deafened" and to him the darkness is white, a reversal of normal.

In Hardy we are shown "the brazen glare of shining majolica", in Crockett "the white smother", vivid pictorial evocations of the unleashed force of the storms dwarfing the puny human beings caught in their elemental buffeting. In both we see clearly in our imaginations a fast-moving picture of sound and fury. One is black and multicoloured, the other is white; that is the only difference.

¹II, p. 84.
²XLIII, p. 367.
Although they are perhaps at their most impressive in these huge panoramas of tempest, both Hardy and Crockett are able to use small grotesque touches of description to good effect; they do not despise the day of small things, especially when describing minor rustic characters. Often they remind us of the gargoyles devised by medieval stone-masons in their use of exaggerated detail. Hardy brings before our eyes a middle-aged man

with a semi-bald head and one tooth in the left centre of his upper jaw, which made much of itself by standing prominent, like a milestone in a bank.

while Crockett gives us Sammle Tamson

at the door, leading from the outside to put his head inside, as one might set the bending top of a fishing-rod into an open window.

Hardy shows us the maltster, old and bent:

This aged man was now sitting opposite the fire, his frosty white hair and beard overgrowing his gnarled figure like the grey moss and lichen upon a leafless apple-tree.

"Father's so old that 'a can't mind his age, can ye, Father?" interposed Jacob. "And he's growed terrible crooked, too, lately," Jacob continued, surveying his father's figure, which was rather more bowed than his own. "Really, one may say that Father there is three-double".

Sammle Tamson is bent likewise and walks

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1 I, p. 88.
2 XXI, p. 187.
3 I, p. 86.
with a strange forward stoop which approached a right angle. He leaned heavily on his shepherd's staff as he went — his thin, pallid face with its lack-lustre eyes going before him. He had the air of a man who carries his own head for a hand lantern.¹

And Silver Sand’s arms are exceedingly long and carried swinging at his sides as if they belonged to somebody else who had hung them there to drip.²

These last two comparisons especially are so like Hardy that one might easily attribute them to him if asked to guess without context. They are of course the idiosyncratic narrative of Patrick which counts in a way as direct speech to the reader, and Hardy very often puts his grotesque comparisons into the mouths of his countrymen:

"I believe that if so be that Baily Pennyways' heart were put inside a nutshell, he'd rattle", continued Henery. ³

"He got so much better, that he was quite godly in his later years, wasn't he, Jan?" said Joseph Poorgrass. "He got himself confirmed over again in a more serious way, and took to saying "Amen" almost as loud as the clerk, and he liked to copy comforting verses from the tombstones. He used, too, to hold the money-plate at Let Your Light so Shine, and stand god-father to poor little come-by-chance children; and he kept a missionary box upon his table to nab folk unawares when they called; yes, and he would box the charity-boys' ears, if they laughed in church, till they could hardly stand upright, and do other deeds of piety natural to the saintly inclined."⁴

Remove the clerk, the god-father and confirmation from this passage, the phrase from the Offertory at the Communion

¹XXII, p. 198.
²VI, p. 61.
³I, p. 105.
⁴I, pp 102-103.
service and the charity-boys, and it would sound exactly like Crockett; Hardy's sense of humour expressed through Joseph Poorgrass has precisely the same delight in the ridiculous -- the missionary box kept upon the table "to nab folk unawares" is pure Kailyard if one feels it worth while to say so. Hardy finds rich comedy in the naive comments of rustics on the religion which is so integrally part of their lives, just as Crockett does with the beadle carrying up the Bible or Patrick proposing to go to church with May behind him on a pillion. In both writers there is found the phrase "a queer Christian"; Hardy's Mark Clark uses it of Bathsheba's late father,¹ and Crockett's Patrick of Silver Sand and of himself.² This may seem a small similarity but it is indicative of the fact that both Hardy and Crockett thoroughly relished the "queerness" of humanity and particularly of Christians in their attitude to the Christian religion, the influence of which in their early days neither entirely threw off as they grew older.

But the most significant way in which Crockett resembles Hardy is the power of visualisation which they both possess, the ability to make us see before us in imagination the action they are narrating -- the technique, as Lord David Cecil points out, of the film director.³

¹I, p. 104.
²XVIII, p. 169.
³Cecil, p. 56.
Even in descriptions which in other writers would have been static, Crockett introduces movement so that landscapes are always alive as they are in a film. The mainland seen from Rathen is not a stolid steady mass but a multiplicity of tiny movements blending together:

Thence was to be seen the reek of many farm-towns and villages, besides cot-houses without number, all blowing the same way when the wind was soft and equal.

When disaster comes to Craigdarroch,

it grieved me to see the bonny corn that had grown so golden on the braes anent the isle screeving up in fire to the heavens.

The gentle movement of the golden corn growing slowly and naturally is suddenly interrupted by hissing consonants close together that quicken the pace of the sentence and have almost a flapping effect, to illustrate the flames and their swift destruction: "screeving up in fire to the heavens"; one can hear them as well as seen them.

Sound often accompanies movement; the sound of water moving in the caves,

those resounding halls of native rock, with the green water booming solemnly into them, and the gough of their roaring carried far along the coast;

or the tiny sound effects of a group of sheep:

It was pleasant and cheery to hear them cropping the herbage with short, quick bites, then moving on to another clump.

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1_1V_, pp 36-37.
2_VII_, p. 73.
3_XI_, pp 101-102.
4_XVIII_, p. 167.
The sound of the sheep pulling up mouthfuls of short grass can be heard in the simple sharp disyllables equally accented — "pleasant", "cheery", "cropping" and "herbage", then we come to their head-movements in a change of rhythm — "short, quick bites"; after the three mono-syllables there is a slight pause, and in the next phrase, slower and more irregular, "then moving on to another clump", we feel something of the wandering irresolution of grazing sheep. It is not merely that Crockett describes the sounds and actions, he makes us hear them in the vowels, consonants and varying speeds of the words he chooses. Hardy's style does not admit of this flexibility. He knows that shepherds recognise variations in the sound of sheep-bells and he can from the outside describe the variations and the interpretation put on them:

To the shepherd, the note of the sheep-bell, like the ticking of the clock to other people, is a chronic sound that only makes itself noticed by ceasing or altering in some unusual manner from the well-known idle tinkle which signifies to the accustomed ear, however distant, that all is well in the fold. In the solemn calm of the awakening morn that note was heard by Gabriel, beating with unusual violence and rapidity. This exceptional ringing may be caused in two ways — by the rapid feeding of the sheep bearing the bell, as when the flock breaks into new pasture, which gives it an intermittent rapidity, or by the sheep starting off in a run, when the sound has a regular palpitation. The experienced ear of Oak knew the sound he now heard to be caused by the running of the flock with great velocity.1

But this sounds too much like a treatise on practical sheep-farming, or an article in "The Times" newspaper:

1IV, pp 36-37.
Hardy explains, diagnoses, provides us with information about, the sound of sheep-bells in nineteenth century Wessex, but he does not evoke their sound or make us hear them. We read on without any genuine interest in the sheep and before we know it we are in the first major disaster in the novel, the destruction of two hundred ewes and their unborn lambs when a too enthusiastic sheep-dog drives them over a cliff into a chalk-hole. Our minds know it to be a tragedy for Gabriel, but Hardy has not made us feel it; unlike the later fire and rainstorm, it has not been brought to life before our eyes. There is more reality in Crockett's sentence about placid grazing sheep than in Hardy's flat statements about the "heap of two hundred mangled carcases, representing in their condition just now at least two hundred more". Information about a disaster does not have the same effect as creating the feel, sight and sound of that disaster itself; and since we do not feel its impact we cannot help wondering whether it was probable -- whether a man like Gabriel Oak, represented to us as a kind of archetypal shepherd, an expert on sheep, would have been foolish enough to keep a dog as stupid and irresponsible as the one who did the damage, and whether, if he did keep him, he would have gone off to bed without making sure that he was safely indoors with the trustworthy dog, old George. We are asked

1 I, p. 59.
to regard the disaster as a stroke of malignant ill-luck for Gabriel, ruining him and his prospects of remaining an independent farmer; because Hardy has not through his description convinced our emotions of this, we suspect that it was either bad management on Gabriel's part or else Hardy invoking a convenient disaster because he wants Gabriel to be forced into Bathsheba's service as a common shepherd. The melodrama thrusts itself too crudely into our perception and our common-sense rejects it. Crockett can be guilty to the same fault, but not because he has not troubled to build up the reality of the situation he is describing.

Early in The Raiders there comes a highly dramatic account of the smugglers, aided by the hill gypsies, attacking Patrick and the Maxwells in the Great Cave on Isle Rathan. Crockett plunges us most vividly into this, describing the slow passage of the rowing-boat into the cave, the high cliffs, the tiny plants that grow in the crevices at the entrance, even Quharrie the dog sniffing uncertainly in the prow of the boat because he has never been in a sea cave before. The details build up so convincingly that we are there ourselves, listening to the rock pigeons in the sunshine and suddenly surprised when they are frightened by the boat grinding on the shingle.

At this the doves took instant alarm, and with a startling whirr and clang they swooped down on us in a perfect cloud, their shining breasts extraordinarily near us, so that the wind came in our faces as the living stream poured out of the narrow and fetid
darkness of the cave into the splendid sunshine of the morning.¹

If Crockett can bring the sight, sound and smell of pigeons so strongly to our senses, what could he have done with the flock of terrified sheep driven over a chalk cliff by a yapping dog? We can guess by his description later of the maddened cattle thundering over the Dee Bridge pursued by the gypsies. But he approaches his climaxes so carefully, and builds them up with careful familiar detail so cunningly, that he can make us believe almost anything.

By the time we reach the actual attack on the cave, we are completely convinced of its reality and willing to receive the varied impressions with which he portrays it.

... a great round shot came plumping into the mouth of the cavern, breaking away a fragment from the cliff which plunged like thunder into the deep water of the entrance. Myriads of chips flew every way, but not so much as a feather-weight of dust reached the great centre hold called Ossian's Hall, where only the echoes reverberated, and the swells raised by the round shot and the fall of the great fragment came rolling up to our feet in an arching wall of green water crested with white.²

Sight and sound are tightly co-ordinated; the force of the "great round shot" hits our ears in brief monosyllables and goes "plumping" into the mouth of the cave in one of those homely words which are convincing because they are true to Patrick's type; the cliff fragment falls

¹XI, p. 104.
²XIII, pp 114-115.
with repetition of the same vowel as in "plumping" but more strongly directed -- "plunged like thunder" -- until it is swallowed up by the slow quietness of "the deep water of the entrance". The flying chips, flying "every way", not "everywhere", contrast in their littleness with the hugeness of Ossian's Hall -- and how expressive is "feather-weight" when applied to dust, light and dry and soft in contrast to the sharp brightness of chips -- and among the rolling of the echoes the besieged see the "arching wall" of disturbed and swelling water rolling towards them in words which convey the splash and suck of the disturbance.

When we stop to examine the facts, we are bound to notice the exaggeration with which they are narrated. Anyone who has explored the small caves of the Solway -- or of the Antrim coast -- will realise that a cavern of such magnitude is highly unlikely; could a round shot and a fragmented boulder of cliff "plunge like thunder" into the entrance, yet be heard only as echoes in the interior? Could their shattering impact send the hard stone flying in chips, yet not disturb the calm of the central cave by as much as a movement of dust? Crockett's imagination has been running riot and conceived a cave as fantastic as the great underground caverns in H. Rider Haggard's She¹

through which Holly and Leo Vincey make their way with Ayesha to see her reduced to a mummified corpse two thousand years old after a second exposure to the fofling flame that is the Spirit of Life. Such things may be in the mysterious city of Kûr in darkest Africa, but not in the common day of the Solway Firth. Yet his description is so vivid and he has guided us so faithfully in the small details surrounding and leading up to it that we are prepared to believe, momentarily, that tiny Isle Rathan really can accommodate such a vast cave in some subterraneous and inexplicable way; to help us do so, Crockett devotes three whole paragraphs in the remainder of the chapter to further information about the cave and where it is to be found, solemnly assuring us that it must not be confused with another nearby, as if he realises that his invention is in need of corroborative detail.

He plays the same trick of exaggeration in his description of the raiders' breaking down of the dam in Loch Valley in the hope of sweeping the punitive expedition to destruction. The Loch breaks loose with as much force and majesty as if one of the Tennessee Valley Authority's monster reservoirs had breached its barrier and poured forth to flood an entire county. In fact, Crockett took his idea from John Macmillan's account of the day the weir on Loch Valley had given way.

One fine day, warm and sunny, our guide tells us that he was working with his sheep high up on the hill, when the rear and rattle of great stones carried along by the water brought him down the "screes" at
a run. Loch Valley had broken loose. The weir was no more, and the Gairlin burn was coming down in a ten-foot breast, creamy foam cresting it like an ocean wave. Down the glen it went... while the boulders crashed and ground together with the rush of the water.¹

This was most impressive, no doubt, but not as impressive as Crockett makes it.

We were just at the corner of the burn where, under a great black face of rock it is hemmed in a deep defile, when our scouts on the hillside set up a great crying, the cause of which we could not at the time understand.

"Come up!" they cried. "The water's broken loose!"...

Suddenly we heard before and above us a tremendous roaring noise as though the bowels of creation were gushing out in some great convulsion. The hills gave back the echoes on every side. I found myself climbing the brae with some considerable verve and activity till I was fairly among the higher rocks... .

The great roaring noise still continued... . Suddenly we that were up on the side of the Gairy saw a wondrous sight. A great wall of water, glassy black, tinged at the top with brown and crowned with a surging crest of white with many dancing overlapping folds, sped down the glen. Our array was pent in the narrow passage -- all those, that is, who had not taken the hill at the first alarm. As the wave came down upon them there was the wildest confusion. Men threw away their guns and took blindly to the hillside, running upward like rabbits that have been feeding in a bottom of old grass. From where we stood the water seemed to travel with great deliberation, but nevertheless not a few of our men were caught in the wash of it and spun downwards like corks in the inrush of the Solway tide.

The black, white-crested wave being passed, the great flood ran red again in a moment, with only a creamy froth over it, and we could hear the boulders grinding and plunging at the bottom of the burn.²

¹Roderland, p. 62. This was a reprint of an article "Galloway Fastnesses" contributed to Leisure Hour in 1894. See Chapter 3, p. 76, note 5.

²XL, pp 338-340.
So much for the Gairlin burn! One can see very clearly how Crockett has built upon his original (written in the same year as *The Raiders* so that the incident was fresh in his mind) and added the necessary intensifying touches. The central sentence "Loch Valley had broken loose" gives him his theme; already an overstatement of a small incident relating to a burn running out of the loch, it provides a basis for amplification. John Macmillan peacefully working with his sheep on the hillside is changed to the watchful scouts whose "great crying" in its romantic vagueness arouses in the reader expectation of some catastrophe of considerable magnitude. Their cry when heard clearly, "Come up! The water's broken loose!" adds to this expectation; when followed by the sound appropriate for the catastrophe, "a tremendous roaring noise as though the bowels of creation were gushing out in some great convulsion" we are ready to be appalled, and an immense empty resonant landscape opens before our eyes as "The hills gave back the echoes on every side".

So far the amplification has been aural, with the scenery implied rather than stated, except for the opening which places the party in a "deep defile", a vaguely menacing position reminiscent of gorges or passes in the foothills of India. Once Patrick climbs up higher, Crockett's visual amplification is able to enter into play; he prepares us for something magnificent in "a wondrous sight" and then provides it. "A great wall of water" suggests something much more than the ten-foot breast of the
burn, and the two sharp words that follow, "glassy black", make us feel the height and savage strength of it, poised for a moment to be seen in horror before at the end of the sentence it "sped down the glen" in terrifying speedy simplicity. "The water seemed to travel with great deliberation" is also intensive in effect; a rushing river or sea appears to travel slowly only when great distance is involved; by saying the water seems to move slowly, Crockett implies that Patrick the observer is far removed above it, set in a vast landscape at a point thousands of feet above what he is watching. The mention of rabbits and corks to describe the men flying from or caught in the water is not only in keeping with Patrick's homely experience but adds a hint of man's helplessness in the face of such natural elemental forces of disaster, yet again intensifying the magnitude of the occasion; and the vividness of the angry spatter of monosyllables tumbling like the water -- "not a few of our men were caught in the wash of it and spun downwards like corks in the inrush of the Solway tide" -- not only gives us a sense of the wild ruthless energy of the water's movement but adds the cruel dimension of the Solway tide rushing up its channel to the picture -- quite irrelevant to a burn in the hills, but splendid in its suggestion of force and majesty; the spreading slower movement of "the inrush of the Solway tide" confirms our impression of the huge area engulfed by the flood. Crockett makes us see vividly
what he wants us to see, and for the moment we forget that he is merely describing the minor incident of a burn breaking down a weir. Everything has been made larger and more terrible by the energy with which his visualisation has worked; we see and hear it so clearly that we are hardly aware of being cheated.

Most of the high points in the narrative are in passages like this, full of drama and visual touches. There is the burning of Craigdarroch:

The ricks of corn which had been left unthrashed from last year’s harvest were in a blaze. Black figures of men ran hither and thither about the house and round the fires. We could see them disappearing into the office-houses with blazing peats and torches. The thatch of the barn was just beginning to show red. Narrow tongues of fire and great sweeps of smoke drove to leeward against the clear west.¹

There is the defence of the cave at Isle Rathen during the last attack:

A moment afterwards there came out of the smoke, floating as it were upon the water, half a dozen heads, black and fierce, with long hair dabbling in the tide as their owners swam towards us.

Richard Maxwell, Jerry, and I fired, but what with the darkness of the place, the thickness of the smoke, and the horror of shooting at men’s heads so close, I think that no one of us except old Richard shot his man.²

There is the defence of the old House of Earlstoun against the outlaws who in the end flee, leaving their wounded and dead in the courtyard, until the more dextrous thieves creep back to remove them and

¹VII, p. 72.
²XIV, p. 128.
each dead man seemed to rise of his own accord and crawl backward towards the gate. We remained stiff with terror, rooted to the spot with fear, and in a little nothing remained in the courtyard but the red splashes and the broad, shallow pools of blood.¹

There is the rushing of the maddened cattle at the Bridge of Dee, when the outlaws set fire to their backs with oil and pitch stolen from the ewebuchs at Duchrae, perhaps one of the most strenuous pieces of description in The Raiders:

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 of 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 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 drove 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.

¹XXXVIII, pp 325-326.
It is hard to make any one who did not see it, believe in what we saw that night.\footnote{XX, pp 180-181.}

In his final sentence Crockett admits that he is straining the reader's credulity, and perhaps hopes ingenuously that the admission will excuse all. There is a remarkable jumble of improbabilities and conflicting details in his description. The sound, pace and magnitude of the herd of cattle suggest something like the Calgary stampede, yet the Black Water of Dee is a small river, the bridge (whether the one known as the Raiders' Bridge today or an earlier one) must have been small and narrow, and the number of cattle is unlikely to have gone into many hundreds. Moreover, what were Highland cattle doing among the black Galloways? If the outlaws were setting fire to the backs of the cattle, were they likely also to be riding on them? The gypsies, especially the two "half-naked fiends", remind us irresistibly of Red Indians, whooping at the cattle to terrify them, yet the presence of dogs suggests something more local, though this is the first time we have been told about dogs -- and it is the last. Why are the men who leap on to the backs of the cattle described as "desperate" since they seem to be thoroughly in control? Is the Biblical simile of chaff before the wind in keeping with the fire and darkness of the main imagery of the passage? It seems weak and trite, and in addition is quite the wrong colour.

The supernatural runs through all three paragraphs,
but in different forms. The menacing hugeness of the
"great horned shadows against the clouds" is impressive
in its evocation of age-old evil, the folklore image of
the devil as a horned beast suggested no doubt by the
Highland cattle, but it is followed by more sophisticated
similes of the "painted show" and the classical Circe
tormenting the men she has turned into beasts, surely not
only confusing but irrelevant. The third element builds
up in the third paragraph, from the "dance of demons" --
hardly an accurate description of a herd of terrified
cattle -- to the "devilkin" waving a torch as he rides,
and thence to the very Scottish picture of the outlaws
laughing "like fiends yammering and girning when Hell wins
a soul"; this last is appropriate to the Calvinist setting,
but, like the Solway intruding into the Gairlin burn, is
false and over-emphatic, detracting from the reality of
the scene by exaggerated over-writing. Yet in a curious
way, when first we read the passage we hardly notice the
jumble of images, so quickly does Crockett flick one vivid
scene after another before our eyes; the jumble itself
creates the turmoil of the scene, and the confusion of
imagery leaves us with a most lively impression of light,
darkness, noise and terror. The energy has carried us
along, and only afterwards do we ask the awkward questions.

This habit of exaggeration in Crockett, however, is a
fairly innocent one. He becomes caught up in the excitement
of his story and can visualise each incident so clearly that,
consciously or unconsciously, he writes wildly to keep up
with his imagination. The characters survive as real throughout all that happens to them; Patrick is still Patrick after the incredible journey he makes up hill and down dale after May Mischief -- a journey which perhaps owes something to the incredibly long and adventure-packed journeys at top speed which Porthos, Athos, Aramis and D'Artagnan make in both *The Three Musketeers* and *Twenty Years After*; it is well in the Dumas tradition. Crockett's lens magnifies, but it does not distort to any serious degree. Hardy, on the other hand, is prone to a much more dangerous exaggeration; he distorts details, incidents and probabilities in order to make his philosophical point, the cruel over-riding indifferent of Fate. Fanny Robin in *Far from the Madding Crowd* is thwarted by chance over and over again; can so many instances of sheer bad luck really happen to one person? Sergeant Troy has agreed to marry her, but she waits at the wrong church; he, waiting at the right church, which happens to have a loud-ticking clock with most complex machinery which by chance happens to be revealed by an open door to the waiting women in the pews, is so humiliated by the women and the striking of the clock with its mannikin -- "One could almost be positive that there was a malicious leer upon the hideous creature's face"¹ -- that he casts her off for ever. She makes an incredible three mile journey on foot, weak, feeble and we discover later pregnant, to

¹I, pp 191-192.
Casterbridge Union Poorhouse to die in giving birth to Troy's child; that journey is so fraught with darkness and gloom and the desolation of Durnover Moor that we recoil in disbelief; the final agonising detail of the stoning away by the poorhouse porter of the extraordinarily friendly stray dog which helps her crawl the last half-mile is just too much. After her death, fate still buffets her coffined body; by chance and the drunkenness of Joseph Poorgrass it reaches the churchyard too late for burial and by perverse circumstance is kept overnight in Bathsheba's house so that first Bathsheba and then Troy discover the existence of the dead child as well as the dead mother. Even when safely interred she is not safe from Fate; the plants which the repentant Troy sentimentally sets in the soil above her grave are washed away by the cruel chance of an exceptionally wet night and a gutter in the shape of a hideous gargoyle, emblem of pitiless Fate, which directs the flow of water from the church tower directly on to her grave. Hardy is here not merely exaggerating, he is manipulating events with careful contrivance in order to make the cosmic conspiracy against Fanny more obvious and thorough. He does the same thing, often in even cruder terms, in all his novels; he twists his details and his plots to suit his purpose. "The characters seem puppets all right; but puppets not in the hands of Fate but of the author."¹ Crockett is never guilty of this; the lesser

¹Cecil, p. 129.
writer, he is guilty of lesser sins, and has no philosophical axe to grind.

One of the sources of Crockett's exaggeration is the material which he uses; in particular the gruesome story of the Murder Hole, borrowed from Nicholson, is so melodramatic that Crockett in retelling it actually makes it less so. The one huge improbability which he creates is the moving of the house on the boundless plain high up into the hills close to the lonely desolation of the Wolf's Slock; this cannot be accepted; no sensible outlaw either expects or waylays passing travellers in a spot where there does not seem to be a road. Every detail thereafter, however, is made more credible, more realistic, than it was in Nicholson. The pedlar boy is unwary enough, in Nicholson's account, to advertise his orphan state:

"I am alone in the wide world also! Not a person exists who would assist me in distress, or shed a single tear if I died this very night."

This is indeed asking for trouble, one would think.

Crockett abandons this melodrama and replaces it with Patrick's naive delight in passing himself off as a pedlar from New Abbey and mentioning his uncle's name which one of the outlaws recognises; he is so pleased with himself that -- quite in character -- he embroiders his story further and says he is carrying "the siller I got wi' the last pack", thinking himself "wondrous clever".  

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1 Nicholson: Tales, p. 52.
2 XXVII, p. 243.
course decides the outlaws to kill him for the sake of the money, achieving the same result as Nicholson's pedlar boy's lamentations with ten times more likelihood. The villains too in Crockett's vivid descriptions have a grotesque wicked life; the old woman he nicknames Eggface because she has "a face as smooth as an eggshell and as false as a deal door painted mahogany"; the two sons cramming something into a chest are transformed into several unrelated outlaws, "curly-haired, olive-skinned men", obviously gypsies, and they each have separate and distinct villainous characteristics. The smell of cooking, the warm fire and the bubbling pot contribute homely realism and credibility to the bizarre household. The slaughtered goat whose blood seeps under the pedlar's bedroom door in Nicholson and the conversation about "the old gentleman last night" (who turns out, most improbably, to have been the pedlar boy's presumably long-lost father) are all wisely abandoned and replaced by much more ordinary grumbling and quarrelling from the men; the previous night's visitor is the white corpse whom Patrick sees being stuffed into the black chest; the old woman, in a sentence whose sinister quality derives from its understatement, dismisses him carelessly:

"We had a stranger last night, nae farther gane, an', indeed, we hae hardly gotten redd up after him yet."
The goat disappears, and instead of its Grand Guignol blood we are shown an incident much more horrible because it is so ordinary and domestic.

I turned down the bedclothes. They were clean sheets that had never been slept in but once or twice. But I turned down the sheet also, for I am particular in these matters. Something black and glutinous was clogged and hardened on the bed. I turned up the bed. The dark red stuff had soaked through and dripped on the earthen floor. It was not dry yet, though some sand had been thrown upon it. I did not need to examine further as to the nature of the substance. I turned sick at heart and gave myself up for lost.

Last night's stranger is indeed present, in his congealed blood and some still wet; but Patrick carefully investigating the bed because of his liking for cleanliness, and being so shocked by his discovery that he cannot name it but refers obliquely to "black and glutinous" matter and "the red stuff", is so realistic, so true to his nature, that we share his sickness at heart, and his physical revulsion too. A further gruesome detail about the body in the black chest "cut up and piled within, as a winter bullock is pressed into a salt barrel ready for the brine" completes a picture more ghastly than anything in Nicholson, and more convincing because more thoroughly visualised. The Murder Hut at Caignairny, high up in the trackless hills; the dead man thrust into a chest when the Murder Hole is so near; the whole melodramatic situation is unreal; but Crockett by the marshalling of

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1 XXVIII, p. 245.
his life-like details brings it much closer to reality than it was when he found it. Our "willing suspension of disbelief" comes into play because he has made it so easy for us to see what he wants us to see.

In each of Crockett's major climaxes there is some improbability; he is temperamentally given to excess when it comes to violent action or natural disaster. Even the white still world into which Patrick and Silver Sand emerge after the storm, although described in a matter-of-fact way and probably based on Crockett's Alpine experience as a mountaineer, has its central flaw. The vast circular snow-crater in which the dead outlaws are found is the creation of his imagination; it is magnificent, but it is not real.

So he went upward and I followed him, till we came to the edge. I shall never forget what I saw, though I must hasten to tell it briefly. It was a great pit in the snow, nearly circular, built up high on all sides, but specially towards the south. The lower tiers of it were constructed of the dead bodies of a great multitude of sheep piled one on top of the other, forming frozen fleecy ramparts. But the snow had swept over and blown in, so that there was a way down to the bottom by walking along the edge of a wreath. Looking in, we saw protruding from the snow -- here the arm of a man and there the horn of a bullock.¹

It is done in such a quiet deliberate way that one can almost believe it (Patrick's "I shall never forget what I saw" is included to help us over the hurdle); the facts are related in such factual terms that we nearly accept them,

¹XLVII, p. 400.
until we come to the bullock-horn. There Crockett has gone too far. We can almost credit that the outlaws in the exceptional circumstances of the Sixteen Drifty Days might have built up a wall of dead sheep as a shelter, on the evidence of Eskdalemuir, but there can be no bullocks high up in the Dungeon of Buchan. The vestigial remains of the herd of maddened cattle at the Dee Bridge have been Crockett's undoing.

Yet if we allow this impossible premise to pass, what follows is extraordinarily convincing. Patrick's wonder at the phenomenon is conveyed by the awed simplicity of his noting one thing after another, and he and Silver Sand without speaking set about brushing the snow off the dead faces.

I understood at once. We were standing above the white grave of the outlaws of the Dungeon. They had all died in their hillside shelter. With our "kents" we could do little to unbury them, and give them permanent sepulture. It was better that they should lie until the snow melted off the hill. But we uncovered many of the faces, for so much of the work was not difficult. As each white frozen face came in view, Silver Sand said briefly, "Miller!" or "Macaterick!" or "Marshall!" as soon as he looked upon them.

But there were no Faas among them.

"The Faas have done my bidding," he said, "and they have at least a chance for their lives.

Quharrie marked the spots where the dead were to be found by digging with his forepaws, throwing the snow through the wide spaces between his hind legs, and blowing through his nose as a terrier does at a rabbit hole.

But we found seventeen and no more, all under the great south wall of sheep, which the starving wretches had built to keep them from the icy bensil of the snow wind. . .
They looked strangely happy, for the whiteness of the snow set their faces as in a frame. I saw the rascal that would have killed me in the cot of Craigmerry. He looked quite a respectable man. Which made me think that some ill devil had, mayhap, long hirsled and harried an innocent body against its will. So may it be. The good God knows. The Day of Judgment is not my business.¹

There is something so sad and yet businesslike about their actions that once more we can see them clearly, moving over the snow and saying little. Their silence is emphasized by the unexpected yet vivid detail of Quharrie, once he realises what his master is about, digging as enthusiastically as if he were after rabbits.

The pity which Patrick feels for the dead men, and the strange happiness he sees in their faces, marks a new maturity in the young man. Compassionately he avoids judgment; God alone can lay bare the perplexing mystery of human motives. The imaginative detail of his recognising the man who had held the knife to his throat and finding him looking "quite a respectable man" is well conceived, and leads to a thought which reminds us of Stevenson's Thrawn Janet; perhaps "some ill devil had, mayhap, long hirsled and harried an innocent body against its will".² His religion deepens to a truly Christian forgiveness. "So be it," he says, "The good God knows.

¹XLVII, pp 400-402.

". . . the auld, deid, desecrated corp o' the witch-wife, sae lang keepit frae the grave and hirsled round by deils, lowed up like a brunstane spunk and fell in ashes to the grund. . . .
The Day of Judgment is not my business". He speaks there for Crockett also; he too was a man of compassion.

Wisely, after this passage of quiet simplicity and understatement, Crockett quickens his story to an end. His other lesser climaxes could each be surpassed, but nothing could follow this moment of understanding. Deliberately he uses anticlimax; Patrick, little Marion and Silver Sand are literally brought down to earth in a kind of improvised toboggan made from Silver Sand's red neckerchief on which they slide down through the Wolf's Slock and over the Cooran Lane on the frost-bound snow to find horses at Clattering Shaws and make their way back to the warm wood fires of Earlstoun. Little Marion is restored to Sammle and Eppie, Lady Grizel welcomes Patrick with a kiss of impulsive gladness, Patrick is reunited with May, and The Raiders reaches its happy conclusion. The last word is with Patrick directly addressing the reader, just as Rosalind does at the end of As You Like It, Prospero at the end of The Tempest and Puck at the end of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

And now a "Fair-guid-e'en" to all you that have come so far with us. There is no more that I have to say, and no more that you need to hear. Mistress May Mischief and I love you for your kind courtesy, and we pray you that, like the dear Lady Grizel, you will take the door with you as far as it will go, and leave us thus in the firelight, with only the Earl's great chair for company.1

The familiar device works well, draws a firm line across after the headlong tale of adventure and danger, and has

1XLVIII, p. 409.
good precedent. To make the ending doubly clear, Patrick in his tidy way adds a colophon to match his Foreword; his writing down of the story was finished at Rathen on his son John Faa's second birthday, his daughter Grizel Maxwell being "now in her seventh year, and my dear wife entering her thirty-third — but, as I think, bonnier than ever." We end as we began with the same quiet contented voice.

The style which Crockett gives his narrator is a blend of the Scots he had heard and used in his youth, the Biblical cadences we have seen him experimenting with in Mad Sir Uchtred, and the language of the Covenanting pamphlets and books with which he was equally familiar. George Blake dismisses it as "a somewhat embarrassing pastiche", but it was the common practice of historical novelists of the time to attempt an archaic form of writing, and Crockett, being himself a bilingual Scot and a reader of old books, manages it better than most. For him it was less a conscious literary device than a natural echoing of a flexible old-fashioned narrative style in which he was very much at home.

He can, for instance, slip from straightforward narrative to colloquial comment, back again to narrative and thence into pious moralising, in one brief paragraph without our noticing strain.

It behoved me, however, to lie low among the heather, and watch warily the tarry scullions that

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1George Blake: Barrie and the Kailyard School (London 1951) p. 15.
were making such a hash of the bien and comfortable homestead. Only about two hundred yards from where I lay in the sheuch of the moss-hagg, I could see, plain as black on white, a sailor man with a musket which he took over his shoulder as if he had been one of His Majesty's red soldiers — as indeed he was, but deserted and waiting for the tow-rope or the ounce of lead which, in good sooth, and in the fitting time of an all-wise Providence, he received in due course.1

Here the plain narrative of "lie low" and "watch warily" gives way to the outraged indignation of "tarry scullions" who were "making such a hash" of Craigdarroch; the young laird of Rathan almost breaks into a cry of rage in these colloquial quick phrases; the narrative slows down and continues as he controls himself, however, but anger gradually grows into the vicious comment about "the tow-rope or the ounce of lead" which in turn as Patrick remembers his godly upbringing sobered down into the smug formality of "the fitting time of an all-wise Providence." If this is pastiche, it is more lively and natural than the ordinary style of many writers and is fitted remarkably well to the personality and the changing moods of Patrick through whose eyes we see the events and people as they move.

It is Scots in flavour and cadence but not strongly Scots in vocabulary; Patrick has been taught Latin and English by his father, and as we would expect writes good straightforward prose, with only the turn of phrase and an occasional word to show his nationality. A paragraph chosen at random illustrates this:

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1VII, p. 74.
Presently we got upon what was one of the roughest parts of the country for heather and stones that I have ever seen. It is called, I hear, the Rig of Drumquhat, and I do not know who is laird of it; but one thing I know, that he has a barren heritage and routh of heather. If it had not been for this latter, indeed, I fear we had been as good as dead men. As soon as we had darned ourselves into the thickest of it, Sasmal dropped on to his knees and put his hands on the ground and panted with his head down and his tongue out.1

Many elements blend in this not especially impressive group of four sentences. The third sentence, "If it had not been for this latter . . ." is formal and English in structure. "Roughest . . . for heather and stones" has a colloquial Scots ring about it, as does the downright "I do not know who is laird of it; but one thing I know. . .". "Presently", "laird" and "routh of heather" is Scots in vocabulary, and "darned ourselves into the thickest of it" is an expression which Crockett likes to use and may have invented; it is vividly exact in description of men hiding among the tall scratchy heather stems on a hillside. The loose construction of the last sentence with its string of "and"s is both colloquial and deliberately comic, from whatever nationality of language it be deemed to come.

The speech of the characters is much more Scots than the narrative. Crockett distinguishes between the rank of the speakers: Lady Grizel, for example, the old-fashioned lady of quality, speaks broad Scots, as her kind.

1XXIV, p. 215.
would have done and did as late as Scott's Mrs Bethune Baliol.

"But it's a bonny like thing that ye hae to stand here on the steps o' my hoose. I'm an Earl's dochter, ye ken. Did na ye ken? Gin ye dinna, there's Gib Gowdie, that caa's himsel' a butler, he'll sume tell ye -- silly auld man, Gib! Will ye come ben, man?" she said to Silver Sand, who stood with his hat in his hand as the gentrice do to a lady. "It's mony a day since I saw ye ride aff wi' -- ye-ken-wha ---" Sammel and Eppie Tamson speak broadly too but a little more colloquially, using more common turns of phrase.

"Ye mauna think she's sair on me," he said earnestly. "I'm aye pleased when she tak's eneuch notice to look after me in the way o' keepin' me to my wark. I ken I wad try a sant. I hae nae memory ava, and the mind that I hae is no worth a buckie. Whiles I think I maun hae hidden my talent in my sleep, and forgotten whaur I put it, for I canna see hilt nor hair o't."  

"Ava" is Scots from the south-west of Scotland, as is "canna see hilt nor hair o't", yet neither is so idiosyncratic as not to be intelligible to an outsider. Patrick himself occasionally uses constructions and words which have a flavour of Gaelic: "never a strong man all the days of him" and Silver Sand likewise: "Sorrow am I to have ocht to do wi' sic a pack of brainless loons". "Griesoch", "bensil", "kent", "daich" occur among others and are either italicised and explained in a footnote or given their

1XXXII, p. 273.
2XXXII, p. 199.
3II, p. 22.
4XI, p. 98.
Patrick, May and Silver Sand normally speak in Scots but are also able to use formal English when they choose -- in moments of stress and emotion. In this Crockett differs from most Scottish writers, and he does so intentionally for he allows Patrick to point out the habit when May makes use of it.

... from the front, where she could not see me, May Maxwell said, "But Patrick had good sense too, or I would not have been here by now."

She spoke the English, being somewhat moved.

"Good!" said Silver Sand for all answer.¹

On the other hand, when Patrick is at Craignairny, one of the signs which make him fear the worst is Eggface speaking in English.

"Aye, Paitrick Burgess," said she, "It is a bonny name, and whaur micht ye come frae, Paitrick?"

The dialect reassured me amazingly. No one could speak good Galloway Scots and be a complete blackguard. . . .

"Good Master Peddler, Patrick Burgess, bound from the New Abbey, and wheremight your pack be? Hast lost that also?"

She had fallen back into the English, which I like not, save in the Bible.²

May Mischief and Eggface, taken together, seem contradictory examples of the use of English -- May is allowed to speak English when she is moved, but Eggface when she

¹XXX, p. 259.
²XXVII, p. 236.
does so is merely sinister. The difference in the circumstances of the two speeches may be adduced to explain Patrick's different reaction, but it is more likely to be a careless lapse on Crockett's part, changing his attitude to intensify his dramatic point and forgetting to be consistent. He cannot be defended as a careful and meticulous theorist or even a careful reader of proofs; "pedlar" and "peddler" occur in the same chapter, and there is a gross mistake in the timing of the story in the early chapters: Chapter XIV begins

Then for some hours we had peace.¹

but three pages later in the same chapter we are told

All this takes a long time to tell, yet the sailing away of the smugglers, and the second attack of the gypsies followed within a few minutes of each other.²

However, these discrepancies, and the greater flaws of exaggeration and over-excitement, do not damage the speed and liveliness of the story. Taken as a romance, as Crockett intended it to be taken, The Raiders has a curious honesty which makes it stand out among the other romances of its time and gives it a lasting freshness and vigour in our own. For a romance, its character-drawing is solid and thorough. For a historical romance, its evocation of the hills and bogs, the mists and storms of Galloway, is memorably vivid and complete. Its humour runs through both

¹XIV, p. 125.
²XIV, p. 128.
character and scenery in a distinctive and original way, and the personality of its author communicates itself with an unselfconscious energy which makes us warm to him as an individual. In writing The Raiders, Crockett was thoroughly enjoying himself; perhaps it is that enjoyment which makes the book, in spite of its faults, such a pleasure to read today, eighty years of literary and social sophistication away from the eager enthusiasm of its first writing. One can apply to Crockett in The Raiders what he wrote in 1893 of Stevenson whom he so much admired:

We seldom find him sitting down to it, as it were, and saying, "Lo, I will describe a landscape"... the magic is due not to any very remarkable photographic accuracy of description, certainly not to the cataloguing which sometimes passes for realism, but to an author whose personality is never hid from us, and who is conscious of his power to charm us, making himself part of what he describes, and throwing the limelight of his imagination upon the mad dance of the waters.¹

CHAPTER 10

Two Boys in Contrast: Cleg Kelly and Kit Kennedy

After 1894, so bright with success, there came momentously 1895, in January of which year Crockett the full-time author replaced Crockett the Free Church minister who also wrote stories. He settled down hopefully to the task of producing three or sometimes four books a year for the remainder of his life -- for which reason we shall be from now on examining pairs or groups of books rather than one at a time.

At first the auspices must have seemed favourable. Men of the Moss Hags\(^1\) was being serialised in Good Words, a solid family magazine, and Cleg Kelly, Arab of the City in the respected Cornhill; both appeared in book form almost immediately thereafter. For Christmas 1895 Crockett produced Sweetheart Travellers\(^2\) and two years later, also for Christmas, Sir Toady Lion.\(^3\) During the first half of 1896 The Grey Man of Auchendrayne ran as a

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\(^1\)S.R. Crockett: The Men of the Moss Hags, being a History of Adventure taken from the Papers of William Gordon of Earlstoun in Galloway and told over again by S.R. Crockett (London 1895). This book is hereafter referred to as Men of the Moss Hags.


\(^3\)S.R. Crockett: The Surprising Adventures of Sir Toady Lion with those of General Napoleon Smith. An Improving History for Old Boys, Young Boys, Good Boys, Bad Boys, Big Boys, Cowboys and Tomboys. Illustrated by Gordon Browne. (London 1897). This book is hereafter referred to as Sir Toady Lion.
serial in the Graphic, appearing in book form as *The Grey Man*¹ later the same year. *Lads’ Love,*² a domestic
Galloway tale first serialised in *The Lady’s Realm,* came out in 1897, as also did two Galloway historical romances, *Lochinvar,*³ a sequel to *Men of the Moss Hags,* and *The Standard Bearer,*⁴ a freely romanticised treatment of the
Rev. John Macmillan of Balmaghie. 1898 and 1899 saw
Crockett reaching out for entirely new settings; *The Red Axe,*⁵ serialised in the Graphic before publication, takes
us to a feudal European duchy ruled by terror and violence,
with a background of blood which reminds us that Bram
Stoker’s *Dracula* came out the year before; the
continuation into which its principal characters wander,
*Joan of the Sword Hand,*⁶ first serialised in the Windsor

¹S.R. Crockett: *The Grey Man* (London 1896). This book is
hereafter referred to as *The Grey Man.*

²S.R. Crockett: *Lads’ Love. An Idyll of the Lands of
Heather.* (London 1897). This book is hereafter referred
to as *Lads’ Love.*

³S.R. Crockett: *Lochinvar* (London 1897). This book is
hereafter referred to as *Lochinvar.*

⁴S.R. Crockett: *The Standard Bearer* (London 1897). This
book is hereafter referred to as *The Standard Bearer.*

⁵S.R. Crockett: *The Red Axe* (London 1898). This book is
hereafter referred to as *The Red Axe.*

⁶S.R. Crockett: *Joan of the Sword Hand* (London 1900). This book is hereafter referred to as *Joan of the Sword Hand.*
Magazine, as Joan of the Sword, is much less violent though equally romantic; and The Black Douglas\(^1\) manages to combine romance and horror by linking the fall of the Black Douglases with the blood-drinking necromancy of Gilles de Retz, Chamberlain of the King of France -- Galloway history with a difference! Then in 1899 also, he moved back to less sensational settings: Ione March,\(^2\) first serialised in part as The Woman of Fortune in Woman at Home, describes a young American girl making her way as a typist in contemporary London, and Kit Kennedy: Country Boy,\(^3\) first serialised in the People's Friend. A Miscellany of Popular and Instructive Literature as Kit Kennedy; or the Waif of Galloway, derives from Crockett's memories of his youth and upbringing at Little Duchrae. It must be admitted that in the five years following his decision to devote himself to writing as a profession, he deliberately ranged far.

But it was not roses, roses all the way. From Cleg Kelly in the Cornhill to Kit Kennedy in the People's Friend is quite a decline in the hierarchy of literary

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\(^2\)S.R. Crockett: Ione March (London 1899). This book is hereafter referred to as Ione March.

\(^3\)S.R. Crockett: Kit Kennedy: Country Boy (London 1899). This book is hereafter referred to as Kit Kennedy.
publication. Crockett had acquired his many readers but he also had vocal and disapproving critics. We have already seen John Buchan's dismissal of him as "only a boisterous talker";¹ and his was not the only voice. Accusations of plagiarism, inevitable with an author who relied to such an extent on broadsheets, traditions, hearsay and already published historical sources, were already being made in 1894 -- they will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter - and although Crockett was able to defend himself robustly, they tended to stick in the memory of readers and relegate him to the ranks of the second rate. More seriously, the first book which appeared from his pen in 1895, Bog-Myrtle and Peat. Tales Chiefly of Galloway Gathered from the Years 1889 to 1895, revealed itself by its title for what it was, a collection of stories and sketches already published in magazines or lying not yet used in Crockett's desk. Although buttressed at beginning and end by verses from Andrew Lang, taking its title from the verses at the end and presumably having Lang's blessing, it is sadly undistinguished. It breaks some new ground in that one of the longer stories is set in Italy and another in the Paris of the 1870 Commune, and it introduces "Kit Kennedy, Ne'er-do-weel" just as The Stickit Minister had introduced Cleg Kelly, but for the most part it is, as the Athenaeum reviewer

¹Above, Chapter 3, pp. 93-94.
pointed out, "cauld kail het again;" the Graphic, with a Crockett serial already booked, dealt with it kindly but a little mockingly:

They are certainly not great work in any sense; but they are all pleasant reading, and they never fail to capture the attention. The volume is not to be read as a whole, unless by a reader who cannot have too much of the ministers of the various kirkis in Galloway, and their elders, and their own and their elders' families — a set of folk of whom, according to normal tastes, a little goes a long way

and concluded that it was

better qualified to maintain, than either to make or advance a reputation.2

This type of comment must have warned Crockett that he was perhaps saturating his market; it was perhaps for this reason that in the following years he deliberately experimented with new themes.

A sudden and damaging attack came in 1895, when W.E. Henley's New Review published an article by John Hepburn Millar called "The Literature of the Kailyard";3 this vilified with exuberant scorn in the manner of a Gifford or a Jeffrey all the domestic studies of Scottish life which had proliferated in the wake of Barrie and Thrums, and picked out Crockett for particularly harsh abuse.

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2 "Bog-Myrtle and Peat" (Review), The Graphic, LI (January-June 1895) p.704.
3 John Hepburn Millar: "The Literature of the Kailyard", New Review XII (January-June 1895) pp. 384-394. This is hereafter referred to as Millar.
It is a young man's article, and more than that, the work of a young man who is determined to demonstrate his own supreme cleverness. Millar threw a few contemptuous remarks at Ian MacLaren who had newly appeared with Drumtochtby, then turned his attention to Crockett, mocking him for some incautiously-worded statements which had been attributed to him by reviewers -- statements deriving from innocent inexperience, but nevertheless sounding silly and pompous under Millar's bludgeon -- and went on to enumerate one weakness after another. *The Raiders* is "a shambling, slovenly romance of adventure, without a single "evidence of design," save the occasional interjection of a perfunctory, "As you shall presently hear." He denied Crockett any knowledge of class distinctions or any ability to record genuine Scots speech, insisting that no elderly Scots aristocrat would have used Scots at all -- Millar had clearly not remembered his Cockburn, Lockhart or Scott. He levelled at him the familiar charge of plagiarism, this time from Dean Ramsay, without descending to actual examples. He condemned him for coarseness in humour:

In other matters, Mr. Crockett may be strained or laboured; but give him a sore "dowp" and he unbends at once; add a man sitting down on a prickly whin and he is unaffectedly joyous and gleeful; while as for the consummate jest of a wife correcting her husband with a "besom-shank" -- why, it is so excruciating that there is nought to be done save to roar

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1 Millar, p. 386.
with mirth, and to lug it in, and dwell lovingly upon it, on every possible occasion. Such are the simple and primitive diversions of a Free Kirk minister.1

At the same time, Millar would have none of his "strenuous attempts at fine writing" which he described, with selected passages from The Lilac Sunbonnet, as showing

that complete mastery of the terminology of the child's paint-box, which enables an author thus to polish off the beauties of hill and dale.2

But it was Crockett's depiction of young love which Millar found most distasteful. The Lilac Sunbonnet, he alleged, was a "warm" novel.

The very fact that authors are allowed a free hand imposes upon them a doubly stringent obligation to certain literary virtues: to tact, to reticence, to good feeling, to discretion. This obligation Mr. Crockett consistently ignores; to these virtues he is a total stranger. He touches courtship and love-making but to disfigure them with his heavy hand; he opens the sluices to an irresistible flood of nauseous and nasty philandering.3

Instancing one example of this supposed quality after another in disgusted but copious quotation, he exclaimed

Here, in Mr. Squeers's immortal phrase, here's richness! Here's a perpetual flow of juicy bad-breeding which no American Evangelist ever surpassed! You can hear the Young Men's Sabbath Morning Fellowship Association snigger and the Young Women's Guild giggle as you read.4

To Millar, it was all a

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1 Millar, p. 389
2 Millar, p. 390
3 Millar, p. 391
4 Millar, p. 392
slough of knowing archness, of bottomless vulgarity. It is with a sense of relief that one passes from such trash to the clean and honest wit of Fielding or of Congreve.¹

Having completed his denunciation, Millar turned his attention to the reviewers who had grossly over-praised Crockett and were about to do the same for Ian Maclaren, and particularly "a portion of the so-called religious Press".² He detected a certain rude vigour in Crockett which might, if disciplined, have been made worth while even if less ambitious, and concluded by a general attack on what he called "The Great Dissenting Interest".

The Dissenters have for some time, indeed, almost openly abandoned the doctrinal principles of their forefathers, which alone entitled their ethical views to respect, and, though they retain the snuffle and the whine of Tribulation Spintext, they seem rooted and grounded upon nothing save a bitter hatred of the Church of England.³

The conclusion perhaps gives us the clue. Crockett is the writer attacked, but the real villain is W. Robertson Nicoll and his very successful, very profitable multiple journalism, with its strong appeal to Radical nonconformists of all denominations. There is undoubtedly a case to state, but Millar has grossly over-stated it, and in the process has read into Crockett a great deal of salacious sniggering and giggling of which Millar himself is the

¹Millar, p. 393
²Millar, p. 393
³Millar, p. 394
source. His jibes about the "simple and primitive diversions of a Free Kirk minister" and the "Young Men's Sabbath Morning Fellowship Association" reveal that much of his objection is based on snobbery, on Anglican Toryism, on that Edinburgh and Oxford narrowness which is dangerously like priggishness. He would be comic if it were not for the fact that his outcries against Crockett -- and against the so-called "Kailyard School" in general, repeated in his Literary History of Scotland eight years later -- still echo today in the books of literary historians who have not taken the trouble to read afresh before they write.

At the time, in 1895, the impact of this article on the young enthusiastic author of thirty-six who had made his way from humble country beginnings to the status of a professional literary man may well have been drastic. It is unlikely that Crockett would ever have allowed himself to be "snuffed out by an article" but he must have read it with some dismay. The very freshness and honesty which separate Crockett from Maclaren and to a lesser degree from Barrie were greeted by Millar in terms so offensive that one could have understood Crockett's shrinking into his shell. Millar, six years younger, the son and grandson of Scottish judges, bright boy of Edinburgh Academy, perpetually dux of his classes and finally dux of the school, graduate of Oxford (and of Balliol College, into the bargain), graduate also of Edinburgh's Faculty of Law,
advocate, one of Henley's clever young men,\(^1\) must have seemed to Crockett a child of fortune; he had been born into a position which Crockett could never hope to achieve. He may even have appeared to be a touchstone of Edinburgh literary and social manners; how could Sam Crockett back his country taste against this confident opponent? Was he really guilty of "juicy bad breeding"? We have seen in some of the stories in *The Stickit Minister* that he could dissect and expose the hypocrisy, the meanness, the selfrighteous respectability of Edinburgh and elsewhere, but such sneers at his lack of reticence (which amounted to questioning whether he was a gentleman -- and he knew he was not, in the technical sense) were impossible to counter.

If he reacted in this way, he recovered. Beneath the humour of the preface to *Lads' Love* in which he lists the masses of divergent good advice his correspondents from all over the world bestow on him there lies an ironic realism which is fighting back; he does not mention Millar, but it is irresistible to suspect that he may be in Crockett's mind when he writes

>You have informed me that your great-aunts cannot be expected to approve of certain passages in my books.\(^2\)

Crockett asks his readers for tolerance:

>It is not given me always to write what you would -- only what I can. To write that which is in one's

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\(^1\) The late Mr J. Hepburn Millar, LL.D", *The Scots Law Times* (Edinburgh February 23 1929) p. 29.

\(^2\) *Lads' Love*, "To my Unanswered Correspondents", p. vii.
heart at the moment is the only rule. . . Be content, therefore, with lowlier things if the knightly quest prove too high for me. After all, if the matter like you not, there is no compulsion to read -- not even if, as I hope, you have gone to them that sell, and bought my merry lads in Lincoln green.¹

But some damage had been done; after Millar's savage attack, there were no more experiments like The Lilac Sunbonnet. His confidence had been shaken, or at any rate it is tempting to think so as an explanation of the disappearance of explicit sexuality from his pages. Lads' Love exemplifies this well; it is almost entirely light, humorous and sentimental, "an attempt to depict in kindly epitome the various humours, idylls, loves, and tragedies of moorland life in Scotland well-nigh half a century ago".² Crockett had been driven - almost - into the Kailyard by the very critic who first assailed it and may indeed have invented its title, though Millar modestly attributes "this happy nickname" to Henley himself.³

Certainly lovemaking plays a very minor part in the two books we are about to examine as an introduction to Crockett's range in the nineteenth century scene, Cleg Kelly and Kit Kennedy. Neither hero indulges in extended or romantic flights; Cleg is the unperceptive practical

¹ _Lads' Love_, "To my Unanswered Correspondents", p. ix.

² _Lads' Love_, Note, p. xi.

spirit not given to eloquence and Kit is bashful and tongue-tied, so that both are only sketchily awarded the young woman destined for them by their author. In many other ways too they invite comparison; they both deal with the growing up of their heroes in vastly different surroundings; one begins in Edinburgh and ends in Galloway while the other begins in Galloway and ends in Edinburgh; and both spring from Crockett's own direct experience, Cleg Kelly from the days when he worked among the slum-dwellers of the Pleasance in Edinburgh and Kit Kennedy from his Galloway boyhood. Neither book has the exuberance of descriptions shown in The Lilac Sunbonnet and The Raiders; since both deal with youngsters grappling with harsh circumstances, the pictorial element in the writing is subordinated to narrative and conversation, and there is more action and less reflection, although the vividness remains in sharp quick passages which root the characters firmly in their backgrounds.

Cleg Kelly and Kit Kennedy are more ordinary, less imaginative boys than Patrick Heron, and pass through everyday experiences which emphasise their boyishness — their courage and inventiveness, their resource and their philosophical acceptance of life's difficulties without time wasted in self-pity or complaint. Kit Kennedy is obviously more autobiographical than Cleg Kelly — critics hailed it as Crockett's David Copperfield — but both exemplify qualities which he admired and which we can see in his own personality. It would be too neat a
generalisation to say that Cleg and Kit illustrate two sides of their author's nature — Cleg the perpetual optimist, enjoying mischief, defying respectability, always contriving schemes for the betterment of his personal world, Kit the more bookish and thoughtful student who is closer to religious ideas than Cleg and more of an innocent, but still capable of playing truant and playing tricks on his grandmother — but it is tempting to distinguish between them in this way; Kit makes a brief appearance in *Cleg Kelly* and the contrast between the two is deliberately pointed by their creator. Cleg is aggressive and vociferous, Kit more peaceable, but when they fight they are evenly matched:

All Cleg's activity and waspishness were met and held by the country boy, with his dogged persistency and massive rustic strength. Cleg was lissom as a willow wand, Kit tough and sturdy as an oak bough. And if Cleg avoided the most blows, he felt more severely those which did get home.¹

Yet different as they are, the same boyish eagerness is in each; the true distinction lies in their formative experience. Put Kit in Cleg's surroundings and his wits would have been sharpened and he might have turned out another Cleg, but Cleg in Kit's surroundings would never have turned out First Galloway Bursar. There was not enough stillness in him to make him a reader, and his enthusiasm for Sunday School was born of personal devotion to Miss Celie rather than interest in Biblical narrative.

¹ *Cleg Kelly*, XLIII, 293.
Kit is more fully Crockett in his background and values; Cleg is merely a boy whom Crockett has observed with sympathetic irony and affection. He is both simpler and more consistent than Kit, and his qualities are less fully human because Crockett is looking at him from the outside and can therefore make him a uniform type rather than a puzzling human enigma. Cleg is almost at times a caricature of the ideal Edinburgh street urchin, defiant, resourceful, energetic, skilful, happily manipulating police and employer and indeed all the grown-ups with whom he has dealings, with a worldly-wise suspicion of everyone's motives which is allied with a careless magnanimity and no trace of bitterness. He is too good to be true -- too contented with his own cleverness, too untouched by evil to be a genuine product of slum life. Crockett is idealising, although in an unusual way, for the sake of a good story; he makes us admire Cleg by omitting the nastiness and slyness which our commonsense tells us would have been part of such a boy, however extrovert his nature. Cleg whisks hither and thither with bright ingenuity, climbing roofs and chimney pots, "managing" his drunken father, going to the sergeant's wife for a "piece" to provide himself with an alibi when he sees his father setting out to commit a burglary, coming out on top of all emergencies. Life, we all know, is not like this, but the attractiveness of the urchin makes us suspend our disbelief, and the exaggeration of Cleg's charm enables
Crockett to throw greater emphasis on the sleasiness of the society with which he is contending -- the Jewish landlord, the cockroach-ridden paper-shop, the Sunday School Superintendent who gives short weight in his shop, the kindly owner of Callendar's woodyard whose men are busily engaged in planing deal so that it can be grained and passed off as mahogany. Cleg is set about with cheats and hypocrites, and by presenting him as a cheerful scamp Crockett achieves a more forceful contrast with the so-called respectable Edinburgh citizens.

Kit, on the other hand, is less of a type than Cleg. He is rooted in the countryside and part of its seasons and slower rhythms. Mischievous he may be, but he is thoughtful and self-questioning; when the villain suggests he is a burden to his grandparents, he thinks the proposition over, accepts its essential justice and goes off to work for his living without argument. It is worth noting that Cleg Kelly is, in its author's words, a "random chronicle"¹ -- much more so than Kit Kennedy which proceeds by way of a slowly evolving plot. Cleg Kelly is divided into "Adventures", Kit Kennedy into the more normal "Chapters". It is also interesting that Crockett devises no neat happy future for Kit such as he bestows on Cleg; he leaves Kit with his immediate problems over but no definite indication what his future calling is to be.

¹ Cleg Kelly, XVIII, p. 132.
Will he become a minister or a farmer? We are not told, and inevitably one wonders whether this is a sign that as early as 1899 Crockett was feeling a puzzled dissatisfaction with his trade as a full-time writer. Certainly he identified more fully with Kit, who was re-living his own boyhood at Little Duchrae, and Kit’s response to Edinburgh when he comes to the city as a student is as sensuous and impressionistic as Crockett’s own must have been.

The Waverley station was now no more a prosaic railway terminus. Common details were sunk in a pale, luminous, silver mist, through which burned a thousand lights, warm, yellow, and kindly. The blue deepened beneath the Castle rock. There it was indigo, with a touch of royal scarlet where the embers of the sunset lay broadly dashed in against the west. Princes Street, that noblest of earthly promenades, whose glory it is to be no mere street, lay along the edge of a blue and misty sea, bejewelled with scattered lights, festooned with fairy points of fire, converging, undulating, and receding till they ran red as blood into the eye of the sunset.

Above all towered the ancient strength of the Castle, battlemented from verge to verge, light as a cloud, insurgent as a wave, massive as its own foundations, etched bold and black against the spreading splendours of the west.

"Oh, look," cried Kit, laying his hand impulsively on the arm of his companion, "I did not know God had created anything half so beautiful!"

There is nothing like this in Cleg Kelly. Any snatches of townscape which appear are like Cleg himself, lean and spare and related sharply to what is going on — vivid but without poetic imagination.

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1Kit Kennedy, XLI, p. 296.
Tim Kelly bored his way into the eye of a rousing south wind that 'reesled' among the bare bones of Samson's Rib, and hurled itself upon Edinburgh as if fully determined to drive the city off its long irregular ridge into the North Sea. Bending sharply to the right, the burglar came among buildings again. He crossed the marshy end of Duddingstone Loch. It was tinder-dry with the drought. At the end of a long avenue was to be seen the loom of houses, and the gleam of lights, as burgess's wife and burgess moved in this order to their bedrooms and disarrayed themselves for the night.¹

Tinklers' Lands was in one of the worst parts of the city. Davie Deans Street goes steeply down-hill, and has apparently carried all its inhabitants with it. Tinklers' Lands is quite at the foot, and the people there have come so low that they can fear no further fall. The Kavamahs, as has been said, dwelt in the deepest cellar of the worst house in Tinklers' Lands.²

Crockett has disciplined his descriptive style to a bare minimum, so that the reader will have a sense of Edinburgh not as a place of colour and light, not as Scott's "mine own romantic town" or Lewis Spence's "braw hie-heapit town", "yon shadow-mile o' spire and vane", but as a hard indifferent jumble of grey tenements and square stone houses covering with their uninviting carapaces the undulations of the ground, without gardens or gentleness. It is a truly utility landscape of breweries, coalyards and printing-works, of brickfields and timberyards which Cleg contemplates with a shrewd eye to assess for climbable walls and convenient closes by means of which to elude the

¹Cleg Kelly, VI, pp. 48-49.
²Cleg Kelly, XI, p. 84
police or dodge his drunken Irish father, Cleg knows all Edinburgh; he has learned to swim at the piers of Leith and Trinity; he has explored the railway yards and stations; but his especial kingdom is St Leonard's and the parts adjoining -- the Sooth Back, now called Holyrood Road, the Calton Hill, the Pleasance running down steeply to the Cowgate and the wide windy spaces of the Queen's Park. This is Crockett's Edinburgh too, the district in which he lived when he came to the city as a student; he makes Kit Kennedy lodge there likewise in an attic looking out on the stars and Arthur's Seat. Among these tall grey tenements and backyards punctuated with "ash-baskets" and rubbish heaps Cleg is at home; his playthings have been old bricks and bottomless basins and other pieces of urban debris, and he and his companions perform acrobatic feats among the chimney-pots and area railings, cheerfully content with these dusty smoke-stained surroundings. When Cleg makes his way to Galloway and the open countryside, he finds himself in silent unfamiliar regions which at first he neither likes nor understands:

He grew distracted with the silence and the wide spaces of air and sunshine about him. He longed to hear the thunderous rattle of the coal-carts coming out of the station of St Leonards. He missed the long wolf's howl of the seasoned South Side coalman...

Cleg grew more and more tired of the silence. It deafened him, so that several times he had to go outside and yell at the top of his voice -- simply, as it were, to relieve nature.1

1Cleg Kelly, XLVIII, p. 317.
Crockett cleverly reverses the conventional view of the country being fair and beautiful and the city being foul; those things which poets would have found ugly intrusions on the peaceful beauty of nature are to Cleg sources of comfort and consolation because they link him with his familiar haunts.

Cleg knew himself on sure ground again, so soon as he came to something so familiar as the four-foot way. He felt as if he had a friend in each telegraph post, and that the shining perspective of the parallel metals stretched on and on, into direct connection with Princes Street Station and the North Bridge tram lines, which in turn ran almost to the Canongate Head. He was, as it were, at home.

The gleaming railway lines are beautiful to Cleg; the telegraph posts hum with the same kind of energy as he feels in himself; they bring him close to those things which he understands and feels safe with. This is acutely observed; precisely the same reaction was to be found two world wars later among city evacuees taken to the country and homesick for their familiar chipshops and back streets, but Crockett foresaw it in 1899. Cleg's colourless spatial perception of Edinburgh is carefully delineated in all its bareness and boniness; Crockett can put himself behind the eyes of the street urchin and visualise the city as he saw it, with only one small sign that Cleg is aware of the brightness of growing things -- the drooping daisies which Cleg plants round his wooden

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1Cleg Kelly, XLV, p. 302.
hut in Callendar's yard and waters with a teapot. Yet even this is strictly practical; when Cleg sees a picturesque cottage or a railway hut, his immediate reaction is to want to tar it or whitewash it. He has never noticed the Castle silhouetted against the sky; to him the Waverley Station is a place where urchins like himself can earn a few pence carrying luggage or selling newspapers. Not for him the poetry of Kit's vision of jewelled lights and spreading splendours of the west. To the two boys, reality is something completely different, and Crockett can visualise and understand both aspects.

The styles of the two books match their heroes and convey their different perceptions of the world around them. In writing of Cleg, Crockett continues the mock-heroic multisyllabic style he had evolved for the earlier short stories of "Cleg Kelly, Christian", detached, ironic, and dropping every now and then into anticlimax, into colloquialism or into sudden telling detail to deflate a situation into its correct and often scathing perspective. His sentences are short, his effects brief and sharp; the comedy is often satirical. Hunker Court Mission School may sound well, but it is in fact a "gloomy cellar". Its superintendent's dignity is qualified by the fact that he is "otherwise and more intimately known as 'Pund o' Cannels'," suggesting some derisive anecdote which the reader can imagine for himself. His rebukes to the unruly lads with whom he had to deal in his Mission School

1 Cleg Kelly, XI, p. 79.
smelt of the counter, and were delivered in the tone in which he addressed his apprentice boys when there were no customers in the shop -- a tone which was entirely different from the bland suavity he used when he joined his hands and asked 'And what is the next article, madam?'

The phrase "joining his hands" slyly suggests an attitude of prayer, and adds to the scepticism which we are meant to feel about the superintendent's Christian piety.

Cleg shatters the Mission School by his downright comment "I tell you, God's dead, and it's all a dumb lie!" Crockett makes him say "dumb" in deference to his readers' sensibilities, but we know -- and they probably knew -- that what he really said was "damn". He is cast out, at eleven years old, as a "bold blasphemer and atheist", according to the superintendent's oratory, from among "our innocent lambs"; he is "a wicked and incorrigible boy" and -- a far worse offence -- "a disgrace to any respectable mission school". This sums up the theme -- the lively intelligent youngster, struggling with far harder circumstances than the superintendent can imagine, pitted against the forces of respectability personified by 'Pund o' Cannles' who habitually gives short weight to his customers in his grocer's shop.

Cleg may be outcast but he is not overcome.

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1 Cleg Kelly, 1, p.3.
2 Cleg Kelly, 1, p.1.
3 Cleg Kelly, 1, p.4.
The awed silence was sharply broken by a whiz and jingle which occurred close to the superintendent's ear, as Cleg Kelly, Iconoclast, punctuated his thesis of defiance by sending a rock of offence clear through the fanlight over the door of Hunker Court Mission School.

The impudent vigour of "whiz and jingle" deflates the "awed silence" so that the vaguely dignified "occurred close to the superintendent's ear" enlists our amusement. "Cleg Kelly, Iconoclast" takes us into the mock-heroic, equating Cleg with Luther, Knox, the Reformers and many a learned "thesis of defiance" nailed to a church door or published in Holland. Isaiah and St Paul both use the splendid image "rock of offence" but this time the rock is no more than a stone that the young reprobate hurls through the fanlight to show he does not care.

But Cleg does care. Immediately after his expulsion, Crockett with affectionate understanding of boyish nature makes him go up into the Queen's Park and empty his pockets to review his small store of possessions in order to comfort and console himself. These possessions are endearingly real and typical — a box of matches, several lengths of string, a long-pronged wire instrument taken from his father's burglary kit, a pair of pincers, a knife with one good blade, a pipe and brown-paper tobacco to smoke in it, an old exercise book, six marbles, a piece of bread, and half an apple with many lopsided bites out

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2Isaiah, 8, 14; Romans 9, 33; 1 Peter 2, 8

1Cleg Kelly, II, p.8.
of it because of Cleg's lost tooth on the left side and "one clean crisp semicircle bitten right in to the apple core". Cleg decides since he is an outcast he may as well behave as an outcast and sets off to burn a few whin bushes to relieve his feelings and so launches upon his next adventure with the park ranger, but in that one clean bite, neat and strong, Crockett has vividly and economically introduced us to the feminine interest in the book, Vara Kavannah.

Cleg, dancing like an imp through the Pleasance tenements, is clearly a product of Edinburgh, but Vara is an import whom Crockett found elsewhere. In an article contributed to the Christian Leader at some time before 1893 and preserved in a book of cuttings made by Crockett himself and kept in the Ewart Public Library, Dumfries, he had written about "The Child Greatheart and Her Pilgrims. A True Story of Today". This tells the story of Maggie Sullivan, a ten-year-old girl of Irish parentage who, with her two sisters -- one a baby -- leaves her drunken jailbird mother in Manchester and sets off to walk to Glasgow in search of her father who has left his family, half in despair at his wife's behaviour, half in the hope of finding work and returning to rescue his children. A friendly young man gives them sixpence, they sleep out several nights in the open air sheltered by haystacks, a kind-hearted

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1Cleg Kelly, II, p.8.
farmer's wife gives Maggie new stockings and a shawl, another lets them have the dog's porridge when she sees their hungry eyes and persuades her husband, a carrier, to take them fifteen miles on their way as far as Carlisle. There other good souls, railway workers, collect among themselves enough money to pay their train fare to Annan, and in due course, after eleven days altogether, they reach Dumfries. There kindly authorities intervene. The police communicate with the Manchester police and they are sent back and placed in a children's home there. When Maggie is old enough she finds work in a mill and all goes well until the drunken mother finds out her lodgings and breaks in upon her with threats and abuse if she will not tell where the younger children are. When she falls into a drunken sleep Maggie leaves and finds new lodgings, but she is haunted by the fear that her mother will find her and disgrace her at the mill; in the end she and her three sisters are sent to make a new life for themselves in Canada, through the kindness of their guardians, and they all do well in their new country. Crockett, or else his father-in-law, must have had some hand in this arrangement; towards the end of the article he writes "one morning we bade good-bye to our heroic little friend" as if he had been present at their departure from Manchester to their new home. At any rate, he knew of their story, and when the time came to expand the Cleg stories into a full-length book, he obviously remembered Maggie Sullivan and thought that the brave little girl with
a drunken Irish mother was just what he needed as a foil to Cleg with his drunken Irish burglar of a father. He transferred the Sullivans to Edinburgh, settled them in "the deepest cellar in the worst house in Tinklers' Land" and gave them Cleg for a friend; the only change is that instead of two young sisters Vara Kavannah has two young brothers, one a baby.

In the transference he has elaborated the flat narrative of the "Child Greatheart" sketch into a detailed and imaginatively conceived account of real living human beings. He retains the incidents recounted in the article -- including the one piece of direct speech, the small boy who ran to his mother calling "Mother, here's a lass at th'door wanting our Snap's parritch" in north-country accent -- but expands them with faithful visualisation of Scottish detail and the Scottish country folk they encounter on their way to Liverpool in search of their father. He can easily describe Vara and her squalid cellar; he has visited families like this and knows exactly what they are like, and he skilfully links the two elements in his narrative by making Cleg the instigator of their first flight from the drunken Sal Kavannah. He has just established himself in a wooden construction hut in Callendar's builder's yard, fragrant with pine shavings, having left the brickfield in which he had lived before his mother's death; he locks his door with an improvised lock and set off to see how Vara is faring in Tinklers' Lands. Crockett manages the interchange between the two
with delicate care so as to bring out their unspoken understanding.

Cleg ran down into the area and bent over the grating.

"Vara!" he cried, making a trumpet of the bars and his hands.

"Aye, Cleg, is that you?" said Vara. "She's oot; ye can come in."

So Cleg trotted briskly down the slimy black steps, from which the top hand-rail had long since vanished. The stumpy palings themselves would also have disappeared, if they had been anything else than cast metal, a material which can neither be burned nor profitably disposed of to the old junk man.

Vara met him at the foot. She was a pleasant round-faced, merry-eyed girl of ten -- or, rather, she would have been round-faced but for the pitiful drawing about the mouth, and the frightened furtive look with which she seemed to shrink back at any sudden movement near her. As Cleg arrived at the door of the cellar, a foul, dank smell rose from the depths to meet him; and he, fresh from the air and cleanliness of his own new abode among the shavings and the chips, noticed it as he would not have done had he come directly from the house by the brickfield.

"She gaed awa' last nicht wi' an ill man," said Vara, "And I hae seen nocht o' her since."

Vara Kavannah spoke of Sheamus Kavannah as 'faither,' but always of her mother as 'she.' To-day the girl had her fair hair done up in a womanly net and stowed away on the top of her head. When one has the cares of a house and family, it is necessary to dress in a grown-up fashion. Indeed, in some of her moods, when the trouble of Hugh and the baby lay heavy on her, Vara looked like a little old woman, or as if she had been her own fairy godmother fallen upon evil times.

But to-day she had her head also tied up in a napkin, rolled white and smooth about her brows. Cleg glanced at the bandage with the quick comprehension which comes from a kindred bitterness.

"Her?" he queried, as much with his thumb and eyebrow as with his voice.
"Aye," said Vara, looking down at the floor (for in the Lands such occurrences were not spoken of outside the family), "yestreen".

Hearing the voices at the door, little Hugh, Vara's brother, came toddling unevenly upon legs which ought to have been chubby, but which were only feeble and uncertain. He had one hand wrapped in a piece of white rag; and, whenever he remembered, he carried it in his other hand and wept over it with a sad, wearying whimper.

Cleg again looked his query at Vara.

"Aye," said the girl, her eyes lighting this time with a glint of anger; "the bairn toddled to her when she cam' hame, and he asked for a bit piece. And wi' that she took him and gied him a fling across the floor, and he hurt his airm on the corner of the bed.

And Cleg, though he had given up swearing, swore.

"The wean's asleep!" said Vara; "speak quietly."

The details of this our first meeting with Vara are quiet and understated, so that we realise how normal and ordinary this kind of situation was in the slums. Cleg has to make sure that Mrs Kavannah is out before he can venture into the cellar, which is damp and dark in contrast to his own bright clean hut with its new white-wash. Vara can calmly report that her mother has gone away with "an ill man", making no fuss because it has happened so often; she always talks of her mother as "she", a significant index to her feelings towards her — we later find that Hugh always calls her "the Awfu' Woman". In three laconic words — "Her?" "Aye — yestreen". — they deal with the fact that Vara's mother has struck her daughter so roughly that her head is cut and has had to

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1 Cleg Kelly, XII, pp. 84-86.
be bandaged; that too is so normal that there is a recognised code of behaviour among those who have to suffer it and it was not spoken of outside the family. Little Hugh the toddler has suffered too, but Vara can describe what happened to him because protocol allows her to speak of injuries done to others — that counts as reporting, not complaining — and moreover she is angered by an attack on a child. At ten years old she does not think of herself as a child; and in a Dickensian image Crockett says that at times she looks like "her own fairy godmother fallen upon evil times". With regard to Hugh, Crockett plays down the sentimentality which could have intruded; Hugh has one hand wrapped up but he is not seriously hurt; only "whenever he remembered" does he hold it in his other hand and mourn over it in "a sad, wearying whimper". "Wearying" acknowledges the sadness of the situation but realistically points out that Hugh is to some extent keeping the crying going deliberately and in the process making a noise that is irritating to the nerves of others. There is genuine understanding of the small and trivial afflictions of the poor as well as their great ones.

Cleg's reaction comes in a direct and human way in one short hard sentence.

And Cleg, who had given up swearing, swore.¹

How difficult it is for a slum-dweller to persist in the

¹Cleg Kelly, XII, p. 86.
virtue which the mission workers preach when faced with
the daily reality of drunkenness and cruelty; 'Pund o' Cannles' and his like may not realise this (being mere
theorists and orators) but Crockett does. Vara is not
shocked or put about; she merely reminds him that the
baby is sleeping and he must talk more quietly, thereby
conveying the force and sincerity of Cleg's swearing.

We discover why the baby must not be allowed to awake --
Vara has no food to give him.

"God!" said Cleg; "I canna stand this."¹

Off he goes and by a mixture of wheedling and threats
extracts from his employer Mrs Roy of the papershop half
a week's wages, two shillings, and buys food:
twopence worth of meat from the neck and a penny bone
for boiling, a pennyworth of carrots, a halfpenny
cabbage, a large four-pound loaf, and twopence worth
of the best milk. To this he added two apples and
an orange for Hugh, so that he might have a foretaste
of the golden time when dadda should come home.²

The precision of this, and its meagreness, is vividly
convincing, as is Vara's heartbreaking astonishment when
she sees it.

"Cleg Kelly!" said she, speaking under her
breath, "what are you doin' wi' a' that meat?"²

To her in her poverty it is so rich a store that it has to
be spoken of with reverent wonder; her involuntary exclam-
ation "a' that meat" ought to have filled middle-class

¹ Cleg Kelly, XII, p. 88
² Cleg Kelly, XII, p. 89
Edinburgh with shame. In joyful contrast to her previous need for silence, she lets the baby cry as much as it likes.

"Greet, Gavin, greet," she cried; "aye, that is richt. Let us hear something like a noise, for I hae gotten something to gie ye at last."

So she hasted and ran for the baby's bottle -- which, as in all poor folks' houses, was one of Maw's best. She mixed rapidly the due proportions of milk and water, and tested the drawing of the tube with her mouth as she ran to the cot. At first the babe could not be brought to believe in the genuineness of the nourishment offered, so often had the cold comfort of the empty tube been palmed off upon him. It was a moment or two before he tasted the milk; but, as soon as he did so, his outcry ceased as if by magic, the puckers smoothed out, and the big solemn baby eyes fixed themselves on the ceiling of the cellar with a stare of grave ineffable rapture.

There is sympathetic laughter in the description, and in the longer more formal words in which Crockett couches it, but underneath we can feel the angry sympathy running through it, and the familiarity with every detail in the life of the poor. It is typical of him to name the very make of the feeding bottle in parenthesis; he likes to show this inner knowledge, and the firm of Maw's continues in being to this day.

But in case this incident should grow too affectingly domestic, Crockett quickly contrasts Cleg's reaction. Once the little family are settled, he leaves them to their temporary happiness and returns to his own ploys, which are regrettably characteristic.

1 Cleg Kelly, XII, p. 90.
So altogether happy did he feel that as soon as he found himself in a respectable street, he went and cuffed the ears of two well-dressed boys only for looking at him. Then he threw their new bonnets in the gutter and departed in a perfect glow of happiness and philanthropy.

One can imagine that some middle-class readers might well raise their eyebrows at this unprovoked attack on those whose only fault is to be well-dressed and not hungry -- most of Crockett's readers would come within this classification. But the final sentence with its ironic concentration on "happiness and philanthropy" is calculated to disarm them; "happiness" reminds us why he is happy -- he has just spent half his week's wages on his friends -- and "philanthropy" is such a cold and pompous word that it reminds us of the ladies who distribute tracts rather than of Cleg. If it had been only one well-dressed boy, one might have frowned, but he took on two of them, "cuffed their ears" -- a verb which implies light deftness rather than heavy blows -- and the boys in any case had "looked at him" -- we can guess with an Edinburgh smugness which invited rebuke. The healthy exercise of the cuffing and the throwing of the bonnets in the gutter contributes to the "perfect glow" in which he "departed", a verb more suitable to an Old Testament prophet than a cheeky small boy. The most rigid of critics is forced to smile at the impertinence of the hero who makes up for a good deed by relieving his feelings in the commission of a bad one.

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1Cleg Kelly, XII, p. 91.
But only half Cleg's task is done. When he returns to Tinklers' Land the next day, he finds silence and a closed door. He listens and looks with the aid of the keyhole but can hear and see nothing.

"They're a' killed," said Cleg, who had once been at the opening of just such a door, and had seen that which was waiting within. "I'll break open the lock." 1

The sobering grimness of "that which was waiting within" is worth a page of explicit horrors, reminding us again of Cleg's sombre background. Vara calls out when she hears him at the lock and tells him to go away; he can hear her sobbing.

"Vara," said Cleg, "what's wrang? What for will ye no open the door?" 2

The boyishness of the simple questions remind us that he is only twelve years old. Vara explains that she is tied to the foot of the bed while her mother sleeps off her drunken night.

Such things had been done within Cleg's knowledge — aye, things infinitely worse than these. And with his sad and unchildish wisdom Cleg feared the worst.

But he was not Tim Kelly's son for nothing. And it did not cost him a moment to search in his pockets for a fine strong piece of twine, such as all shoemakers use. He always carried at least ten sorts of cord about with him. This cobbler's string was a special brand, so wonderful that Cleg had made friends with the shoemaker's boy (whom he loathed as a sneak) solely in order to obtain it. 3

1 Cleg Kelly, XIII, p. 94.
2 Cleg Kelly, XIII, p. 95.
3 Cleg Kelly, XIII, p. 95.
There follows a clear precise description of how it is possible with the right sort of string to manipulate a long-shanked Edinburgh tenement key from the outside of the keyhole so that it can be poked out with a piece of stick, hang by the string on the inside of the door and be caught and pulled out under the door by a skilful operator who happens to have a burglar's hooked wire in his possession. "He was not Tim Kelly's son for nothing" -- good comes of evil in the most direct way. The exact description of this minor piece of burglary and the pride with which Crockett writes of Cleg's dexterity captures our imagination and we delight in it too. But only for a moment. The story slows almost imperceptibly as the next step comes.

With the key in his hand, and in the other an open clasp-knife, Cleg turned the bolt back and stepped within.\(^1\) Watchfulness, readiness for anything, readiness even to use the knife as a weapon, are suggested by these strong deliberate yet perfectly ordinary phrases. "Turned the bolt back" has a slow heaviness of movement which gives us the sound of the old lock as well as the caution with which Cleg proceeds, and cleverness takes second place to Vara's helplessness. Cleg makes up his mind immediately; they must leave at once.

\(^1\) *Cleg Kelly*, XIII, p. 96
"Come awa' oot o' this, Vara, and I'll bring the bairn and Hugh," said he to the girl, when she was somewhat recovered.

"But Cleg, where are we to gang?" said Vara, starting back.

"Never you heed, Vara; there maun be nae mair o' this frae this time oot."

Momentarily Cleg the boy has disappeared and it is an authoritative grown-up Cleg who speaks, one who will take on the responsibility of these unprotected children. He picks up the baby and Hugh, and asks if there is anything she would like to bring with her. There is only the baby's feeding-bottle. With that one item as her sole worldly possession, Vara allows herself to be led "out of the grim murkiness of the cellar in Tinkler's Lands into the blinding noonday streets", a contrast in light which underlines the harshness of the world, the one to which she is going as well as the one she has left. Cleg establishes them in his hut in Callendar's woodyard and runs off himself, a boy once more, to make everything right with Mr Callendar.

It would have been easy and popular to make Mr Callendar a good man eager to succour the forlorn children. He is, says Crockett, an "honest man and pillar of the Seceder Kirk" but he is busy and prosperous.

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1Cleg Kelly, XIII, p. 97
2Cleg Kelly, XIV, p. 99
To reach him, Cleg has first to get past the servant girl who "very much resented having to answer the door for a ragged boy with bare legs" and then has to compete with Mr Callendar’s interest in his dinner, his comparative luxury and greediness being thus juxtaposed with our knowledge of Vara’s distress.

The builder was just putting a potato into his mouth. He was so surprised to see Cleg enter unannounced that the fork with the round well-buttered new potato upon it remained poised in mid-air. Only when Cleg assures him that the police are not after him does the builder carry "the suspended potato" into his mouth. Cleg tells Vara’s story plainly and brutally, working up to a climax because he knows this is the best weapon: "Will ye turn them away to gang back to a' that?"

The builder, good man, was troubled. The tale spoiled the relish of his new potatoes, and it was the first time he had had them that year. He turned with some asperity upon Cleg.

"But I dinna see what I can do," he said; "I cann’ tak' them here into my house. The mistress wadna alloo it." We can all recognise this; the middle-class guilty conscience pricking its owner so that he resents the cause through which the pricking comes. Through Mr Callendar Crockett is wringing the withers of his readers.

But Cleg has the answer and declares that if Mr Callendar will let them stay in the hut he has built for

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1 Cleg Kelly, XIV, p. 99.
2 Cleg Kelly, XIV, p. 100.
himself in the woodyard, he can find somewhere else to live — Cleg the street urchin gives up his whole dwelling in contrast to the builder who cannot take them in at all. On consideration, Mr Callendar is good-natured enough to say they can stay in the hut if Cleg will guarantee their honesty and make sure he loses nothing by his gesture. After this lazy meaningless permission, Cleg jumps for joy and gratitude — ironic over-gratitude, as Crockett makes clear.

"I kenned ye wadna turn them awa' — I juist kenned it, man!" he cried.

Then Clegg realised where he was, and this enthusiasm subsided as suddenly as it rose.

"I shouldna behave like this on a carpet," he said, looking apologetically at the dusty pads his bare feet had left on the good Kidderminster.  

The Kidderminster, the new potatoes, the ill-mannered servant — they are all details adding up to comfortable respectability which insulates Mr Callendar from human sympathy with the needy. Cleg's trust that he would not "turn them awa'" makes us ashamed, as it should have made Mr Callendar, but he is satisfied with things as they are. His final good-natured suggestion shows his blindness; he calls Cleg back.

"I hae anither wood-yard doon by Echo Bank," he said. "There's a cubby-hole there you could bide in, gin ye had a blanket."

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1 Cleg Kelly, XIV, p. 101.
2 Cleg Kelly, XIV, p. 102.
He is not a bad man, merely an indifferent one, who is willing to be kindly as long as he does not have to put himself out or lend any of his own blankets. We are not surprised to find him later in the story watching his wood-yard burning with patient fortitude, comforting himself that it was the will of God and he was fully insured.

And so Vara is encouraged by Cleg to leave her worthless mother; the story of Maggie Sullivan has been given flesh and blood by Crockett the novelist working on the plain narrative supplied by Crockett the moralist. Cleg's hut replaces the children's home of the Little Greatheart article, only Crockett brings this incident forward in time and it is he who finds work for Vara in a papermill and printing works — Hillside Works he calls it, perhaps thinking of Nelson's Parkside Works, now gone but until quite recently situated at one of the entrances to Holyrood Park. The Junior Partner in the firm greatly desires to improve his standing with Miss Celie, Cleg's Sunday School teacher, and Cleg knows it; by mentioning Miss Celie's name, Cleg employs judicious blackmail to obtain employment for Vara. For the whole summer things go well, Vara growing happier and healthier and gaining respect at the works, Cleg delivering his papers and sleeping at Echo Bank. Then the blow falls as it fell in Manchester; Vara's mother discovers where she is working and comes blustering and swearing to disgrace her. Heartbroken Vara escapes for the moment and tells Cleg of
her terror; she knows that sooner or later her refuge at Callendar's Yard will be invaded. Cleg settles down that night with the watchman in charge of roadworks at Grange, but before he has solved the problem of what Vara is to do, he sees the sky red with burning and realises that Callendar's Yard is on fire. He rushes to save Vara and the children, but instead of finding them in the hut, he finds the soft heavy body of their mother, sound asleep, after having set the yard on fire.

Cleg stood a moment wondering whether he would not do better to leave Sal Kavannah where she was; and more than once since that night has the same thought crossed his mind. He still fears that in dragging her away by the feet from the burning hut, he interfered unduly with the designs of an all-wise Providence.

Here we see very clearly the hard edge of Crockett's realism which he is not afraid to express quietly and without apology. Sal Kavannah is a useless worthless woman for whom there is no excuse or redemption, and Cleg should have left her to burn to death without mercy. By doing what seemed a Christian act of pity, Cleg was frustrating the purpose of God. It is a clear and courageous point of view which the twentieth century might not be so prepared to face. And in expressing it as a thought which in the present tense still occasionally occurs to Cleg, Crockett makes his hero not only very realistic but very real, with a personality which exists

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1Cleg Kelly, XV, p. 114.
outside the story.

For a while we lose sight of Varz, Hugh and the baby in Cleg's return to Hunker Court and his further adventures. He does his best to find out what has become of them, through his friends the police, the rubbish-cart men and the early morning milkmen, but in vain, and he has "perforce to abide ill-content, with his heart unsatisfied and sore".¹ For twelve chapters we follow him through various episodes with Cleaver the butcher's boy and his love affairs, the formation of the Knuckle Dusters' Club, the enrolment in that organisation of Miss Celie and a visit to the Penny Gaff on Easter Road on which occasion Cleg escorts Miss Celie and pays for her himself. We realise just how random a chronicle the book is when Crockett includes one whole chapter -- or rather Adventure -- about himself, under the name of Big Smith the Pleasance missionary, "so called to distinguish him from 'Little Smith', a distinguished predecessor of the same name, who was popularly understood to have read every book that was".² 'Little Smith' almost certainly refers to Crockett's cousin William Crocket, with whom he at one time shared lodgings; William Crocket had also worked in the Pleasance, and was a voracious reader,³ so that although he was by no

¹Cleg Kelly, XX, p. 148
²Cleg Kelly, XVIII, p. 134.
³Information and agreement with the identification of 'Little Smith' from William Crocket's grandson, Professor J.C. Smyth.
means small, he sufficiently fits the part, allowing always for Crockett’s fertile imagination. ‘Big Smith’ without any doubt is Crockett himself.

On this occasion he was addressing his weekly open-air meeting on the street underneath one of the great houses in the Pleasance. The Knuckle Dusters thought it good sport to ascend to the window of the common stair, and prepare missiles both fluid and solid. This was because they belonged to the Sooth Back, and did not know Big Smith.

Big Smith’s mode of exhortation was the prophetic denunciatory. He was no Jeremiah among preachers — a Boanerges of the slums rather. He dealt in warm accusations and vigorous personal applications. He was very decidedly no minor prophet, for he had a black beard like an Astrakhan rug, and a voice that could out roar a Gilmerton carter. Also he was six feet high, and when he crossed his arms it was like a long-range marker trying to fold his arms round the target.

"Sinners in Number Seventy-Three!" cried Big Smith, and his voice penetrated into every den and corner of that vast rabbit warren, "you will not come out to hear me, but I’ll make ye hear me yet, if I scratch till the Day of Judgment. Sinners in Number Seventy-Three, ye are a desperate bad lot. I hae kenned ye this ten year — but —"

"Clash! came a pail of dirty water out of the stair window behind which the Knuckle Dusters, yet completely unregenerate, were concealed.1

The tallness and the black beard identify him unmistakeably, but most characteristic is the cheerful gusto with which he describes his roaring evangelism, his oak staff, "a stick of fibre and responsibility, as indeed it had need to be",2 and his routing of the Knuckle Dusters as they ran downstairs to evade him, tripping them up

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1Cleg Kelly, XVIII, p. 134.
2Cleg Kelly, XVIII, p. 135.
with a foot like a Sutton's furniture van... till quite a little haycock of Knuckle Dusters was formed at an angle of the stair.

Then Big Smith, in a singularly able-bodied way, argued with the heap in general for the good of their souls; and the noise of the oak stick brought out all the neighbours to look on with voluble approbation...

"It'll learn them no to meddle wi' oor missionary," they said, as they retired to drink tea syrup, which had been stewing on the hearth since morning."

This adventure, though only marginally relevant to Cleg, shows the toughness required of those who sought to do good in the Pleasance in the eighties, though indeed some of the tenements had been replaced by other buildings before he wrote; the Deaconess Hospital bears the date 1894 and stands on the site which would have contained the address Cleg had given as his, 200 Pleasance.2 It also illustrates, with typical exaggeration, his method of supplying that toughness, and his lack of illusion about its efficacy. His value to the people of the Pleasance was as a lively character, a kind of free entertainment; they offered with cheerful disregard of missionary preaching to lay bets on his physical strength against that of any other missionary in the city:

"He could lick them a' wi' his hand tied shint his back," said the Pleasance in its wholly reasonable pride.3

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1Cleg Kelly, XVIII, p. 136.
2"A Knight Errant of the Streets", The Stickit Minister, p. 176.
3Cleg Kelly, XVIII, p. 137.
The reprobates of Number Seventy-Three drink their stewed tea unshaken in their self-approving sinfulness; Crockett knows this very well and writes of it with ironic affectionate amusement which turns it into comedy. One wonders what his colleagues — what William Crockett his cousin, later to become the respected headmaster of Sciennes School, Edinburgh — thought of this picture of evangelism in the slums. Crockett’s sense of fun, like Cleg’s, is inextinguishable and no respecter of institutions.

In Adventure XXVIII we begin to move back to the main plot with the exciting railway tales of Duncan Urquhart the engine-driver, the uncle of Cleaver’s boy’s final and definite fiancée; the railway workers at Carlisle who collected enough money to send the “Little Greatheart” children on to Annan by train have given Crockett the idea of introducing a series of railway incidents to reunite Cleg and Vara. The “Muckle Alick” whom Urquhart describes is based on Crockett’s Uncle Robert, a porter at Castle Douglas station¹ and a man respected for theological knowledge and soundness; Netherby Junction is Castle Douglas station; and the incident in which Muckle Alick

¹Marion Macmillan: "S.R. Crockett", MS 11/8, Hornel Library, Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, p. 9. "... he told us a story just as it happened which later on he worked into his book "Cleg Kellie" (sic). His uncle Robert Crockett was porter at Castle Douglas station, a much respected man and he is the Muckle Alick of the tale & the station he calls Netherby Junction & it is the engine-driver who tells the story. But as he told it to us that night it was the real characters & it was the station-master told it to Crockett as his uncle did not see anything in it worth speaking about."
throws a party of drunken Irish drovers out of the train is probably based on fact. It is described in Urquhart's lively Scots in the same mood as the incident with Big Smith and the Knuckle Dusters; Muckle Alick goes into the compartment and out come the Irish drovers one by one
till there was a decent pile o' Irish drovers, a' neatly stacked cross-and-across like sawn wood in a joiner's yard. Certes, it was bonny to see them! They were a' cairded through yin another, and a' crawling and gippin' and fechtin' like crabs in a basket. It was a maist heartsome sicht!1

There is a distinct family resemblance between the uncle and nephew, in their size, their muscular technique, and the imagery Crockett uses to convey the piling up of astonished victims.

In Duncan Urquhart's next anecdote, Muckle Alick rescues a little ragged boy and a baby from the path of the express, "tinkler weans, gaun the country"2 who are joined by an agitated "lassie rinnin', wi' a loaf in her airms".3 Cleg recognises Vara and her brothers, and sets off with Duncan Urquhart on his train the next morning, helping with the shunting and the coupling, having had experience of such things at the St Leonards coal depot. Meanwhile the story backtracks and picks up Vara and her changes again, narrating their adventures on the way down to Galloway. These follow the "Little Greatheart"

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1 Cleg Kelly, XXIX, p. 207.
2 Cleg Kelly, XXX, p. 211.
3 Cleg Kelly, XXX, p. 211.
pattern fairly closely but once more fill in the details and elaborate on the characters who help or hinder them on their way -- the young man who gives them sixpence, the shop with the cakes and gingerbread with the addition of the baker's wife's little girl who comes after them with a gingerbread lion saying "We hae lots o' them at our house", the hayrick in which they sleep, to be found in the morning by Mary Bell the byre lass, a better Christian than her mistress who thinks the children are "bonny" and remind her of last Sunday's text "I will both lay me down and sleep in the land o' the leal" but will not let them into the farmhouse: "What wad the guidman say?" -- a neat parallel with Mr Callendar. The kindly farmer's wife who gives Vara a shawl and to ease Vara's mind keeps the old one to make floorcloths is there, and the carrier's wife whose little boy complains "Here's a lassie wants to gie oor Snap's porridge to a babby!"; her husband takes them on to Netherby in his cart the next day, and there ensues the incident on the railway line. For good measure, Crockett adds a scoundrel who robs Vara but is dealt with by a stalwart young minister with a stick, and one anxious night when little Hugh is lost.

Once at Netherby, they find safe haven; Muckle Alick

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1Cleg Kelly, XXXIII, p. 225.
2Cleg Kelly, XXXIV, p. 229.
3Cleg Kelly, XXXIX, p. 258.
Douglas and his wife Mirren, a childless couple, decide to adopt them, since they know that their father, the tramp James Kavannah, is probably dead after an accident in the spring. Robert Crockett was never married, so this part is imaginary as far as he is concerned. Hugh and the baby remain with them at Sandyknowes and Vara goes out to service with the sister of a neighbour, Mrs MacWalter of Loch Spellanderie, a sharp-tongued shrew who rules her husband and her hired boy Kit Kennedy with pitiless scolding and abuse. It is here that Cleg finds Vara, talking to Kit, and the fight between the two lads takes place in the evening after milking.

They are interrupted by Vara's warning that the two MacWalters are about to arrive on the scene. Cleg lets them come almost within striking distance, then eludes them with a spectacular dive into Loch Spellanderie, from where for about a quarter of an hour he taunts all four spectators with triumphant mockery, "the Thersites of the Sooth Back", treading water, diving, twisting and turning in the water as easily as a fish, and generally showing off as hard as he can. Then he kisses his hand with a final derisive "Guid-nicht!" and swims off into the darkness of the loch.

Cleg-like, he finds friends and shelter with two honest poachers whom he disturbs — Charlie and Poet Jock,

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1 Cleg Kelly, XLIV, p. 298
2 Cleg Kelly, XLIV, p. 299
two railway surfacemen who live in a disused railway carriage beside the water-tank for the engines. Poet Jock, a very tall "rough-haired, black-bearded man with a huge chest and wide shoulders", we meet first as he sits singing one of the railway verses of "Surfaceman", a Scottish poet of the railways, Alexander Anderson, whom Crockett probably knew personally. Volumes of his poems appeared during the 1870s and won him so much fame that, although a quarryman turned railway worker, he was appointed Sublibrarian to the University of Edinburgh and in 1905 its Librarian; he was also for a while Secretary of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution in Queen Street, Edinburgh, whose meetings Crockett attended. He had been born at Crocketford in Galloway, which gave the two men a regional link, and he had reviewed The Lilac Sunbonnet most enthusiastically in the Bookman, hailing it as the work of "A Scotch Theocritus". Possibly Poet Jock is intended as a portrait of Alexander Anderson; there may have been sufficient likeness for readers to regard it as such, but it is not recorded how he reacted to the liberty, even although sweetened by a complimentary footnote hoping for still more railway verses. He is chiefly remembered today as the author of the saccharine verses "Cuddle Doon".

1Cleg Kelly, XLV, p. 304.
3Cleg Kelly, XLV, p. 305.
Cleg is made welcome to share their trout and their railway carriage, and the next morning, still dressed in the old sack he has adapted as a garment while his clothes dry, he rises early (though "not as early as Poet Jock and Auld Chairlie") and runs to the top of a little hill from which he can see the farm where Vara is employed. He gloats over his exploit of the night before.

"I showed her wha was the man, I'm thinkin!" he said. And there upon the heather-blooms Cleg Kelly flapped his thin arms against his sack and crowed like a chanticleer.1

But Cleg is sobered by tragic news; Muckle Alick has been killed by an express. The tone of the book changes; as Crockett moves into Galloway he becomes more serious and involved. Alick's death was not necessary for the plot because Vara and her brothers would have been cared for just as well without it, but Crockett uses it to illustrate the simple faith in Providence which the Cameronian elder felt in his last moments. As he thinks quietly of approaching death where he lies in the left-luggage room, he reflects that Mirren will find it hard to bear since there are no children to console her, then says

more brightly, "There's three comed noo, though. Maybe they'll be a blessin' to her. The Lord sent them to her, I'm thinkin'. He wad ken o' this aforehand, nae doot!"2

Crockett makes a striking contrast between the selfish

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1 Cleg Kelly, XLVII, p. 316. See Appendix 3, p. 618
2 Cleg Kelly, XLVIII, p. 332.
middle-class Christians of the city and the strong practical piety of the country folk among whom he had been brought up; their faith is able to weld Vara and Hugh and Gavin firmly into the purposes of God. They are no longer homeless unwanted wanderers but necessary parts of the divine plan. Mirren in a few words and simple actions demonstrates a gentle unpretentious strength.

... in all that room, where now stood ministers and doctors, men and women that had loved him well, hers were the only dry eyes that dark midnight.

"I wad like to get him hame the nicht, if it's no great trouble till ye," she said; "I think I wad be mair composed gin I had him hame to me the nicht."

So they took her dead home to her at quiet Sandyknowes. They carried him in between the beds of dusky flowers and laid him in his own chamber, They they left her quite alone. For so she desired it. The wandering children, Hugh and Gavin, were asleep in the next room. So Mirren watched her man all that night, and never took her eyes off the broad and noble brow, save once when little Gavin woke and cried. Then she rose calmly and prepared him a bottle of milk, mixing it with especial care. As she did so, she raised her eyes and looked out into the dissolving dark. And there on the brae face was the light of the distant signal still shining like a star in the midst of the brightening sky of morn.¹

The irony and polysyllabic detachment have gone, and Crockett is writing with earnest sympathetic sincerity, the vocabulary slightly Biblical to suit the sad dignity of the occasion: they "laid him in his own chamber ... for so she desired it. ... she raised her eyes and looked out into the ... dark ... and there ... was the light ... still

¹Cleg Kelly, XLVIII, p. 333.
shining like a star". The need to be "composed" and yet not to give trouble -- this reticence and quiet loving acceptance of God's will he loves and respects.

A second motive for Alick's death is Crockett's desire to bring before his readers the harshness and danger involved in the lives of the railway workers who are so much taken for granted by the public. He has touched on this already in writing of Poet Jock and Charlie:

Those who know railwaymen best are surest that there does not exist in the world so fine a set of workers as the men whose care is the rails and the road, the engines and the guard vans, the platforms, goods sheds, and offices of our common railways.¹

He lingers on the names of their buildings and the machines for which they are responsible, and enters into a long detailed eulogy of their endurance and faithfulness in all weathers, even to the extent that some give up their lives in carrying out their humdrum tasks.

A porter is crushed between the platform and the moving carriages; a goods guard killed at the night shunt in the yard. Careless fellow! Serves him right for his recklessness. Did he not know the risk when he engaged? Of course he did -- none better. But then he got twenty-two shillings a week to feed wife and bairns with for taking that risk. And if he did not take it, are there not plenty who would be glad of the chance of his empty berty? . . .

To blame? Who said that any one was to blame? Of course not. Are we not all shareholders in the railways, and do we not grumble vastly when our half-yearly dividend is low? So lengthen the hours of these over-paid, lazy fellows in the corduroys --

¹Cleg Kelly, XLVII, p. 320.
lengthen that column [of those employees killed on the railways] over which the Board of Trade’s clerk lingers a moment ere he adds a unit. What matter? They are only statistics filed for reference in a Government office.¹

After this quiet sarcasm (and Crockett held North British Railway Company shares so he includes himself in the indictment) it is natural that he should exemplify through Muckle Alick the kind of trivial incident which can add up to disaster; public indifference towards railwaymen is a proper extension of and corollary to public indifference to slum dwellers. He knows from his own experience and the talk of his uncles and their fellow-workers how many small things can build up to tragedy.

Alick in the first place was doing extra duty, because another man wanted time off to visit his sweetheart. He arranged the parcels in the left-luggage office so that they were ready to go in the morning, and listened as he did so to the roaring of the wind; it was a wild night, and Duncan Urquhart, the driver of the goods train, was doing his shunting in a hurry because he wanted home out of it. He had noticed earlier that one of the waggons was piled high with a load of goods — too high, making it liable to blow over in a high wind since it was topheavy and unstable — but at shunting time he forgot; as the wagon reached the buffers in the siding it jerked off the rails and crashed on to the main line. Duncan, ready for his supper, was

¹Cleg Kelly, XLVII, p. 322.
already away with the rest of the trucks and did not wait to make sure that all was well.

James Cannon the signalman ought to have seen the blockage; it was his duty to see that the line was clear before signalling the boat express to come on. But he had been on duty for sixteen hours without rest, because his relief had decided to stay off work and although James had asked for a substitute none had been provided.

Netherby was considered a light station to work, and the duty would no doubt be done somehow.1 James had been up all the night before with a sick child and was utterly exhausted. He did his best to stay awake but in spite of his efforts the lights blurred and he fell asleep. Only Alick heard the odd noise of the falling truck and went out to see what was wrong, in darkness made worse by the flickering of the few lamps which the wind had not blown out altogether. He saw the derailed truck blocking the main line. Seizing a heavy iron bar he ran to try and move the truck; he could not lift it but found he could just manage to slew it up and off the rails.

"God help me just a minute more -- for the sake o' thae hundred folk and their wives and bairns!" prayed Muckle Alick, his whole soul in the muscles which gripped the iron.

With a hoarse roar and a leaping volcano of fire-lighted smoke the express leaped by, the glow from the engine illuminating for a moment the strong man bending with tense arms and set face over the bar beneath the overturned waggons.

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1 Cleg Kelly, XLVII, p. 323
"Thank God! Thank God! Thank God!" muttered Muckle Alick between his set teeth as each winking carriageful tore past, the travellers within reading their papers or settling themselves to sleep, alike unconscious of their deadly peril and their brave deliverer.

The way of the express was clear.

But something, it was thought the iron framework of the catcher on the postal car next the guard's van, suddenly caught Muckle Alick and jerked him thirty feet from where he had been standing. And then, without so much as a quiver, the express flew past the Junction and out again into the darkness, the black tempest hurtling behind her and the engine whistle screaming a true man's death-knell.1

The noise and brightness and violence of this description conveys a sharp memory of the old steam trains to all who have seen the Paddy flash through a station on its way from Stranraer to London every week-night in the old days, and is sufficiently vivid to convey that frightening roar to those who have not. "Each winking carriageful tore past" is especially true to the continuous flashing of the oblong windows with seated figures in each compartment and their regular clattering passage. Crockett knows his trains. He knows them well enough to make it an irrelevant mechanical contrivance which brought about Alick's death; he saved the express and knew he had done so; the long line of carriages had roared past into the darkness safely with the engine whistling triumphantly, but the second-last car did the damage: "something, it was thought the iron framework of the catcher on the postal car next to the guard's van" caught Alick up and tossed him thirty feet

1Cleg Kelly, XLVIII, pp 327-328
to his fatal injury. The very vagueness of this is convincing; it is like an echo from an official inquiry or a press account of a real accident -- no one ever knew exactly what had brought about Alick's death. The same note of reality is felt when Alick has been carried to the left-luggage office and laid on the bench.

What he was like I know, but I am not going to tell. His wife, Mirren, might even now chance to read it.\(^1\)

Crockett has been present at just such a tragic aftermath of cruel unnecessary disaster, knows the suffering of the bereaved and does not want to add to it even in fiction. Instead he records the anger of the stationmaster, the unashamed tears of Urquhart, the agony of James Cannon, the quiet authority of the doctor when he comes, and the calm of the dead face when all is over,

untouched and beautiful, and as composed as it was wont to be on Sacrament Sabbaths when he carried in the elements at the head of the session, as it is the custom for the elders to do in the Cameronian Kirk.\(^2\)

Writing of Galloway and Galloway people, Crockett has a sureness and authority which he does not use in writing of Edinburgh. His style with Cleg in the city is a deliberate artefact which he devises for a specific and limited purpose -- the exposure of how his courageous urchin struggles with ugliness, poverty and human indifference -- but even Cleg is treated differently in

\(^1\) Cleg Kelly, XLVIII, p. 330.

\(^2\) Cleg Kelly, XLVIII, p. 333.
After Alick’s death, Crockett returns to a lighter theme in his account of Cleg and General Theophilus Ruff, but he never quite renews his detachment. Residence in Galloway, even in the fantastic circumstances of Barnbogle House, has brought about a mighty change in this Cleg of ours. He was no more only an Arab of the city after all these years.¹

Cleg has ceased to be merely a boyish imp and become a whole man, though as yet only in embryo, and this is not just because he has grown older. He has grown better because he is settled in the country, with the example of country folk and their ways and values. For the first time his quality is recognised and respected; Kit Kennedy, in renouncing Vara whom he for the moment loves after only one treasured kiss by the march dyke, expresses a new attitude towards Cleg:

He fed and clothed them, and never asked as much [as a kiss.]. He is better than I. I will not trouble her any more. For he is better and worthier than I.²

Cleg is now to be taken seriously. He will never have Kit’s poetical vision; he will remain shy, inarticulate when it comes to deeper human emotions, a man of action not words, so that the beginning of his love for Vara after looking at her for a long time with an ache in his heart at her "sunshine and pleasantness" is no more than a prosaic

¹Cleg Kelly, LV, p. 390.
²Cleg Kelly, LIV, p. 388.
sentence at which we have to smile:

Ye are takkin’ your meat weel to a’ appearance.\(^1\)

But Vara who knows him well understands and is well content:

It was more to her from Cleg than all Kit Kennedy’s sweet speeches. . . "He maun think an awfu’ deal o’ me to say that!" she told herself.\(^2\)

Cleg and Vara in love are still Cleg and Vara;

Crockett cannot be false to the limitations he has imposed on these two Edinburgh waifs. To launch them into conventional love speeches would have been untrue to their characters; when they do finally plught their troth, it is in terms of the selling of milk and butter, the leasing of Springfield farm as well as Mirren’s smallholding, and Vara coming over to help him run it:

"Do ye think that ye could" — (Cleg paused for a word dry enough to express his meaning) — "come ower by and help me to tak’ care o’t? I hae aye likit ye, Vara, ye ken."\(^3\)

They remain themselves, and always will be different from Kit Kennedy; their kind of reality, though equally real, is more limited, practical and unimaginative. Crockett is shrewd in leaving it so.

Cleg Kelly ends in Galloway; Kit Kennedy begins there. Without more evidence it is impossible to be sure whether Kit himself first appeared as one of the Bog Myrtle

\(^1\) Cleg Kelly, LV, p. 395.
\(^2\) Cleg Kelly, LV, p. 396.
\(^3\) Cleg Kelly, LIV, p. 433.
and Peat sketches and then found himself written into the successful Cleg Kelly story, with his step-father's sister Mistress MacWalter to contend with instead of his mother's cousin Mistress MacWalter, but this seems the most likely relationship between the sketch and the book. In writing of Kit, Crockett returns to the familiar countryside of his youth which he had used so successfully in The Lilac Sunbonnet, but in a less symbolic treatment: the grasses and flowers which to Ralph Peden had stood for nature wiling him away from cold theology were for Kit merely the normal physical surroundings among which he had grown up and were taken much more for granted. The narrative is leisurely, without the sharp transitions of Cleg Kelly, and is much less of a "random chronicle"; until Kit reaches Edinburgh and Crockett disperses his energies into portraits of the professors he had known as a student, the "Infidel Lecturer" who works with the poor, and Dr Strong who is drawn directly and without much creative care from the great Dr Alexander Whyte of Free St George's, the story flows on without irrelevance, except for the comic passages concerning Willie Gilroy the sheriff's officer who has a part to play in the plot but is chiefly taken up with the tombstone he has erected to his first four wives and the question of who is to fill the remaining space, before he himself with careful forethought arranges to be buried at Carsphairn, to avoid unpleasantness when the time comes for Judgement and resurrection. He corresponds to the "humour" of Saunders
Mowdiowort in *The Lilac Sunbonnet* and to Hardy's comic countrymen like Granfer Cantle and the Mollstock Quire.

Crockett’s own childhood had been such an untroubled and happy one that it did not provide sufficient material for a "story" such as his readers in the nineties would expect; the habit of nostalgia which in our time after two world wars and the break-up of accepted social structures has produced an appetite for simple accounts of childhood per se had not yet developed. He had therefore to devise a plot on which he could hang the scenes and memories of his boyhood. It seems likely that his own illegitimacy suggested itself as a basis for the book. He therefore invented for Kit Kennedy a renegade father, Christopher Kennedy, B.A., Classical Master at Cairn Edward Academy, whose fine words and charm win the heart of Lilias Armour, daughter of Matthew Armour, Ruling Elder of the Cameronian Kirk at Cairn Edward, another alias for Castle Douglas. Kennedy is a drunkard and a gambler as well as a scholar, and Armour forbids his daughter to associate with him, but they go through an irregular marriage secretly. Kennedy, because of his debts and drunkenness, is dismissed and leaves the district hurriedly, and Walter MacWalter, a neighbouring landowner, a Yorkshireman, who wants to marry Lilias, produces a certificate purporting to prove that Kennedy is married to a Mary Bisset from Sandhaven in the northeast of Scotland, the little town of which he is a native. Challenged with these facts, Lilias produces the
marriage lines Kennedy had given her, which her father sternly and for her own good destroys.

But Lilias is pregnant and in due course her son Kit is born. The grandparents accept him with no shadow of reproach and bring him up at the Dornal farm as a favourite. He is a happy mischievous child, full of questions, and when he asks innocently why he does not live with his mother like other boys we learn that Lilias has in the end married MacWalter and is living with him in his fine house of Kirkoswald, at a short distance from the Dornal. Her father had owed MacWalter six hundred pounds of debt incurred in the past by his father, and MacWalter cancelled the debt when she became his wife. It is the typical plot of Victorian melodrama, the villain threatening the aged parents if the daughter does not yield to his wicked will, but since the marriage is never described and lies conveniently in the gap between Chapter II, The Marriage Lines and Chapter III, After Eight Years, we are asked to accept it without complaint as a necessary premiss; its unlikeliness is buried under the homely details of Kit's upbringing.

Walter MacWalter never comes to life; he is the stage villain, and Crockett introduces him in stock garb and attitude, "a well-attired, well-groomed figure, leather-breeched, riding-whipped, blatantly aggressive, floridly-prosperous".\(^1\) His riding-whip goes with him everywhere.

\(^1\) *Kit Kennedy*, VI, p. 39.
At best he is a puppet introduced to afflict the just; at his worst he is ridiculously incredible; sitting in his mansion, raging at his wife because she loves her "nameless loon", he "grunted, thrust his fingers into the bowl of his pipe and turned the red-hot contents out upon the polished mahogany of the dining-room table".\(^1\) Perpetually in an ill temper, he persecutes Lilias through her family while she remains meekly under his roof, suffering; he strikes Kit with his whip when the boy accidentally startles his horse, buys the farm on which the Armours are tenants for the pleasure of evicting them and reducing Matthew to the status of a roadman, and persuades Kit to leave his grandparents' home and earn his living as farm-boy at Loch Spellanderie (where we found him in Cleg Kelly) because he knows his sister-in-law Mrs John MacWalter will probably break Kit's will and turn him to evil ways.

But goodness prevails. Matthew Armour remains uncrushed by misfortune, dignified and God-fearing. Christopher Kennedy, B.A., reappears as a drunken tramp and discovers that Lilias whom he had been told was dead (by whom?) is still alive. She is sorry for him and gives him money, which enables MacWalter to have him arrested for theft. Kennedy survives three months imprisonment with hard labour and six months nursing in the poorhouse hospital, to emerge a reformed character; when he discovers

\(^1\) *Kit Kennedy*, VII, p. 50.
that he has a son he devotes himself to lurking in the background of the story, watching over Kit and influencing him for good.

Kit bears the abuse heaped upon him by Mrs John MacWalter with cheerful patience. He makes friends with the "Orra Man" at a neighbouring farm — his father in disguise — and at his suggestion embarks on three years' secret tutoring in Latin, Greek and the other subjects required for the Galloway Bursary, with the Orra Man as tutor. Clever at school, he profits by his nightly instruction; to outward eyes he is fulfilling the MacWalter intention and consorting with the lowest of the low, but in fact he is being drilled in Latin prose and Greek roots, and in the end wins the Bursary.

Thereafter come Edinburgh, lodgings in the Pleasance, matriculation at the University, new friends, new interests, especially a family who live on the same stair and are called Bisset. Daniel Bisset, a free thinking educationalist (what Crockett calls an Infidel Lecturer) who combines social work with teaching, has a daughter Mary, a pleasant young school teacher who wins Kit's heart, and a son Dick who introduces him to evil ways and steals his Bursary money. But just as Kit is escorting Mary from Dick's flashy dinner party in St James Square to the equally flashy Elysium theatre (a picture of the Theatre of Varieties, opened at the east end of Chambers Street in 1875), Christopher Kennedy turns up, forbids him to enter such a den of iniquity, and reveals that he is his father.
All is quickly tidied up. Daniel Bisset is Kennedy's old friend of Sandhaven days, the brother of Mary Bisset whom he is supposed to have married; through Bisset he is introduced (as is Kit) to the godly Dr Strong, who as an additional bonus is found to have known Kennedy at College.

Letters come from Kit's mother and the Armours' faithful servant telling how MacWalter is behaving very strangely, keeping Lilias a prisoner and talking of taking her to Sandhaven at Christmas. Bisset, Kennedy, Kit and Mary set off together to rescue her, which they do at Sandhaven on Christmas Day, just as the now insane MacWalter is about to push her over Baxter's Heuchs to her death, just as he had pushed to her death twenty years before his first wife, — Mary Bisset. His story had been lies, the certificate of Kennedy's marriage to Mary Bisset forged.

Dr Strong in some unexplained way produces Nick French who had been a witness to Lilias's marriage to Kennedy and still has the marriage lines; the marriage is legal, the much-tried pair are reunited, and Kit returns to his University course. All has ended happily, if a trifle vaguely.

Set down thus, the plot of Kit Kennedy is rubbish. But fleshed out with the living characters of Crockett's childhood, set in the long low white-washed farm-house where Kit is brought up, the dusty sunlit streets of Whinnyliggate and the small everyday events which actually happened, above all with Crockett's happy recollections of
his boyhood gathered together and re-lived through Kit, it has an impetus which carries the reader along. Even Christopher Kennedy, though his speeches to Lilias are conventional and falsetto, is set in clearly visualised detail of what he does;

He was ready to walk ten miles before breakfast, help Lilias Armour to gather in her cows, make the prettiest and most convincing love in the shady places of the loaning, encounter (if he had bad luck) the stern eyes of her father, and after all be back again in time to see the early 'prentices taking down their snuff-brown shutters, and stacking them in neat piles behind the shop doors in the High Street of the little town, at the exact moment when his brother teachers were turning sleepily out of their beds to the music of the morning milk-cans rattling in at their doors.  

How many Castle Douglas love affairs and Cotton Street awakenings are reflected in this paragraph? Kennedy may not be more than a pasteboard character at this point, but the lanes and the streets are real.

The stern father, who might have been unsympathetic even in 1899, is depicted with respect and affection and contrasted effectively with his less spiritual, more practical wife.

It was the morn of the Sabbath some months after the early meeting between the classical master and Lilias Armour. The solemn Taking of the Book was over in the farmhouse of Dornal, but Matthew Armour, Ruling Elder in the Cameronian Kirk, still sat with the Bible open before him. His face, with its shock of silvering hair sweeping back from the noble cliff-like brow, was sober with more than Roman gravity. His wife gathered together the folded white handkerchief, the spectacles and the psalm-book which were her indispensables at any function of a religious character. She had learned by the experience of

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1 Kit Kennedy, I, p. 3.
half a lifetime, added to her original store of woman's instinct, when it "wasna chancy" at such times to stand long in the way of her husband. Now in that hush of Sabbath silence which she knew so well, she was especially eager to be gone.

But even in the doorway the voice of the Elder arrested her.

"Margaret Armour, bid our daughter Lilias come hither to me!" he said.¹

Fussily his wife urges him to be gentle with Lilias, and Lilias to be obedient and give up Kennedy as her father asks -- she had had to do the same herself. Lilias is more realistic.

Lilias Armour looked at her mother with so steady a gaze that the eyes of that good bustling housewife fell before them. The daughter laughed a little laugh, hard to listen to from one so young, it was so full of bitter knowledge of the past and carelessness for the future.²

Melodrama is creeping in here with the conventional bitter laugh, but the sad steady gaze which Lilias, feeling and knowing so much more than her mother, opposes to the triviality of that mother's advice, is simple and real.

Matthew Armour confronts his daughter with the truth about her lover -- his drunkenness, his commonplace boasting, his making her name cheap in the Red Lion, his dismissal from the Academy, his previous marriage. Lilias refuses to believe what he says and declares she is married to Kennedy; her father demands to see the paper which is

¹*Kit Kennedy*, II, p. 10.
²*Kit Kennedy*, II, p. 11.
her only proof.

The old man adjusted his spectacles, and read it as calmly as he would a text of Scripture.

Then, without a moment's hesitation, he walked across to the fire that burned in the grate of the houseplace of the Black Dornal, and thrust it deep into the midst.

With a strange, breaking cry Lilias threw herself forward towards it.

"Father, father," she cried, "give it to me. It is my all!"

Her father kept her back with his left hand, while with his right he held the paper down till it was consumed, and the fragments swirled up the chimney, with little fiery dots still crawling crablike across them.¹

It is a sharp, curiously dignified picture of the father carrying out his duty according to his lights; working against the expectations of current nineties romanticism, Crockett makes us respect the father even while we sympathise with the daughter. He has grafted his own grandfather on to the story of Jean Armour whose father mutilated the marriage lines given her by Robert Burns -- he has used the name Armour to point the reference -- but has made Matthew a finer man than James Armour. He is strong in his principles but also compassionate; when the incident is over, he queries his own worthiness.

He stood a long while thus praying, his face softening strangely as he did so with a kind of inner light shining out from it.

"Perhaps I have done wrong," he said, "as well as that poor young lassie."

¹Kit Kennedy, II, p. 17.
And as he shut the book he said again yet more gently than before, "My poor, poor lassie!"

We meet Kit in the next chapter, when he is six or seven, his grandfather's favourite and his grandmother's half-scolding, half-laughing despair.

"A bonny like thing," she went on shrilly, among her milk pails, that after bringing up his ain in the fear o' God and a guid hazel stick, Matthew should be turned about the wee finger o' a bairn like that. It's easy seen that some folk are growin' early doited".2

We can easily accept this as a reflection of the situation when Crockett was a child at Little Duchrae; his aunts have disappeared and of his uncles only one plays a prominent part, but what we know of William and Mary Crocket fits this mellow picture of the little boy stealing the cream and running to his grandfather's knees for safety. The grandmother's remark that he was hard on his own children but lenient with his grandson rings absolutely true; this is how it must have been. We meet the group amid sights and sounds which we recognize from The Lilac Sunbonnet as recurring memories of Duchrae summers.

As Matthew Armour sat thus with his broad bonnet of blue on his head, his eye caught the glint of the mower's scythe somewhere down in the hollow. And at intervals there came to the old man a waft of song, the gay lilt of an air, the plaintive note of a psalm tune, or again, the strident rash-whish of the sharpening strake on the scythe as the mower set it with its point to the ground, and put an edge on the broad shining blade with long alternate sweeps of his arm.3

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1 Kit Kennedy, II, p. 18.
3 Kit Kennedy, III, pp 19-20.
Lilies may be the deserted love, but she cares for her son in a perfectly ordinary way, coming to see him at Dornal every Monday when her husband is at Cairn Edward market and leaving with sad reluctance.

She walked as one easily tired, and ever and anon she stopped to take breath with her hand on her side. Each time that she did so she looked longingly back to the Black Dornal.

The little whitewashed house, one-storied, low-roofed, stretched itself beneath her, looking hardly more imposing than a long brown-thatched potato pit. Its door stood open. She could see the marshmallows stand lilac and green against the wall, and almost the red house-leek that sprung thick-leaved and blossom-crowned from among the thatch.

But these were not what she most looked for. She strained her beautiful eyes — now, alas! grown somewhat dim with time and tears — to catch a glimpse of a little black figure which ran round the office house chasing the butterflies and hallooing with wild joy as the young collies pursued each other at a stretching gallop, gripped, and fell over in riotous heaps.

She sighed to think that he had so soon forgotten his mother. "But it is better so," she said, and turning, resumed her way with that slightly weary drag in her gait.1

The eyes "dim with time and tears" is trite, made more so by the facile Tennysonian alliteration, but "easily tired" and the "weary drag in her gait" we can see as real, and the energy of the boy playing with the butterflies and the collies is undeniably realistic — the child's natural resilience that makes forgetfulness easy as one interest displaces another in quick succession. There is another

1Kit Kennedy, IV, p. 24.
brilliant touch of reality in Kit's scornful summary of his uncle's well-meaning attempt to spare him the sorrow of seeing his mother go away:

"... the last day my mither cam' to see us, after she had patted me on the head, and ta'en me on her knee, an' played hide an' seek aboot the stacks wi' me, an' gied me a' the sweeties she had (there was only nine and a broken yin), she gaed awa' ben the hoose. An' then Uncle Rob he says, "Wad ye like a ride ower to the backfield -- a ride on my back to see the rabbits and the whuttericks and pu' the gowans?" (he aye says the same thing, as if I didna ken what he meant. Uncles is that silly; aunts, too -- but I hae nane). And so I gaed wi' him to please him, and after a while I said, "I think we can gang oor ways hame. My mither will be ower the hill by noot!" "Ye blastie," says he, "never mair will I cairry you on my back to be oot o' the road when you mither gangs awa'. Ye can juist stop an' greet your fill!"1

-- this bright childish ability to see through grown-ups makes Kit a very real small boy. Life breaks through the creaking plot and makes its characters live.

The same mixture of melodrama and reality occurs in the passage where Lilias comes on Kennedy the sleeping tramp by the quarry. She cries out in conventional horror when she sees him; he turns grey when he wakes and recognises her and on hearing of her marriage talks like a third-rate Victorian villain:

"Curse him! He has crossed me twice. Let Walter MacWalter have a care. There is still something here that can strike!"2

Yet after the high-flown theatrical posturing he suddenly speaks to her in Latin.

1Kit Kennedy, III, p. 23.
2Kit Kennedy, IV, p. 30.
"Vive memor amoris nostri — et vale!" said Christopher Kennedy in his old drolling voice, but with a firm grip of his fingers upon hers.

"What does that mean?" said the woman, just as she used to do.

"It means 'Good-bye, and do not quite forget!" he said, and let her hand drop. He looked at her a long while before saying another word.1

In that flash we see the old relationship lit up and alive; we can believe in it and in them — the careless young scholar with his half-teasing charm who had dazzled the country girl and the girl who was willing to be impressed and curious to know what his Latin words meant; still after all these years she falls into the old habit and asks "What does that mean?" The firm grip of his fingers and the long look suggest the feeling that runs deep between them, even to this unhappy meeting. Immediately thereafter, however, Kennedy goes off again into phrases about the fire being all burned out and the ashes bitter, and we are into melodrama again. It is exasperating that Crockett should be satisfied with the easy cliché and the stock response when we can see that something much better was within his power if he had exerted it.

When Kit is holding the stage and a boy in Galloway, however, there is no melodrama, and all those concerned with him catch some of his quality of liveliness. The household of the Ruling Elder could have been too quiet and good to be true, but Kit and his grandmother do much

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1Kit Kennedy, IV, p.32.
to lessen that danger. She is not quick enough to catch him at his mischief and relieves her feelings by lecturing the servant lass in terms that remind us that the present is encroaching on the past and that even the most Cameronian of households have maids whose suitors appear in the loaning and make them think of hats with artificial flowers.

"Betty," she would cry as she went into the kitchen, "ye are but a feather-headed lassie. Ye think o' naething but the vain adornment o' your frail tabernacle, and aiblins what lads will come up the loanin' courtin' ye this nicht. Mind ye, there are mair eternal verities to be considered than lads and bonnets wi' gum-flowers. And" (in a louder voice, as being more pressing matter for consideration than even the eternal verities) "mind the scones on the girdle. Gin ye frizzle them up into fair sole leather, I declare to peace that I will gie ye a daud on the side o' the head that will pit ye by looking at a lad till September fair. Noo, ye hear me, Betty Landsborough."

Then Mistress Armour, active as twenty in spite of her sixty-five years, would whisk about quickly with a sense of some unseen presence behind her....

"O ye blastie!" she would cry, "ye are at it again. And me no done speakin' to your grandfaither aboot your ongangin's. Think shame! I'll gar ye sup sorrow for this. Gin I catch ye ye shall never sit on an easy seat for a month and mair. Lay doon that cake. Wad ye then?"

This is vigorously authentic, the old lady's mixture of remembered sermons and Carlyle -- "vain adornment o' your frail tabernacle" and the "eternal verities" -- with homely threats of "a daud on the side o' the head" producing a comic realism very like that of the Leddy of

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1 Kit Kennedy, IX, pp 63-64. This is a true and vivid picture of Crockett's grandmother; see Crockett and Grey Galloway, pp 17-19.
Grippy and her garbled law terms in Galt's *The Entail*. Moreover, she preserves Scots phrases that one remembers from one's grandfather: "I declare to peace..."; "Think shame!"; "I'll gar ye sup sorrow for this". Yet for all her flow of scolding we know that behind her pepperiness there lies affection and kindness; she contrasts with that genuine shrew Mrs MacWalter whose outbursts are nothing but abuse, with no gracenotes of old Scots phrases, and through whose words we can hear the high-pitched screeching speed with which she delivers them.

"Shake yoursel' weel, na', an' knock your great clamperin' feet on the door-step," cried the voice of Mrs MacWalter, as Kit laid his fingers on the latch of the kitchen door. "Whaur hae ye been a' this time? D'ye think that I pay you good siller and feed ye up wi' the best of meat for you to gallivant aboot the countriside?...

"Gang and sit by the door and be thankful that ye hae a meal o' meat to eat in a decent God-fearin' hoose, which is mair nor a nameless kinless loon like you has ony richt to expect. And no a word out o' the head o' ye, pervertin' the minds o' my innocent bairns and bringing disgrace on your maister, that may be an elder o' the parish in twa-three years, gin he keeps in wi' the minister and the factor!"

Mrs MacWalter is a vulgar boaster, taunting Kit with his fatherless state and not hesitating to call her household "decent" and "God-fearing", a claim which even in his dealings with his erring daughter Matthew Armour had not presumed to make, and her hopes for her husband's preferment to the eldership are based on "keeping in" with

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1 Kit Kennedy. XXXII, pp 217-218.
the minister and the factor. She is mean, too; for all she says of his excellent meals, Kit has to eat the MacWalter's left-over porridge which he shares with the dogs and (like Cleg Kelly) have recourse to his own cleverness in taking milk from the cows as he fodders them. The two farms of Dornal and Loch Spellanderie are shown as two extremes; by contrast to Kit, at the mercy of his mistress because he has no one to defend him, Betty Landsborough is well off.

Service in a countryside so primitive as Whinnyliggate argued nothing of social inequality. And Betty Landsborough, the daughter of the cooper in the village, a man with a good business connection, took her place not as servant but as helper, almost as daughter, in the house of Black Dornal.

When the Armours are forced to leave the Dornal, Betty of her own free will chooses to go with them to Crae Cottage, rented to them by a neighbouring laird who dislikes Walter MacWalter "with the half-contemptuous aversion of a man of old family for one whom he looks upon as a merely vulgar and moneyed interloper"; what is more, she goes without wages out of loyalty to her evicted master and mistress, and the signs are that she will in the end marry Rob Armour. Matthew Armour, far from losing status because of his son-in-law's vindictiveness, becomes a roadmender without any diminution of the respect in which he was held:

. . . that strong-hearted community, permeated to the core with the republican equalities of three hundred

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1 *Kit Kennedy*, XVII, p. 115

2 *Kit Kennedy*, XXI, p. 140
years of Presbytery, thought neither the better nor
the worse of him for the change. Indeed, as he works patiently at this new trade he has
learned "in the little square indentation cut from the side
of the road, which, in all parts of the empire, is sacred
to the priesthood of Macadam" his minister is pleased to
come out on foot from Cairn Edward to talk to him, to try
his hand clumsily at stone-breaking, and to share his
"piece" with his elder at the noon break.

It is the old-fashioned inherited social structure
which Crockett is describing and differs little from that
which Burns described before him. The factor, for example,
is distrusted, just as he was distrusted in The Twa Dogs;
he is out for himself and for Walter MacWalter with whom
he is hand in glove; his employer is part of the countryside
and at first protests against the idea of selling the
Dornal:

"I tell you, Wandale," cried Lord Glenkells, "I
will not split the property. And I won't have my old
tenants put out. The Armours have been in the Dornal
ever since I can remember. I have often got my tea
there when a boy and out shooting -- aye, and my
dinner too. I am not going to have old Matthew
shifted at his time of life!"

But the factor, playing on his lordship's need for money
in order to pay his gambling debts and keep his ladies

1 Kit Kennedy, XXI, p. 140.
2 Kit Kennedy, XXI, p. 144.
3 Kit Kennedy, XIV, p. 101.
happy (Victorian melodrama again) cunningly tempts him, and the prospect of hard cash is too much for the weak and gouty aristocrat — though Crockett declares that he does not realise MacWalter means to turn his parents-in-law out; He merely considers him oddly sentimental in purchasing his wife's birthplace.

Crockett, as we have seen in the Galloway part of Cleg Kelly and we now see in Kit Kennedy, looks back fondly on this settled community in which every one had his place and did his duty proudly in sturdy independence and self-respect. It is a life which disappeared after his death with the 1914-1918 war, and for him it disappeared even earlier, during his lifetime. If he idealises it — as he certainly does — this is because he is looking back at it through the rose-coloured spectacles of memory, over the gulf which circumstances had placed between Galloway and the clever young writer who lived in Bank House, Penicuik, his social position in a sense higher and more gracious but in another much less clearly defined, having to be fought for by book after book churned out of his wearying imagination, so that Kit Kennedy rising in the frosty dark to cut turnips for the sheep seems infinitely nostalgic.

He is equally uncritical of his schooldays, as he retells them through Kit and his experiences. He creates with vivid actuality the atmosphere of the school, the schoolmaster Duncan Duncanson whom we have met already in
The Stickit Minister, the dullness of the country bumpkins who make up his pupils, among whom Kit stands out in clear contrast -- perhaps too clear contrast to be quite credible. What he never does is criticise the kind of education these Scots country children were receiving -- the emphasis on memorising Latin and Greek, the remoteness from their homely experience, the rigid unimaginative discipline with which they were expected to conform.

Kit Kennedy differs from the other boys in that he is bilingual, using both Scots and English; this in their ears damns him as "odd".

Presently the hum of the school droned lower and lower. The arithmetic pupils along the wall communed as to results in subdued tones. The writing classes joggled each other's arms and elbows with cautious circumspection. Dominie Duncanson leaned back in his chair and bethought him of his new pupil

"New boy, what's your name?" he said.

"Kit Kennedy, sir," said Kit, the polite son of his father, rising to his feet.

The action instantly roused the deepest resentment in the breast of every boy in Whinnyliggate School. They gazed at him in amazed horror.

"Did ye year him?" -- the whisper ran swiftly as ill news athwart the school -- "he said 'Sir!' And he stood up to answer the maister." And then heads were shaken, and resolves were taken that betokened no good to Kit Kennedy. Such a disgrace had not been heard of in Whinnyliggate School within the memory of boy. Who was this upstart that had come off the heather to take away their good name?¹

A trace of the Cleg Kelly style is felt in this ironic
description; "within the memory of boy" is neat and humorous but belongs to Hunker Court rather than Whinnyliggate. Kit stands up politely as his mother would have taught him; it is careless sentimentality to introduce his father at this point; but Crockett makes effective use of the two pronunciations, Scots and English; Kit says "liar", the other boys say "lee-ar", and this again emphasises his difference because of a stricter more literate upbringing -- it also brings back memories of primary school in Dumfries where "lee-ar" was perfectly normal but to say "liar" was swearing according to fellow-pupils. Kit put to the test reads Macaulay not only well but with enthusiasm,

while the master gaped, and the school paused in its scufflings to listen in an amazed contempt, which slowly sank into a kind of dull uncomprehending disgust.1

To cap it all, Kit is so carried away by what he has been reading that he resorts to homely Scots to ask if he may borrow the book. The dominie is dumbfounded and does not know what to say; his Macaulay is precious.

Kit saw his hesitation, and at once put it down to the true cause. He had noticed the same hesitation in one of his uncles, who was a buyer of books, on every occasion when Peter Siboe, the New Galloway "book-man", passed that way, and Kit asked for the loan of his latest purchase.

"I'll no dirty it," he exclaimed with earnestness, "and I'll tell ye what, I'll lend you my 'Gleanings among the Mountains.'" 2

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1 Kit Kennedy, XI, p. 75.

2 Kit Kennedy, XI, p. 76
This little incident is so vivid, so out of the ordinary, that one feels it must correspond to something in Crockett's own childhood; he did have a well-read, book-buying uncle, and one can believe that he, having pored over Simpson's Traditions of the Covenanters with boyish enthusiasm, would have been capable of some such bargain with his astonished master at Laurieston School. It is in accord with the rest of his impulsive enthusiastic life. And, like Crockett, Kit is able to hold his own with the dullest pupils in their own world of fighting so in spite of his politeness and his misguided pronunciation he settles down happily in their midst, making his way to the top of the class without any great effort.

Crockett has one significant sentence about his young hero; his schooling was, he says,

easily gotten. He had the natural faculty for letters which makes nothing difficult.¹

It is tempting to apply this to Crockett himself. If what he says proudly of Kit is true of Sam, it would explain many of the defects we find in his fiction. If he did not have to work hard at school and at college, if he had this happy knack of picking up information and academic skills without effort and "never remembered the time when he could not read any book which came in his way", he would inevitably have fallen into habits of carelessness,

¹Kit Kennedy, XII, p. 84.
inaccuracy, lack of thoroughness, and it is these which mar everything which he wrote. He composes too quickly and too easily, mistakes creep in, and he is too impatient to take time to consolidate and make sound.

But these defects notwithstanding, Kit Kennedy has the pleasant homeliness and brightness which were present in The Lilac Sunbonnet and The Raiders, and it has originality too -- it has touches of which only Crockett would have been capable. Christopher Kennedy's gradual return to self-respect could have been conventionally moral but Crockett enlivens it with his individual sense of humour. Heather Jock the packman meets Kennedy near Loch Spellanderie and after exchanging information offers him some of the mutton ham he has been given by Mrs Macmillan of Glenhead of Trool -- another instance of the private joke which Crockett enjoyed in his Galloway novels -- and thinks about the name under which Kennedy is disguising himself, John Smith.

"... What did you say your name was? Smith? Dod, I yince kenned a man o' the name o' Smith. Maybe he was some friend of yours. It's no a common name here awa' -- Smith. They's a' MacMillans and MacQuhirrs an' MacLandsboroughs. Aye, man, an ye're a Smith. Weel, a heap o' decent fowk hae had queer outlandish names in their day. And I daresay ye'll no be a penny the waur o' yours!"

This inversion of the normal, making the packman shake his head over a queer outlandish name like Smith, is typical of Crockett's inconsequent sense of fun; by sharing a

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1Kit Kennedy, XXIX, p. 197.
joke with the people of Galloway Crockett makes himself one of them, which goes far to explain his regional popularity as the local novelist.

And who else but Crockett would have described with such enjoyment how Kennedy looks for classical texts in a junk shop in Friar's Vennel in Dumfries and finds his own there, row upon row in a glazed cupboard?

"There," cried the old man, laughing senilely, "if ye set up for a learned man, there's something to bite on. She bocht them at the sale o' a dominie that ran awa frae Cairn Edward a lang while since -- made a munieicht flittin', that is. You'll see his name on the boards. He was just desperate for debt they say!

The creaking tones of the old shopman awakened the Orra Man. "I cannot buy them all," he said; "I have not the money. But I want to buy them one by one if you will keep them for me."

"Dinna fret; they'll keep themsel's easy eneuch in the toon o' Dumfries. There's nae run on the dead languages in Dumfries. Bibles are drug stock, and even Shakespeare -- man, I dinna think we hae sold yin o' him for twenty year, except a big bound copy to Rob Veitch, the hosier, that he uses to keep his letters doon on his desk, and to throw at the dogs that come snuffin' aboot the wicks o' his shop door."  

Crockett the Stewartry man cannot resist a dig at the neighbouring county town and its philistine inhabitants; such touches are pleasant and give Kennedy's reformation credibility through their vividness.

He does not spend much detail on the slow process of the tutoring -- that would have been dry and tedious for the general reader -- but says that for three years Kit met the Orra Man every night at the Black Sheds and read Latin

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1 *Kit Kennedy*, XXXII, p. 220.
and Greek by the light of a stable lantern; he performed his tasks with a list of words stuck on the barn door when at the threshing, the irregular verbs, which depended from a point of the harness in the stable, the rules pinned above his candlestick, and the red and blue marks which decorated the grammars the classical master had bought for him from the general dealer in Dumfries.1

Once and only once the Orra Man failed to turn up for the nightly lesson; his old weakness of drinking had overcome him, but Kit comforted him shyly with the suggestion that "I yince heard the Doctor say the ye dinna get better a' at yince, o' a trouble that ye hae had for a lang time. Maybe ye hae had this trouble a lang while, and are no fairly better yet."2

Once in three months he has a day off to visit his grandparents and his mother; once a year he proudly hands over his wages to help pay the rent; and always when no one is looking he lays his cheek on his mother's brow and promises her splendid things when he is "a great man" and takes her away with him.

"... And we'll hae a hoose in the toon and a hoose at the seaside. And ye shall hae silk to wear and a bonnet with gum floo'ers intil't, green and red and purple. And ye'll hae naebody to fret ye then, and nocht to do but to see that my sarks are clean to pit on -- a clean white sark evry mornin'. Dinna greet, mither, for it's comin'!"3

Buttressed by these homely interchanges, we are lulled into thinking that perhaps it is all possible, that perhaps a clever lad could be coached in this unorthodox way by a

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1Kit Kennedy, XXXV, p. 244.
2Kit Kennedy, XXXIII, p. 224.
3Kit Kennedy, XXXIII, p. 231.
skilful master whose heart was in his coaching, and to encourage this Kit's studies are paralleled by Jock MacWalter studying in the "ben room" to his mother's admiration, though according to the grocer "a stupider nowt than him ye wadna find between here and the back-shore o' Leswalt". One vividly convincing detail comes with the American edition of Virgil that Jock brings home; Kit finds it on the kitchen table and leafs through it eagerly until Mrs MacWalter boxes his ears for daring to touch it.

It was with a very downcast countenance that Kit made his way to the Black Sheds that night.

"I think I had better give it up; I can never be upsides wi' the like o' yon!" he said to the Orra Man.

And with copious detail he told his master all the wonders of the American book. The classical master smiled a far-off, quiet smile.

"For once," he said, "Mistress MacWalter did quite right. If ever I were to catch you with a book like that I would first throw it in the back of the fire, and then I would tan your hide from head to foot into the bargain... And, well, mind you your versions and never pass a word you don't know the exact meaning of to a shade. And when the day comes, we'll see what we shall see."2

When the day does come, it comes with all the authentic detail which Crockett remembers from his own sitting of the Galloway Bursary -- the nervous candidates in crowded bustling Cairn Edward, "nine or ten lads, crammed to the lips with knowledge, anxiously awaiting the examination

1Kit Kennedy, XXXIII, p. 226.
2Kit Kennedy, XXXIV, p. 236.
papers which were to seal their doom", the hall, the pens, ink and paper, the scratching of so many pens all moving rapidly forward in the tense silence, the Orra Man asking for an account of Kit's answers and going over the papers with the light of the stable lantern, "combing each question and estimating marks and deductions upon the margin with a stubby lead pencil". Kit in the end wins the bursary, in spite of the raucous complaints of Mrs MacWalter, and the lad with whom he has made friends during the examination, Robert Grier of Garlieston, is awarded a subsidiary bursary, just as Robert Blair had been when Crockett was the winner. And Crockett is honest enough to make the tutor, Christopher Kennedy, get roaring drunk with joy and relief and have to be taken home to Cairnharrow by the sorrowful Kit in the farm cart.

When Crockett is so obviously aware that this phenomenal winning of a bursary by a farm lad coached by a deposed classical master needs so much careful detail to make it pass, it is painful to have to point out that elsewhere he indulges in gross unlikeliness and cheap effects for the sake of the drama in his plot. One of the worst instances is the roup that takes place when the Armours have to leave the Dornal. He describes it in lively detail so that we feel the bustle and the tangled emotions -- the busy and efficient auctioneer, the three sons bringing out the

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1 Kit Kennedy, XXXV, p. 239.
2 Kit Kennedy, XXXV, p. 247.
cattle to be sold, the country people thronging to see how the prices go, the Bank Agent keeping an eye to see that all is well, Betty Landsborough crying in the byre, Matthew Armour comforting his sorrowful wife with his own strength and steadiness. Kit thoroughly enjoys the excitement, but when he sees his grandmother’s tears he brings out his own toys and small possessions to add to the sale; this is rank sentimentality, but we can almost believe it and accept that the hard-headed country folk in the circumstances just might bid for the marbles and the broken horse, half-laughing, half-crying, with “the shamefacedness characteristic of Whinnyliggate when it was foolish enough to do a good action”.¹ What we cannot believe is that Walter MacWalter, “slapping his riding-breeches with his whip” should be present and go so far as to kick Kit Kennedy’s pet lamb Donald, so that Kit sprang like a cat at the throat of Walter MacWalter, fastening his teeth in his neck and gripping both hands into his full black beard.² This is too much; this we cannot accept, especially when the spectators almost applaud him for the savage act, preventing MacWalter from punishing him, and his grandparents do not reprove him but receive the proceeds of his private auction with happy pride.

"Are we not more than rewarded, Marget?" said his grandfather, looking fondly down at him, and touching his hair lightly. "Verily, out of Zion,

¹Kit Kennedy, XX, p. 134.
²Kit Kennedy, XX, p. 138.
the perfection of beauty, God hath shined!"  

An affecting and emotional roup is a favourite theme of the Kailyarders, but not even the worst of them introduced such wild and improbable violence into their most mawkish descriptions; it is contrary to the ethos of the Armour household, contrary to Kit's sunny nature, contrary to the reality of any village anywhere. Matthew Armour's benediction on Kit, coming so soon after his wild-cat attack on MacWalter, makes us question the validity of his patriarchal calm and piety. Crockett has gone too far.

He continues to do so when he takes Kit to Edinburgh and introduces the Bissets. The Galloway details were strong enough to carry the weight of the plot while it was taking place there (though we do and must question why Lilias, miserable with her morose and ill-mannered husband, should stay with him when her family pronounce themselves willing to have her return to them and MacWalter would be delighted to be rid of her) but once the scene moves to the capital, Crockett writes more and more wildly. The coincidence is too strained that he should by chance be lodging on the same stair as the very odd Bissets who are connected with Mary Bisset whom his father is alleged to have married, and the very brief superficial sketches of professors and fellow-students carry little conviction. The worst of all is the muddle connected with the younger Mary Bisset, the schoolteacher with whom Kit has fallen in

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1 Kit Kennedy, XX, p. 139.
love. After Lilias is rescued and united with her long-misunderstood husband Christopher Kennedy and Walter MacWalter is dead, it is revealed that "with one of the curious freaks of violent and passion-driven men"¹ (which are convenient for novelists in a hurry to reach the end of their book in that no further explanation is needed) he has left all his money and property to Mary Bisset, "the only daughter of his dead wife".² But how had he known of her existence? Who is her father? Daniel Bisset whom she calls father is her uncle; her worthless brother Dick in anger has called her "a foundling picked out of a hedge root",³ information he says he has gained from his father's papers. Surely Walter MacWalter cannot be her father, although he is her mother's husband? Was she born before the first Mary Bisset was pushed over Baxter's Heuchs -- she must have been if Walter MacWalter knows she exists; she certainly cannot have been born after that sad event. It seems as if Crockett has originally intended a further surprising twist to his already contorted plot, but either has not had time to work it out or in the end has not had room for it but has carelessly left its vestigial remains to irritate anyone who has been trying to make sense of the story. Kit is left in the final scene

¹Kit Kennedy, Epilogue, p. 382.
²Kit Kennedy, Epilogue, p. 382.
³Kit Kennedy, XLVII, p. 347.
embracing the younger Mary Bisset, now the owner of the mansion house of Kirkoswald; he has won medals and we presume done well at University, but we are not sure whether he is to become a minister as his mother hoped or take over the management of his wife's estate. The plot frays itself weakly to a ragged stop, leaving us frustrated and cross.

The ending of Cleg Kelly is equally unsatisfactory, though for exactly the opposite reason; it is too neat and tidy to be tolerable, although even more incredible and false to its characters. Cleg on his way to Muckle Alick's funeral has further adventures on the railway and makes the acquaintance of General Theophilus Ruff of Barnbogle House, who just happens to be the uncle of Miss Celie's suitor the Junior Partner. General Ruff is an ex-Indian army officer who has lived through the Mutiny and now is a recluse in a huge mansion with no servants but a plethora of self-locking doors, strong-rooms, triple-barred gratings and other Grand Guignol contrivances. He takes a fancy to Cleg for no apparent reason and invites him to be his servant, and Cleg, again for no apparent reason accepts, not at all deterred by the cobwebbed house full of bookcases and statues or even the fact that the General sleeps every night in a scarlet-painted iron cellar sunk deep in the rock under the house. The door is operated by a letter combination-lock understood only by the general and closed by a hydraulic time-lock which swings it shut automatically
five minutes after it has opened. His bed is an open coffin comfortably padded, on each side of which is another coffin, closed; he retires to rest every night to smoke himself to sleep with Indian hemp and thornapple. For four years Cleg operates in this crazy atmosphere for a pound a week and his food (it cannot be more because of the exchange rate of the rupee), with part of every day off to look after Mirren and the Kavannahs and whitewash or tar any sheds that may require it; then disaster strikes. Tim Kelly his father and Sal Kavannah Vara's mother stagger drunkenly into the plot again, at the very time when General Theophilus has had a presentiment that he is going to die and is about to retire into his bedroom to do so. They knock Cleg unconscious and follow the general, but Cleg has had time to shout a warning and in any event they are trapped by the hydraulic lock.

Three weeks later when Cleg recovers consciousness he tells the doctor and lawyers of the attack. The massive door and its complex lock are blown open by dynamite (on the suggestion of the firm that installed it) and the General is revealed smiling happily dead in his coffin. On each side the other coffins are open; in one is a fair young woman embalmed in all her beauty, with the label "False Love", and in the other a young man similarly treated with the label "False Friend". Tim Kelly also lies dead, shot through the forehead, and Sal Kavannah has expired through sheer terror. A tableau which leaves the
reader gasping and speechless. But not so the lawyers.

The coffins were buried as privately as possible, the two embalmed bodies being laid within the private mausoleum at the bottom of the garden. For in noble families a private burying place is a great convenience. Here also Tim Kelly and Sal Kavannah took their places with nobler sinners, and no doubt they lie there still, mixing their vulgar earth with finer clay, and so will remain until the final resurrection of good and evil.

Doctor Sidey certified truthfully that the death of General Theophilus Ruff was due to an overdose of opium. And as there is no coroner’s inquest in Scotland (another convenience), matters were easily arranged with the Procurator-Fiscal of the county — who was, in fact, a close friend of the distinguished and discreet firm of Hewitson and Graham at Drummith.¹

That calm "as privately as possible" is majestic in its impertinence; surely never has such an insult been offered to the legal system, the noble families, the lawyers and doctors of a country in a work of fiction. Even in Galloway such things do not take place. There is a unique innocence about an author who can perpetrate such a fantastic excursion into the literature of terror and then return without any apparent sense of incongruity to the humdrum realism of Cleg and his market garden, his wooing of Vara and the marriage not only of Cleg and Vara but of Miss Celie and the Junior Partner, who has inherited Barnbogle House from his mad uncle while Cleg has inherited all the General’s money. The money presents a final mystery; no one knows where it is, until Vara finds it by accident by opening the tins of Chicago canned beef

¹Cleg Kelly, LV, p. 390.
which are stacked for emergencies in the General's kitchen. They are full of newly minted golden sovereigns and Cleg's fortune, like Kit's, is assured. No explanation is offered of how the sovereigns got into the cans, or what connection the General had with Chicago corned beef. With Crockett in this mood, all things are possible. The coffins may perhaps have been suggested by Sarah Bernhardt's habit of travelling with a coffin in which she slept, or by Count Dracula's boxes full of Transylvanian earth which he has to import to England in order to operate there as a vampire, or by Conan Doyle's mummy cases in "Lot No. 249" or "The Ring of Thoth"; the sovereigns in the corned beef tins so far defy all attempts to discover an origin literary or otherwise.

But for all their faults, Cleg Kelly and Kit Kennedy make it quite clear that Crockett is no stereotyped sentimentalist bound by the mythical Kailyard. These two boys are real and alive in their own settings; by detail, by sharply observed speech, by humour and by his shrewdness of understanding, Crockett makes them genuine human beings who remain in the mind long after the books have been replaced on the shelf. The fact that their unsatisfactory endings are so disappointing to the reader shows how vividly Crockett has created his two main characters; we know them so well that we reject the final chapters as utterly wrong, careless, improbable and exasperating.

Both Cleg and Kit deserved better of their creator -- and their creator's weaknesses are not sentimentality, or facile
Scottish nostalgia, or a tendency to idealise country scenes and ways, but rather his own temperamental carelessness -- we can agree with Millar that he would have benefited from discipline -- and a liking for lurid melodrama, and the circumstances which he had laid on his own career which made haste, popular fashion and the demands of editors and publishers of prime importance and necessity. The ending of Kit Kennedy is worse than the ending of Cleg Kelly because he was four years farther into the strain of his hurried writing.

If we are to condemn him, let it be for the right thing -- not for sentimentality but for sensationalism, a defect which he shared with his nineteenth century companions, be they major authors like Dickens, George Eliot, Hardy, or popular suppliers of thrillers and shockers like Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle, E.F. Benson and Bram Stoker. He was bound by the values and fashions of his time, but Cleg Kelly and Kit Kennedy make it obvious that these values and fashions were not those of the so-called Kailyard but those of the frivolous, bored, novelty-seeking nineties. That he manages to include so much that is real, honest and original in books which sodesperately had to catch the public fancy is to his quite considerable credit.
Mad Sir Uchtred and the Covenanting material in *The Raiders* heralded Crockett's full-scale treatment of the Galloway Covenanters, but they and *The Lilac Sunbonnet* also stirred up a storm in a tea-cup.

The *Glasgow Herald*'s anonymous reviewer, dealing in October 1894 with *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, remarked on how quickly Mr Crockett's books were following one another, pronounced him "as true to Galloway as Mr Hardy to Wessex" but declared that to be a pleasant chronicler of Galloway was not enough; he doubted whether this latest book would add much to his reputation and went on

Mr Crockett's peasants are sometimes amusing; very often they are tiresome, but once they are decidedly piquant, and that is when they plagiarise.  

His complaint was that the chapter "the Cuif before the Session" in which Elspeth Mowdiewort defends her son against a charge of defaming the minister, had been taken from "Jockey and Maggie's Courtship, Part III", a chapbook by Dugald Graham, the Skellat Bellman of Glasgow, which had been reprinted as recently as 1883 in Volume ii of his *Works*. To support this he quoted, side by side, two brief passages, one from Crockett, the other from

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Dugald Graham, though he carelessly -- or maliciously -- prefixed "Mother" to the Crockett passage to match exactly the "Mither" at the beginning of the Graham one. This, which made nonsense of the Crockett since Elspeth is the speaker, made the two passages more startlingly similar to the casual reader than in fact they were; they both went on to make a comic point about the Popish origin of the stool of repentance in Scottish churches. He then asked

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. . . Graham died in 1779.

Another journal took this point up; the Literary World the same month observed that a contemporary "is eager to fasten on Mr. Crockett a charge of plagiarism";¹ and finally, in November, William Wallace in the Academy virtually repeated the accusation, parallel passages, Crockett misquotation and all, saying reprovingly

Mr. Crockett would do well to deal with the serious charge of plagiarism which has been made against him in Scotland, and which, so far as I have seen, he has not hitherto attempted to meet.²

This, incidentally, was in the review of Crockett's novels in which he dismissed Mad Sir Uchtred as "an historical

1 "Table Talk", The Literary World, L, (October 12th 1894) p. 262.
impertinence in the guise of historical fiction".

Crockett was roused. In the correspondence columns of the next issue of the Academy he named the two periodicals which had carried the accusation, objected to being called a plagiarist by Wallace, and defended himself roundly:

I never saw or, to my knowledge, even heard of the works of Dugald Graham, the Skellat Bellman of Glasgow. I saw his name printed for the first time in the accusation of plagiarism itself.

But I did read, a year or so before writing the Lilac Sunbonnet, an old anonymous chapbook, one of a multitude such which I then studied; and in that tract, as in my novel, and as in a familiar ingle-nook tale told in every farm-kitchen in Galloway, a man gets his mother to plead his cause before the Kirk Session.

He was obviously annoyed; for once he called The Lilac Sunbonnet a novel, as if standing on his dignity; and referred his critics, for the stool of repentance point, to the Scots Magazine for February 1757 pages 80 to 81, where he said he had found it, maintained his right to use such sources, and carried the war into the enemy's camp:

I conceive that, without the aid of literary and traditional sources of information -- chap-books, sermons, magazines -- a writer on old times in Scotland would be in Mr. Wallace's own state of ingenuous ignorance, and would suppose, for example, that the Covenanters did not claim the power of working miracles.

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2 Anti-Papist (Brechin): "Reasons for abolishing repenting stools", The Scots Magazine, XIX (February 1757) pp. 80-82.
This scathing reference to Wallace's criticism of Mad Sir Uchtred\(^1\) was printed, by chance, alongside Andrew Lang's letter supporting Crockett on this very point.

A week later Wallace replied in high dudgeon, making a clear distinction between what Crockett had written and "Mr. Lang's courteous letter", but still not convinced.\(^2\)

In the same issue of the *Academy*, someone signing himself "X." also set about Crockett, this time attacking The Raiders; he had before him, he said, Nicholson's *Historical and Traditional Tales*, and by means of a formidable array of parallel passages filling one entire column he proved that the Yawkins chapter was based on Samuel Wilson's "The Smugglers" in that volume, and declared himself prepared to do the same for "The Murder Hole". Crockett, he implied, was deceitful in passing off The Raiders as "in every respect his own".\(^3\)

In the next issue, three letters took up the argument with Wallace and the unknown "X." Andrew Lang declared that he had not time to supply complete references to Covenanting claims to miracles, but if Wallace wanted

\(^1\) Above, Chapter 6, pp 196-197.


\(^3\) "X.": "The Raiders: a Note", *The Academy*, XLVI (November 17th 1894) pp 399-400.
chapter and verse he could have them next week.¹

W. Robertson Nicoll in his heaviest style pointed out that in October 1893 he had declared in the Bookman "on the authority of a statement made to me by Mr. Crockett" that The Raiders was based on Galloway legends, and that in April 1894 he had said, also in the Bookman, that Crockett's "true Quellen was (sic) to be found" in Nicholson.²

Crockett himself "apologised" to Wallace for his "misapprehension, which, however, he will allow was a somewhat natural one", was delighted that the misunderstanding was over, but expressed surprise that the Academy should waste space on "X."

It is, of course, perfectly absurd to suppose that I ever dreamed of concealing my indebtedness to Mr. James (sic) Nicholson's Traditional Tales of Galloway. The editor himself is alive, and is to-day my most kind and able helper in obtaining material on which to found my stories. . .

The Traditional Tales is in nearly every house in Galloway. The living representative of Samuel Wilson is my friend. Mr. Nicholson is at present assisting me in obtaining material for a pendant to The Raiders -- a story which may concern itself with the later "Levellers" in Galloway. As in The Raiders, I shall again be indebted to Mr. Nicholson's Traditional Tales, to Trotter's excellent Galloway Gossip (alas! that only one volume has been published), to Maclaggart's Galloway Encyclopedia, to the Castle Douglas Miscellany, to the Dumfries Magazine (I make a present of these to X. and his industrious clan). If I knew any more sources I should be glad to use them, and to stick as closely to them as I possibly could. . .

I will, in concluding, make that gentleman yet another present. In my next book, which concerns

1 Andrew Lang: "Covenabting Miracles", The Academy, XLVI (November 24th 1894) p. 424.
the Covenanting times, and is to run the whole year through the columns of Good Words, I believe that every scene is based accurately upon documents both printed and written, in every case contemporary. The incidents of the story actually occurred. I have told them, so far as I can, in the style and language of the period. Almost every conversation can be substantiated; and the letters quoted were actually written by the characters themselves in the flesh. By the expenditure of sixpence monthly "X." can insure himself a great deal of instructive research, and an indefinite supply of parallel columns to any journal which may think it worth its while to print them. I am only sorry that there is so little of this splendid rough popular material extant. It is pure gold to the romancer; and wherever I can lay hold of it and use it, why, I intend to "do it and do it again."¹

William Wallace remained silent; the Literary World supposed that the plea must be admitted because of the precedents set by Shakespeare and Scott;² the argument was over.

One has to enjoy this cheerfully swinging treatment of hostile critics -- characteristic of Crockett, even down to the misquotation from Lewis Carroll's "You are old, Father William" in the final sentence -- and one notes with appreciation that the author has taken the opportunity to advertise two of his books, one in progress, the other projected. To avoid any further charges of plagiarism, Crockett prefaced Men of the Moss Hags when it came out in book form with grateful thanks to

my researchers, Mr. James Nicholson of Kircudbright (sic), who examined on my behalf all the local records bearing upon the period and upon the persons treated of in this book; and to the Reverend John Anderson

², "Table Talk", The Literary World, L (November 10th 1894) p. 381.
of the Edinburgh University Library, who brought to light from among the Earlstoun Papers and from the long-lost records of the United Societies, many of the materials which I have used in the writing of this story.

He thanked the Library Committee for permission to use the letters printed in the text and also John Macmillan of Glenhead, who had taken him to Cove Macaterick and elsewhere, thus surrounding the book with an aura of scholarship and authenticity; he even mentioned the possibility that he might, with the University's permission, "publish at some future time, for purposes more strictly historical, a selection from both the sets of manuscripts named above".  

Here we have to smile. Both in the Academy letter and in this Prefatory Note, the enthusiast has been carried into over-statement. Hard at work on Men of the Moss Hags, he may really have believed that "every scene is based accurately upon documents both printed and written, in every case contemporary", and many of them are, but "based" is a word capable of many interpretations, and by no means can it be said that "almost every conversation can be substantiated". The "letters quoted" and actually written by real characters sound impressive, but there are only two in the book, which makes the fact much less astonishing. The "Earlstoun Papers", upon investigation, are probably two groups of manuscript material in Edinburgh University Library's Department of Rare Books and

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1 Men of the Moss Hags, Prefatory Note, pp 7-8.
Manuscripts; the first consists of "Various papers"\(^1\) relating to the Gordon family of Earlston, and the second of "Papers perhaps in his autograph" catalogued under the name of Alexander Gordon of Earlston, Covenanter.\(^2\) A miscellaneous collection, they range from the "Last Testimonies" of Donald Cargill, James Guthrie, and other Covenanting martyrs in a contemporary hand which may be Alexander Gordon's, to instructions for bandaging in a hand which is definitely not his, from a series of geographical accounts of Galloway parishes in yet another hand to many theological disquisitions in tiny cramped writing much set about with texts and Scriptural allusions. There are a few letters, one of which, the one which Crockett uses,\(^3\) is from Janet Hamilton, Gordon's wife.

The "long-lost records of the United Societies" (which presumably had been sitting in the University Library ever since they came from their collector, David Laing) are catalogued under "Cameronian Papers" and consist of three volumes: "Cameronian Papers 1679-1700",\(^4\)

\(^1\) Gordon (family of) of Earlston, Galloway. Various papers. La. II. 27

\(^2\) Gordon (Alexander) of Earlston, Covenanter. Papers perhaps in his autograph. La. II. 27

\(^3\) Men of the Moss Hags, XXXI, pp 231-232

"Farrago 1679-1690", ¹ and "Cameronian Papers". ² Once again they are miscellaneous, made up of letters from Alexander and Michael Shields, Letters from sympathisers in Holland to the fathers and brethren who are under the oppressors' yoke in Scotland, copies of Grassmarket testimonies, lists of beliefs to which the signatories adhere, accounts of conferences, meetings and conventions, letters from prisoners on the Bass Rock, chapters from the Book of Discipline relating to Elders and Deacons, and an exhortation "To the Anti-Popish, Anti-prelatick, Anti-erastian . . . Anti-socinian true Presbyterian ffaithfull sweet and valiantly contending remnant of the Church of Scotland". The volume called "Farrago" contains brief minutes of meetings at familiar Covenanting haunts like Friarminion, Cairntable, Wanlockhead and Auchengellock, and similarly assorted letters, exhortations and resolutions. The second volume of Cameronian Papers contains letters and sermons by James Renwick, an extraordinary printed pamphlet about the Gibbites who renounced all authority of every kind throughout the entire world, letters from the Shields brothers at Gröningen, comforting exhortations "To All and Sundrie the prisoners for the name of Christ in the Tolbooths of Edinburgh, Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland"


²Cameronian Papers. "This volume is chiefly composed of the Papers and Correspondence of the fanatics in Scotland during the reigns of Charles ii, James ii and K. William." La. III. 350.
and, dated after the accession of William III, petitions to the Privy Council in favour of individual persons in danger or hardship.

These manuscripts, many of them in difficult seventeenth century hand, can have been of only minimal value to Crockett in fashioning his narrative. He was much more indebted to folklore, hearsay, oral tradition still existing, and to printed sources — to his familiar Simpson’s Traditions of the Covenanters, 1 Howie’s Scots Worthies, 2 Wodrow’s History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, 3 Naphtali, or the Wrestling of the Church of Scotland, 4 Patrick Walker’s Biographia Presbyteriana, 5 Kirkton’s Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland, 6 and the like. Some of them we know

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1 Robert Simpson: Traditions of the Covenanters, or Gleanings among the Mountains (Edinburgh, n.d.) This book is hereafter referred to as Simpson.


3 Robert Wodrow: The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restauration to the Revoluation collected from the publick records, original papers and manuscripts of that time: 2 volumes (Edinburgh 1721-22)

4 James Stewart and James Stirling: Naphtali, or the Wrestling of the Church of Scotland for the Kingdom of Christ; contained in a true and short deducation thereof from the beginning of the Reformation of religion . . . until 1667 (Edinburgh? 1667)

5 Patrick Walker: Biographia Presbyteriana, 2 volumes, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh 1827)

6 James Kirkton: Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to . . . 1678. To which is added an account of the murder of Archbishop Sharp, by J. Russell. Edited from the MSS by C.K. Sharpe (Edinburgh 1817)
to have been in his library. As for his hope to return and publish a selection from the manuscripts, we can conjecture that turning over the tattered documents in faded brown ink may have filled him with a fleeting dream of himself as a scholarly editor; he would be sincere at the time, but what we know of his temperament makes it clear that this is one activity in which he would have been neither happy nor competent.

For a man who worked so much and so openly from printed and oral sources, charges of plagiarism were both inevitable and pointless; his defence is valid. The accusations nevertheless came from time to time, from puzzled members of the public as well as from professional critics. One interesting example appeared in the Dumfries Standard shortly after The Raiders; a correspondent calling himself Andrew Pinwherry complained that the incident of the Murder Hut had been taken from Wilson's Tales of the Borders and did not belong to Galloway at all, and after other minor criticisms continued

Then one might ask, "Is there any ground for the story of the murder of the boy Willie by Grierson of Lag?" Isn't this incident -- pathetic or touching as it is -- a calumny on an historical character? In a Sunday School a few weeks ago I heard the story told as true by a gentleman who had come to address the scholars. It seemed new to me, and I suspect he got it from The Raiders.

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1 Catalogues of the Sales of Crockett's books by Sotheby's, Hornel Collection, Broughton House, Kirkcudbright.

2 Dumfries Standard, April 18th 1894, p. 6.
A letter in Crockett's defence signed "A GALWEGIAN" swept aside most of Andrew Pinwherry's objections with scornful sarcasm, attributed the Murder Hole correctly to Nicholson, calling it "a story almost as old as the Merrick itself, which you can hear at almost any fireside in the Stewartry" and added:

The Crichope Linn incident is not altogether without foundation. You will hear of it in Upper Nithsdale, and I think there are some old verses on the subject if any of your readers could unearth them. A tradition of this kind is sufficient for a novelist, and besides it is not easy to blacken Grierson of Lag.¹

These two small flurries of correspondence serve to illustrate three points about Crockett's historical romances. Firstly, he made no secret of his use of existing material; on the contrary he gratefully acknowledged his indebtedness, following his admired predecessor Sir Walter Scott. He openly borrowed hints and episodes for his plots, re-using what was often familiar but passing it through the vitalising process of his imaginative reworking — it was in that reworking that his originality lay.

Secondly, he was so close to the mood and manner of the traditional that even Gallovidians were not sure what was historical in origin and what was just taken from The Raiders. The gentleman who told the story of Crichope Linn at the Sunday School puzzled "A Galwegian" and made

¹Dumfries Standard, April 25th 1894, p. 3.
him wonder whether or not he had actually seen some old verses on the subject. Crockett had absorbed the inherited feelings of his Galloway audience in particular so thoroughly that they recognised his attitude as their own; whether a tale was true or not did not really matter -- "a tradition of this kind is sufficient for a novelist" precisely because this novelist had caught the prevailing ethos so exactly. He was, in a sense, inventing folklore as well as using it.

Thirdly, we can conclude that, even though he may not in fact have purloined the stool of repentance passage from Dugald Graham, the Skellat Bellman of Glasgow, Crockett was unlikely to be pedantically fastidious about exact relevance to period. If a mid-eighteenth century point stayed in his memory and later occurred to him as suitable for a comic chapter in a nineteenth century love story, he would have no scruples about putting it in. He had talked of the humour of chapbooks, the "rough give-and-take of life at the country weddings, the holy fairs, the kirns and christenings of an older time" in his *Contemporary Review* article on "Scottish National Humour"; by maintaining that there was "still plenty of it, healthy and hearty, surviving in the nooks and corners of the hills",¹ he was reserving the right to pick up his comedy wherever and in

whatever period he found it.

Men of the Moss Hags opens, like The Raiders, when its first-person narrator William Gordon is not yet launched on the serious business of life: the first three chapters establish his relationship with Maisie Lennox his cousin, his love of his parents, his dislike of his elder brother Alexander Gordon, and suggest the peacefulness and beauty of the Glenkens, broken only by the brush with the gipsies which leaves William wounded in the leg and lame and physically weak thereafter; once more Crockett has opted for an unheroic hero. William lives at Earlstoun House high above the River Ken, Maisie at Little Duchrae where Crockett spent his boyhood; their fathers are friends and co-religionists, and the period is late in the 1670s.

Thus my father, William Gordon of Earlstoun, rode away through these sweet holms and winding paths south toward the Duchrae. Nowhere is the world to my thinking so gracious as between the green woodlands of Earlstoun and the grey Duchrae Craigs. For the pools of the water of Ken slept, now black, now silver, beneath us. They were deep set about with the feathers of the birches, and had the green firs standing bravely like men-at-arms on every rocky knoll. Then the strath opened out and we saw Ken flow silver-clear between the greenest and floweriest banks in the world. The Black Craig of Dee gloomed on our right side as we rode, sulky with last year’s heather. And the great Kells range sank behind us, ridge behind ridge of hills whose very names make a storm of music — Millyea, Milldown, Millfire, Corscire, and the haunted fastnesses of the Meaull of Garryhorn in the head end of Carsphairn. Not that my father saw any of this, for he minded only his riding and his prayers; but even then I was ever taken up with what I had better have left alone. However, I may be held excused if the memory rises unbidden now, before the dimmer eye of one that takes a cast back into his youth, telling the tale as best
he may, choosing here and there like a dory child, only that which liketh him best.¹

William Gordon, like Patrick Heron, has some of the imaginative qualities of Crockett; readers in this first chapter would find themselves on familiar ground.

There had actually existed a William Gordon, son of William Gordon of Earlstoun and younger brother to Alexander Gordon, known as the "Bull of Earlstoun"; he was created a Nova Scotia baronet in 1706 for his services to King William during the 1688 Revolution and subsequently distinguished himself under Marlborough on the Continent, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He died in 1718 and was succeeded in the baronetcy by his elder brother who, having fought at Bothwell Bridge, escaped to Holland and was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death in his absence.² But this William Gordon married a Mary Campbell, not Maisie Lennox; though the two lives bear some similarity, William Gordon's personality is Crockett's creation — a practical commentator who, being less strong than Sandy the Bull of Earlstoun is a spectator in events, critical, sometimes scathing, not involved with the Covenanters until circumstances force him into involvement, a mouthpiece for views which, unlike those of Crockett's authorities, are not invariably pious and approving.

¹ Men of the Moss Hags, I, pp 15-16.
The Battle of Bothwell Bridge in June 1679, with Claverhouse routing the Covenanters, plunges the Gordons into disaster. William Gordon the elder rides off to fight the king's dragoons accompanied by Sandy and thirty men-at-arms;

To me my father cried as he rode out of the yard:

"Abide, William, and look to your mother -- and see that the beasts get their fodder, for you are the master of Earlstoun till I return."

"An' you can help Jean to sew her bairn-clouts!" cried my brother Sandy, whom we called the Bull, in that great voice of his which could cry from Ardoch to Lochinvar over leagues of heather.

And I, who heard him with water standing in my eyes because they were going out in their war-gear, while I had to bide at home, -- could have clouted him with a stone as he sat his horse, smiling and shaving the back of his hand with his Andrea Ferrara to try its edge.1

This hostility between the brothers runs lightly through the book, a detail which removes the characters from their distance and makes them very human.

Sandy will return but William Gordon, killed before reaching the battle, lies dead and unburied under a dyke. Not knowing this but fearing the worst, his family await the return of their men. Sounds are heard in the eerie darkness of night, a familiar cough and a knocking of boots as if William Gordon had come home; young William cries a welcome to him and hurries down to open the door, but only the wind and the white fog blow round the house.

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1 Men of the Moss Hags, IV, p. 35.
When dawn comes, Gay Garland, Gordon's horse, comes home alone, trembling and with his head between his knees.

He stood and trembled in every limb. He was covered with the lair of the moss-hags, wherein he had sunk to the girths. But on his saddle leather, towards the left side, there was a broad splash of blood which had run down to the stirrup iron; and in the holster on that side, where the great pistol ought to have been, a thing yet more fearsome -- a man's bloody forefinger, taken off above the second joint with a clean drawing cut.

The precision of this description, each detail carefully and exactly noted, the nature of the blow, the place of the mutilation, the impersonality of the "man" whose forefinger it must have been, bring the tiny chill horror clearly before our eyes. The incident is never explained; we never are told whose forefinger it was; but we do not need to know, just as William does not expect to find out in the troubled days that are upon them. The severed finger is a sign of the brutality that so suddenly bursts upon the quietness and sunlit roses of Earlston.

Simple homely ordinary sounds and movements accompany the return of the son Sandy; Crockett uses the everyday action of baking to underline the sense of irreparable loss that the household suffers -- baking which is a symbol of ordinary warm kindliness, in contrast to the eerie empty night which has just passed.

It was between the hours of ten and eleven on the day following this strange night, that my mother, having

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1 Men of the Moss Hags, III, p. 31.
set all the house maidens to their tasks with her ordinary care and discretion, took down the bake-board and hung the girdle above a clear red fire of peat. Sometimes she did this herself, especially when my father was from home. For she was a master baker, and my father often vowed that he would have her made the deacon of the trade in Dumfries, where he had a house. He was indeed mortally fond of her girdle-cakes, and had wheaten flour ground fine at a distant mill for the purpose of making them.¹

The unhurried deliberate detail of Mary Gordon's movements build up the picture of the house on an ordinary day -- the red peat fire, the husband's pride in his wife's skill, his homely liking for her girdle-cakes so that he provides specially fine materials so that they shall be specially good for his enjoyment.

She had not been at it long before in came Jock o' the Garpel, hot-foot from the hill.

"Maister Alexander!" he cried, panting and broken-winded with haste, "Maister Alexander is comin' ower the Brae!"

There was silence in the wide kitchen for a moment, only the sound of my mother's roller being heard, "dunt-dunting" on the dough.

"Is he by his lane?" asked my mother without raising her head from the bake-board.

"Ay," said Jock o' the Garpel, "a' by his lane. No a man rides ahint him."

And again there was silence in the wide house of Earlstoun.

My mother went to the girdle to turn the wheaten cakes that were my father's favourites, and as she bent over the fire, there was a sound as if rain-drops were falling and bireling upon the hot girdle. But it was only the water running down my mother's cheeks for the love of her youth, because now her last hope was fairly gone.

¹Men of the Moss Hags, IV, p. 37.
Then in the middle of her turning she drew the girdle off the fire, not hastily, but with care and composedness.

"I'll bake nae mair," she cried, "Sandy has come ower the hill his lane."

And I caught my mother in my arms.¹

The gentle exactness of this observation is typical of the best parts of *Men of the Moss Hags*; Crockett is given his incidents by tradition and clothes them in the detail he is so good at seeing in sharp pictures -- a woman realises her husband will never again taste the girdle-cakes he relishes and quietly pulls the girdle off the fire; there will never be for her any point in baking from now on. The silence in the kitchen surrounds her bitter acceptance of tragedy in a small simple gesture.

Later she breaks down and sobs like a child as her sorrow comes over her.

"I ken, O I ken, I shall never see him mair. He's lying cauld and still at the dyke back that yince my arims keepit fast. O thae weary Covenants, thae weary, weary Covenants!"

"Hush thee, my dawtie, say not so!" I heard the voice of my cousin Maisie -- I could not help but hear it, "The Lord calls us to do little for Him oursâ€‌s, for we are feckless women, an' what can we do? But He bids us gie Him our men-folk, the desire o' our hearts. Brither I hae gie'n, twa and three, and my last is my father that lies noo amang the moss-hags, as ye ken!"

But again I heard my mother's voice breaking through in a querulous anger.

"What ken ye, lassie? Brithers and faither, guids and gear, they arena muckle to lose. Ye never lost the man for wha's sake ye left faither an'"

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¹*Men of the Moss Hags*, IV, pp 37-38.
mither, only just to follow him through the warl."

And in the darkness I could hear my mother wait, and Maisie the young lass hushing and clapping her.¹

There is a moving poetry about Mary Gordon's lamenting that makes her the representative of all women whose men have gone to war and never returned; many women in their time have said the equivalent of "Thae weary, weary Covenants!" But Crockett has the honesty to show the other side of the poetic picture. Mary Gordon sweeps aside with selfish egotism the comfort that Maisie offers her; the loss of brothers and perhaps a father is nothing — no one can suffer as she, Mary Gordon, is suffering. It is unromantic, unpoetic, but very real human behaviour.

Sandy must now hide in the oak tree at Earlstoun, renowned in Covenanting tradition,² since he is a wanted man; it is William who sets off with two servants to seek his father's body. On his way, he meets some of Claverhouse's dragoons, commanded by Cornet Inglis,³ from Grierson's headquarters at Garryhorn. Inglis hails him as a canting rebel, like all Gordons, but Walter Gordon of Lochinvar rides into the picture suddenly and calls Inglis a liar,

turning back the lace ruffle of his silken cuff, for he was as gay and glancing in his apparel as a crested jay-piet.⁴

²Simpson, pp 264-266
³Simpson, p. 387. Cornet Peter Inglish.
⁴*Men of the Moss Hags*, V, p. 44.
Wat Gordon is William's cousin, but he is on the king's side, a fellow-officer of Inglis; his father had been a Covenantant but had forfeited his life for his beliefs, his head set to rot on the Netherbow at Edinburgh, while his mother, a Morton, had brought him up a royalist.

With this totally fictitious Wat of Lochinvar, unreality enters the story; Wat is no more than a conventional swash-buckling figure of romance straight out of Dumas, a secular Scottish Aramis involved in intrigues at court and as elegant and unreal as William is solid. Crockett hooks him neatly into the plot, making him in high favour with Claverhouse because of his gentle upbringing:

It was, doubtless, a relief to the high-bred soldier to speak to him after the foul oaths and scurril jests of the country cavaliers; but it was unwise to introduce so artificial and contrived a personage into a family so real. The Lochinvar branch of the Gordons to whom he makes Wat belong, owners of Lochinvar Castle which formerly stood on an island in the loch of the same name four and a half miles north-east of Dalry, an island now submerged, did once exist, but this imaginary scion does Crockett's narrative no good. Wat's fine speeches, in spite of the obvious and useful contrast he provides to his homespun cousin, are not convincing, perhaps because of his obviousness; he breeds

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1Men of the Moss Hags, VII, p. 54.
improbabilities from the moment he appears.

His elegant and skilful duel with Inglis is interrupted by Claverhouse himself, censuring both officers for brawling and affording Crockett an opportunity for a quick portrait of this detested persecutor and his effortless discipline.

Though slender and not tall, Clavers nevertheless looked noble upon the black horse which had carried him at a gallop down the burnside from Garryhorn. His eyes were full of fire, his bearing of gallantry. Yet methought there was something relentless about the man -- something that friend might one day feel the bite of as well as foe. For this was the man who, at his master's word, was now driving Scotland before him as sheep are driven into buchts on the hillside.

Yet I think we of the Ancient Province never felt so keenly the bitterness of his oppression, although mostly it was without bowels of mercy, as we did the riding and driving of Robert Grier of Lag, or Douglas of Morton, of Queensberry and Drumlanrig, that were of ourselves -- familiar at our tables, and oftentimes near kinsmen as well.

What John Graham did in the way of cess and exaction, and even of shooting and taking, was in some measure what we had taken our count and reckoning with. But that men who knew our outgoings andcomings, our strengths and fastnesses, who had companied with us at kirk and market, should harry us like thieves, made our hearts wondrously hot and angry within us.¹

The comment is more interesting and unexpected than the portrait; Graham of Claverhouse is much as we expected, much as Scott showed us in Old Mortality, a literary creation taken from books, but the thoughtful impartial appraisal of the difference between him and the local persecutors is the kind of intuitive flash which gives William Gordon his firm setting within Galloway values;

¹ Men of the Moss Hags, VII, pp 50-51
it may never have occurred to us that a local landowner
turned persecutor would rank as more vile to Galloway than
a stranger coming in from elsewhere. We can accept this
once it is put to us as real and true. Wat Gordon apart,
Crockett is building for us a solid picture of the motives
and personalities involved in the Killing Time.

Because of Claverhouse's careless affection for Wat --
here Wat is useful in the plot -- William is allowed to
ride on with his two companions. They find his father
lying dead, his body wounded with six musket balls. The
account of his burial takes us back to the honest
simplicity of Earlstoun; it is told with homely verbs and
details and ends with a sarcastic thought about Sandy that
is very convincing.

And where we found him, there we buried him, wrapping
him just as he was, in the shrouds my mother had
sent for her well-beloved. Hugh Kerr was for taking
his sword out of his hand to keep at home as an
heirloom. But I thought no. For his hand was
stiffened upon it where the blood had run down his
wrist. And besides, it had been his friend while
he lived and when he died, and it was hard to part
him with that which had been to him as the sword of
the Lord and of Gideon. So we buried his sword and
him together, laying the little red Bible, stained
and spotted with his blood, open upon his breast.
Then we happed him up, and I, who could at that time
fight but little, put up a short prayer over him --
though not, of course, like a minister, or one bred
to the trade. And I thought as I rode away that it
was better to leave him the sword, than that Sandy
should get it to prate about at his general meetings.
Even as it was he could not let him be, but in the
after days of quiet he must have him up to coffin him,
and bury in the kirkyard of Glassford. Yet to do
Sandy justice, he had the grace to leave him the
sword in his hand.1

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1Men of the Moss Hags, VII, pp 56-57
This is a fine example of Crockett's visualisation and understanding of the men he is dealing with. The phrases pile themselves up slowly and thoughtfully -- the wrappings Mary Gordon had sent, the small hesitation about the sword, the Biblical reference linking the sword and the conscience, the small open Bible on the dead man's breast, the clumsy prayer for which William must apologise; one wonders whether behind this paragraph, and many other paragraphs like it, there may be stories told round the fireside of just such burials without coffin or service, oral traditions listened to by Crockett and stored up in his memory, to fill out his later reading and bring it nearer to the heart. The punctuation suggests a voice telling the story in simple sentences, one following the other without complexity, rather than a written account; the details sound recounted as the mind of a speaker comes to them, and the thought of Sandy as William rides away, glad that the sword is saved from exhibition and pious oratory, continues the brotherly rivalry in a most natural and yet unexpected way. Crockett has used his knowledge that the real father lies buried now in Glassford to illuminate with simple clarity the nature of the two sons.

Reality and unreality continue to alternate in succeeding chapters; back at Earlstoun Cousin Wat -- Wulloc at Wat -- behaves like a Dumas character:

Wat came down the street with his rapier swinging at his side, his feathered Cavalier hat on his head, and he walked with a grace that became him well... When Wat Gordon mounted into the saddle with an easy
spring, his horse bent back its head and curvetted, biting at his foot. "How now, curate," began my cousin, reining in his black and sitting at ease.¹

The two cousins have a lively conversation with Peter McCaskill, the curate of Dalry, which rings true, the Indulged curate being a cheerful man who is not hard on his parishioners even though they are Whigs and reluctant to attend his church. He contrasts himself vividly with Peter Pearson, the curate of Carsphairn, and prophesies that Pearson will come to a bad end, as indeed he does, though not in Crockett's book:²

"Peter Pearson o' Carsphairn -- puit craitur, he's juist fair daft wi' his ridin' an' his schemin'. He will hear a pluff o' pouther gang blaff at his oxter some fine day, that he'll be the waur o'! An' sae I hae telled him mony's the time."³

William, Wat and the Dalry curate set off for Edinburgh in the company of Claverhouse and Johnstone of Westerhall; during the journey they witness two moving incidents typical of Westerhall's brutality, the sadistic terrifying of a group of children at Shielhill, and the robbing and destruction of a cothouse because its owner had taken pity on an unknown Whig dying of wounds, had tended him and buried him on the moor wrapped in her own fine linen sheets, her name interwoven "as was then the custom when the bride did her own providing"⁴ giving away her identity.

¹Men of the Moss Hags, VIII, p. 60, p. 61.
²Simpson, p. 100.
³Men of the Moss Hags, VIII, p. 63.
⁴Men of the Moss Hags, X, p. 79.
In Edinburgh, unreality protrudes once more. William spends the winter making petitions on his family’s behalf, hoping that because he himself has not been engaged with the Covenanters he may persuade the authorities not to sequester the whole estate but to be content with a fine, and this squares with the situation, but Wat pursues his love-intrigues with Lady Wellwood, the fictitious wife of an equally fictitious Privy Councillor, and this does not. The climax of this affair comes on a February night when Wat makes his way whistling down the dark snowy stage-set of the Canongate, with William following secretly to find where he is going; as he passes under the Netherbow, a fierce burst of wind blows one of the heads down at Wat’s feet — his father’s head.

"GREAT GOD!" he shouted again, his eyes starting from their sockets, "IT IS MINE OWN FATHER’S HEAD!"

And above us the fitful, flying winds nichered and laughed like mocking fiends.

It was true. I that write, saw it plain. I held it in this very hand. It was the head of Sir John of Lochinvar, against whom, in the last fray, his own son had donned the war-gear. Grizzled, black, the snow cleaving ghastly about the empty eye-holes, the thin beard still straggling snow-clogged upon the chin — it was his own father’s head that had fallen at Walter Gordon’s feet, and which he now held in his hand.\(^1\)

Compared to the earlier glimpse of the supernatural in the elemental quiet simplicity of the elder William Gordon’s return to Earlstoun, this is fustian, over-exclamatory

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\(^1\)Men of the Moss Hags, XIV, p. 107.
and conventional. Even without the shouts in capital letters, it would still be too much -- second-rate Stevenson. The idea may have come from the grisly legend of James Guthrie's blood several weeks after his execution dripping on Middleton's coach as it passed under the Netherbow and staining the leather so that it would never wipe off, ¹ conflated with the tale of Guthrie's nephew who risked death to remove the head from one of the city ports, under the eyes of the Castle guards and piously bury it, ² but the treatment is cheap Gothic horror -- skull, shadows, shrieking winds, flying clouds, terrified son forced to break his tryst by the "Thing" that had fallen in spite of his vow that neither Heaven nor Hell would stand in his way. Even the gentler, more genuine supernatural touch of the creature at Holyrood,

a grey beast with four legs, but blind of eye like a grey mowdiewort, which took the head between its fore-paws and rocked it to and fro as a mother rocks a fretful bairn, sorrowing over it and pitying it ³

which William may have seen or may only have dreamed, does not reconcile us to the incident, however grimly and realistically Crockett may have described the head itself.

Because they are near Holyrood, the two cousins encounter a group of the wronged Lord Wellwood's men and wound Lord Wellwood himself, which means that they must

¹ Scoats Worthies, pp 266-267
² Nicholson: Tales, pp 278-280
³ Men of the Moss Hags, XVI, p. 117
leave Edinburgh — once more cousin Wat has been of help to the plot.

"It's a' by wi' the estate noo, Walter," I said. 
"You and I maun tak' the heather like the lave."¹

We are back to reality with this rueful speech. The two cousins wrangle amicably as they go, William finding himself quicker than Wat in words, if not in sword-play.

"We were none so fond o' the Kirk that I ken of — we that are of the lairds o' Galloway, when we could please ourselves when and where we would go. Was there one of us, save maybe your faither and mine, that had not been sessioned time and again? Many an ill word did we speak o' the Kirk, and many a glint did we cast at the sandglass in the pulpit as the precentor gied her another turn. But after a' the Kirk was oor ain mither, and what for should the King misca' or upturn her? Gin she whummelt us, and peyed us soondly till we clawed where we werena yeuky, wha's business was that but oor ain? But comes King Charlie, and says he, "Pit awa' your old mither, that's overly sore on you, an' tak' this braw easy step-minnie, that will never steer ye a hair or gar ye claw your hinterlands!" What was ye say, Wat? What say ye, Wat? Wad ye gie your mither up for the King's word?"

"No," said Wat sullenly, for now he saw where he was being taken, and liked it little, "I wadna."²

The argument is contrived, and we cannot quite believe that the solid William has been "sessioned time and again", but in essence Crockett is using the occasion to amplify the statement he had made in The Raiders that it was "chiefly dourness and not fanaticism" that had impelled the Galloway Covenanters to rebel.³ The picture he gives

¹Men of the Moss Hags, XVI, p. 114
²Men of the Moss Hags, XVIII, pp 125-126
³The Raiders, XXV, p. 224.
us of the men eyeing the hourglass during long sermons and suffering the church's discipline like children resignedly putting up with a mother's hard smacking of their bottoms is grotesque but appropriate and exact; the "easy step-minnie" is a vivid metaphor.

Once with friends in Galloway, William's narrative plunges us deep into isolated episodes and characters that would have been well-known to Scottish readers. In Chapter XIX Sandy Gordon describes how he and Anton Lennox dealt with John Gibb of Bo'ness and his infatuated followers;¹ Chapters XXI and XXII take us to a typical conventicle, addressed by Richard Cameron and Alexander Peden, and we meet again Maisie Lennox and are introduced to her friend Kate McGhie and her cousin Margaret Wilson of Glenvernock, the latter brought in unobtrusively, to be met again in the muddy waters of the River Blednoch at Wigtown as one of the martyrs. One can follow Crockett easily by means of homely and popular sources, even without using more recondite ones; so easily indeed that one has to suspect that he himself may have been relying mostly on them, although one hint taken from Wodrow demonstrates how freely he could build on his material. Wodrow records that when Alexander Gordon was brought in to be tortured, he appeared

¹Cameronian Papers, Edinburgh University Library, La. III. 350. See also Wodrow: History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, ed. R. Burns (Glasgow 1828-1830, 4 vols.), iii, 348-356. This book is hereafter referred to as Wodrow.
to have been in distraction, and physicians were called to consider his case. November 27th, the physicians report he is affected with that distemper called alienatio mentis, and advise he may be sent to the castle, that by the change of air his case may be better known.¹

This tiny reference is erected by Crockett into "The Madness of the Bull of Earlstoun" which is most picturesquely described, with Sandy, "the black wrath of his long imprisonment suddenly boiling over", tearing an iron bar from its fastenings, foaming at the mouth, roaring at the Privy Council and waxing so furious that he "lundered them about the broadest of their gowns with the bar" until overpowered by soldiers in large numbers and taken to the castle "for a change of air".² In Chapter XXIII we have the slapstick comedy of Birsay Smith, the thieving and rascally Cobbler,³ Chapter XXIV takes William with Cameron and his company to unfurl the Blue Banner of the Covenant, throw off allegiance to King Charles and publish the Sanquhar Declaration⁴ and in Chapter XXV one month later he fights in the Battle of Ayrsmoss or Airdsmoss, having heard Cameron, knowing he was about to die, say the words reported of him as he washed his hands at the house of William Mitchell in Meadowhead: "This is their last

¹Wodrow, iii, p. 472.
²Men of the Moss Hags, LII, pp 375-377
³Simpson, pp 192-197.
⁴Simpson, pp. 14-16; Scots Worthies, p. 424.
washing. My head and hands are now cleansed for the offering”, though typically and realistically he is sceptical about the “chariot of fire” which some alleged had come down from heaven to receive Cameron’s soul.  

Some of these traditional episodes are comic; some are solemn and moving; all are vivid and pictorial; yet somehow none is as warmly convincing as the scenes which must have come from Crockett’s imagination creating the details of the Earlstoun household when William, after four years in Holland, returns there to find the house occupied by the dragoons. His mother and Maisie Lennox hide him in the well-house loft, where he is joined from time to time by Sandy, still at large and hiding in the Earlstoun woods. There is time for talk and laughter, even though some of the talk comes from Sandy’s wife Jean Hamilton, a woman of exceptional and boring piety whose “corncrake crying” is wearisome to William. Maisie smuggles food up to the well-house loft just as Grisell Hume smuggled it to her father when he was hidden in the family vault at Polwarth Church, and Sandy’s children make the same kind of natural but dangerous comments on how much Maisie is eating as did Grisell Hume’s brothers and

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1 *Scots Worthies*, p. 428.
3 *Men of the Moss Hags*, XXIX, p. 218.
sisters.\(^1\) One of the Earlstoun servants is Patrick Laing recently come to their service; this is another glimpse of a Covenanting figure, a soldier in the Scots Greys who deserted and sought safety in the Glenkens rather than carry out orders against his fellow-countrymen.\(^2\) One feels that Crockett is enjoying writing about this quiet lull in the struggle -- he may even have indulged himself too much; the Christmas number of the Graphic in 1897 carried a short story "The Bull of Earlstoun",\(^3\) as if he perhaps had had to leave a chapter or two out.

This pleasant time could not last, and its ending comes in a way which only Crockett could have devised. William and Sandy, talking in the well-house, forget the need for caution; as William tells it, the brotherly rivalry appears again -- William enjoys Sandy's company until he "began to deafen me with his bickerings about the United Societies".\(^4\)

The details of their discovery by the enemy are richly comic.

One night, while he was in the midst of his recital, the mighty voice of him sounding out upon the night brought the sentry from his corner -- who listened, but could not understand whence came the sounds. Presently the soldier called his comrade,

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\(^1\)Margaret Warrender: Marchmont and the Humes of Polwarth, by one of their descendants (Edinburgh and London 1894) pp 31-33.

\(^2\)Men of the Moss Hags, XXXIX, p. 215.

\(^3\)S.R. Crockett: "The Bull of Earlstoun", The Graphic LIV, Christmas Number 1897, pp 12-13

\(^4\)Men of the Moss Hags, XXX, p. 220.
and the pair of them stole to the door of the well-house, where I had lain so long in safety. Sandy was in the heat of his discourse, and I sitting against the chamber wall in my knee-breeches, and with a plaid about me, listening at my ease. For long immunity had made us both careless.

"At Darmead,\(^1\), that well-kenned place we had it," Sandy was saying, his long limbs extended halfway across the floor as he lay on the bare boards and told his story; "it was a day of glorious witnessing and contesting. No two of us thought the same thing. Each had his own say-away and his own reasons, and never a minister to override us. Indeed, since Ritchie lay down at length at Ayrsmoss to rest him, there is no minister that could. But I hear of the young man, Renwick, that is now with Mr. Brackel of Leeuwarden, that will scare some of the ill-conditioned when he comes across the water --"

Even as he spoke thus, and blattered with the broad of his hand on his knee, the trap-door in the centre of the floor slowly lifted up. And through the aperture came the head of a soldier -- even that of the sentry of the night, with whose footfalls I had grown so familiar that I minded them no more than the ticking of the watch in your pocket or the beating of your heart in the daytime.

The man seemed even more surprised than we, and for a long moment he abode still, looking at Sandy reclining on the floor. And Sandy looked back at him with his jaw dropped and his mouth open. I could have laughed at another time, for they were both great red men with beards of that colour, and their faces were very near one another, like those of the yokels that grin at each other emulously out of the horse collars on the turbulent day of the Clachan Fair -- which is on the eve of St. John, in the time of midsummer.\(^2\)

William makes clear his attitude to Sandy by his sly sarcastic phrases -- "in the midst of his recital" and "blattered with the broad of his hand on his knee", but another point of interest is in what Crockett makes Sandy

\(^1\)Simpson, p. 435

\(^2\)Men of the Moss Hags, XXX, pp 221-222
say; "a day of glorious witnessing and contending" to this leading Covenanter is one on which everyone is in a state of disagreement with everyone else, loudly and volubly contradicting one another, with no one having the authority to stop them: "never a minister to override us". This illustrates Crockett's own curiously ambivalent attitude to the men of the Covenant; not only does his hero prove sceptical of his famous brother's high-mindedness and find his sister-in-law for all her piety somewhat tedious, but he himself at times can see and emphasise the ridiculous side of prolonged theological arguments carried out by these perfervid amateurs.

Once more Sandy and William are "on the run", and this time Maisie and their mother take to the hills too. The plot from now on grows less and less plausible. Crockett, because he is nearing the end, crams Covenanting characters in one after the other, without taking time to make them fully credible. William is sheltered by Jean Gordon at her house, called "Jean's Wa's", near Garpel Linn -- he had found this in Nicholson¹ as part of a sad tale of betrayed love and altered the dates so that Jean is alive and active forty or fifty years after she should have been

¹Nicholson: Tales, pp 90-97. Crockett brazenly excuses his departure from Nicholson's story by making Jean Gordon say that she "has still some spunk in her yet, though folk say that she died o' love thirty years syne. Hoot, silly clavers, Jean Gordon could hae gotten a man ony time, had she been wantin' yin". XXXI, p. 228.
dead of a broken heart. Walter of Lochinvar, whose conscience had prevented him from taking part in the Sanquhar Declaration against the King's authority, wanders back into the story, somewhat improbably disguised as the gardener of Roger McGhie of Balmaghie, a fictitious friend of Claverhouse, with whose daughter Kate, a Covenanting sympathiser we have already met as Maisie's friend, he is now in love. Maisie's father Anton Lennox is hidden in Cove Macaterick, ill and in need of help; William and Walter care for him, while Maisie and Kate, elsewhere among the hills, have an adventure with Mardrochat the Spy.¹ There is much travelling to and fro near the Eglin Lane which flows into Loch Doon, and on the side of Meaull and the Dungeon; William encounters Gash Gibbie, the macabre half-wit son of Corplicht Kate, a witch who gathers wolfsbane and mandrake; these are more like Macbeth's witness than anyone to do with the Covenant, indulging in poisoning and cannibalism in three gruesome chapters until the Vengeance of God strikes Kate dead in an indigo-black night. In all probability Crockett was inspired to this flight of fancy by the "Carlin's Cairn" which appears on the map and the story of an old woman who perished nearby which Malcolm Harper attaches to it;² the place-name

¹Simpson, p. 308. Canning of Muirdrogat.

"The Nick o' the Deid Wife" which he gives to Chapter XLII may well have been his own invention.

All the main characters attend the famous General Meeting of the Cameronians at Shalloch-on-Minnoch so that Crockett can describe the Session Stone, which he had visited with John Macmillan;\(^1\) we meet Sir Robert Hamilton whose ill judgement had led to the defeat at Bothwell Bridge,\(^2\) defy Claverhouse, and escape over the moors. In a hotch-potch of traditions, William and Wat meet Black McMichael\(^3\) and see him wield the Galloway Flail\(^4\) in Chapter XLVII, are present with Maisie and Anton Lennox at the rescue in the Enterkin Pass in Chapter XLVIII\(^5\) and witness the drowning of the two Margarets in the River Blednoch, perhaps the most notorious act of the persecutors in Chapter LI. This episode is led up to rather fancifully by William's trying to break into Wigtown Tolbooth to rescue Margaret of Glenvernach (whom we met earlier as

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\(^1\) Marion Macmillan: "S.R. Crockett", MS 11/8, Hornel Collection, Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, pp 7-8.

\(^2\) Scots Worthies, p. 599.

\(^3\) Simpson, p. 55, pp 102-103. See also pp 95-96.

\(^4\) Simpson, pp 321-323.

\(^5\) Simpson, pp 96-97.
Maisie's cousin); instead he is taken prisoner himself and forced by the malice of Lag to watch the drowning.

In this incident Crockett is totally serious and involved; he will not tamper with this heartfelt tradition.

Now the Blednoch is a slow stream, which ordinarily flows in the deep ditch of its channel, wimpling and twining through the sands of the bay of Wigtown. The banks are but steep slopes of mud, on which if one slips he goes to the bottom with a slide. Up this deep channel the sea comes twice every day, damming back the sluggish stream and brimming the banks at full tide. When Lag's men took me down to the water edge, I saw the two women already tied to stakes set in the ooze of the Blednoch bank. At the sight my heart swelled within me at once sick and hot. Margaret Lauchlison was tethered deepest down, her stake set firm in the bottom and the post rising as high as her head.

Nigh half-way up the steep bank stood our little Margaret, loosely reeved to a sunken stob, her hands clasped before her.¹

The Blednoch is visualised in all its slow natural force -- "damming back the sluggish stream" and "brimming the banks at full tide". The horror is suggested by understatement -- the "ooze" of the river, the older woman "tethered" like an animal, Margaret standing, hands clasped in resignation, "loosely reeved to a sunken stob". We could tell that Crockett has been at the spot himself even if we did not have the evidence in Marion Macmillan's manuscript; she recounts how she and her husband went with him to Wigtown and were shown the Blednoch by an elderly

¹ *Men of the Moss Hags*, L.I, p. 365.
retired teacher, whose mother-in-law's grandfather used to take her on his knee as a child and describe the drownings, which he had witnessed. He remembered his mother-in-law's words:

She said he always described the crowd that was gathered to see the awful spectacle as 'there were clouds of folk on the sand that day', meaning not one solid mass but scattered in terrified groups and someone praying in each group.¹

We can detect the influence of this direct contact with the past in Crockett's description; the words of the old man who had been present come down through his granddaughter and her son-in-law to emerge distinctly in what he makes of the scene.

Now Blednoch sands under Wigtown town were a sight to behold that day. They were black with folk, all in scattering, changing groups. There were many clouds of folk on the sands when the lassies were "pitten doon," and in every little company there was one praying. Through them patrolled the soldiers in fours, breaking up each little band of worshippers, which dissolved only to come together again as soon as they had passed.²

Unless Marion Macmillan's memory had been influenced by her reading of Men of the Moss Hags (and this seems unlikely -- she would certainly not have lied deliberately) we have an example here of Crockett using oral tradition directly, simply, and without significant alteration; he recognises that the plain statement of an eye-witness has

² Men of the Moss Hags, LI, p. 367.
its own strength and power. How different from his strained literary attempts at Gothic horror!

Men of the Moss Hags can best be judged as a valiant but ill-advised attempt to cram into one narrative all the aspects of the Killing Time that were tangled in Crockett’s imagination; he was too close emotionally to his material to be able to handle it with judgement. Could any single person have been present at so many well-known events as William Gordon, or have been acquainted with so many Covenanting heroes and villains? The writing of the book moreover took place amid perpetual interruptions; Crockett was still a Free Church minister, hindered by his church duties, classes he had to take and sermons to preach for Dr Whyte at Free St George’s, visits to Andrew Lang at St Andrews, to Ruskin at Coniston, visits from Lang and the Barries at Penicuik, speaking engagements at Glasgow, Manchester and Dundee, as well as hasty happy visits to Glenhead and the Macmillans; it is little wonder that the book written in such circumstances — not yet finished on December 21st 1894, yet scheduled to begin on January 4th 1895 in Good Words — should have been episodic, scrappy and uneven, a kaleidoscope of incompatibles. When it is good, clearly and affectionately visualising and living through experience with the family of Earlstoun, it is very, very good; when it is bad — the pasteboard

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1 Crockett Letters (Hornel): September 22nd — October 30th 1893; April 27th 1894; May 25th 1894; July 7th 1894; October 1894; October 12th 1894; December 21st 1894.

2 Crockett Letters (Hornel): December 21st 1894.
dramatics of Wat of Lochinvar, the gibbering idiocy of Gash Gibbie and his hair-raising mother -- it is indeed horrid, and with a kind of horror that accords ill with the sweeping landscape of figures moving slowly over the moors to Shalloch-on-Minnenoch or the tragic stakes on the Blédnoch. Yet Crockett was deeply sincere -- "I wrote the Wigtown martyrs chapter this morning and wept as I did so"¹ -- and the book has a vitality and energy that pulls one through it in spite of its defects.

Its conclusion could stand as an epitome of his strength and his weakness, his talent for vigorous exciting description but also his haste, his departure from historical truth, his tendency to invent and improve reality. It comes fittingly as a climax; William, having appeared before the Privy Council and Bluidy Mackenzie, has been condemned to death, but as a favour, and because he has spoken up so fearlessly, he is to be beheaded not hanged (a most unlikely development) and beheaded in the noble company of the Earl of Cantyre. We may guess this to be the Duke of Argyll, the change of name excusing any liberties the author means to take with the real facts of Argyll's execution.

Cantyre makes his final speech and kneels before the Maiden. For all that William has been made to stand with

¹Crockett Letters (Hornel): October 1894.
his back to the dreaded instrument, as the drums roll

I heard louder than thunder the horrible crunch as of one that shaws frosty cabbages with a blunt knife. Methought I had fainted away, when I heard the answering splash, and the loud universal "Ah!" which swept across the multitudes of people.¹

Sound, for once, conveys more strongly than sight what is going on, very concisely, very sharply. Now it is William's turn, but just as he has finished the speech which he, somewhat to his surprise, finds himself making, the noise of the crowd falling back and shouting reveals that a girl on a white horse is riding through the West Port. It is Maisie Lennox, with pardons for William and her father; she has disguised herself as a highwayman and robbed the king's messenger who was carrying her father's death warrant. This may sound like another improbable Crockett fantasy, but one is never sure; life can be very improbable. Grisell Cochrane, the daughter of a Covenanting prisoner, Sir John Cochrane, did precisely this for her father.² Only Crockett, being Crockett, adds the small extra twist. Rummaging through the bags Maisie destroys her father's death warrant, and finds a free pardon, signed, sealed, and with a blank space for the name of the one pardoned. Whose name shall she write, her father's or William Gordon's? She makes up her mind, she

¹Men of the Moss Hags, LVI, p. 398.
²Margaret Warrender: Marchmont and the Humes of Polwarth (Edinburgh and London 1894) p. 34.
writes the name — then, with great joy, discovers another layer of paper; there are in fact two pardons.

Maisie Lennox has never told to any — not even to me, who have some right to know her secrets, that name which she first wrote when she had to choose between her father’s life and her lover’s.

She only says, "Let every maid answer in her own heart which name she would have written, being in my place, that day in the changehouse!"

And even so may I leave it to all the maidens that may read my history to let their hearts answer which. For they also will not tell.

This piece of light-hearted teasing of his readers just before the climax of an adventurous and at times moving story makes one realise what honesty and self-knowledge Crockett showed in refusing to regard himself as anything more serious than a romancer.

One result of Men of the Moss Hags and its generous panorama of the Covenanting times — a result which possibly never occurred to Crockett until it was too late — was that he had in his enthusiasm used up most of his material. Any further books about the Covenant would have to repeat some of the events he had described already, or look further afield for fresh material, or depend on his imagination for new plots. This was no small problem; one of Crockett’s imitators, John Buchan, was to show, in John Burnet of Barnes, that an unheroic hero fleeing over and over again from one Border dale to another with

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1 Men of the Moss Hags, LIV, 390.

2 John Buchan: John Burnet of Barnes, (London 1898).
enemies in hot pursuit can become tedious and repetitive.

Lochinvar, in 1897, demonstrated the disastrous pitfalls that lay in wait when Crockett depended on his own imagination. This book, hinted at in the final paragraph of Men of the Moss Hags, continues the adventures of the tiresome Walter Gordon of Lochinvar and his Kate McGhie. They meet again in Holland where William and Maisie are comfortably and domestically married, William and Wat both being in the service of the Prince of Orange. The lovers become involved in one of the conventional silly misunderstandings which plague romantic fiction and make the reader's heart sink. The blackhearted villain typical of such fiction, Murdo McAlister, Lord of Barra, attempts to kill Wat by treachery and kidnaps Kate for his own evil purposes, taking her to the imaginary Hebridean islands of Suliscanna and Fiara, one of which Crockett had sketched in a short story for the Leisure Hour.¹ Wat, of course, follows, and Kate and he come to an understanding but as they try to escape, fate leads them to seek help from the schooner Sea Unicorn; they find they are in the company not only of the Lord of Barra but of the ex-Lady Wellwood who in the meantime has married Roger McGhie, Kate's father. The book is totally without distinction; the conversations are mostly Wardour Street English with only a few servants and minor personages to give any flavour of the author. There is a brief glimpse of

Killiecrankie, the Leaguer of Dunkeld, and the death of Claverhouse, now Bonnie Dundee, in Wat's arms, but scantily treated. The end is contrived to fit Scott's "Young Lochinvar"; Wat comes out of the west on a horse called Drumclog borrowed from his cousin of Earlstoun and carries off his Kate as she is on the point of being married to the villain Barra.

The Standard Bearer, which also appeared in 1897, has more of Galloway and therefore is more successful, but it makes little pretence to being history. Dedicated to "the Good and Kindly Folk of my native parish of Balmaghie" it is set in that area and contains cheerful raillery which they no doubt enjoyed.

"Of one mind?" exclaimed the old man, taking snuff more freely than ever. "Ye are dootless a maist learned and college-bred young lad, with rowth o' lear and lashin's o' grace, but ye dinna ken this pairish o' Balmaghie if ye think that ye can ever hae the folk o' wan mind. Laddie, the thing's no possible. There's as mony minds in Balmaghie as there's folk in it. And a mair unruly, camsteerie pairish there's no between Kirkmaiden and the wild Hieland border. . . ."

"If the people of this parish desire me for their minister, they will send me the call," answered I pointedly. For these things, as I have ever believed, are in a Higher Hand.

"Doubtless, doubtless," quoth auld Drummie; "but the Balmaghie folk are none the worse o' a bit spur in their flank like a reesty powny that winna gang. They mind a minute's jag frae the law mair not the hale grace o' God for a month, and mind ye that!" ¹

We meet again the Sandy of Men of the Moss Hags, now Sir

¹The Standard Bearer, XIII, pp 114-115
Alexander Gordon of Earlstoun but still "a great, strong, kindly, hard-driving "nowt" of a man" and Jean Hamilton his wife, still the pious extremist convinced she is always right. Quintin MacClelland the hero is a romant-icised representation of the famous Rev. John Macmillan of Balmaghie; in his Foreword Crockett refers those who want "the authentic certainty of these matters" to A Cameronian Apostle by his friend the Rev. H.M.B. Reid of Balmaghie. The story is told half by Quintin, half by Hob his imaginary brother; Quintin, brought up on the Earlstoun estate, has long been in love with Mary Gordon, Sir Alexander's daughter, but she has had too much of the Covenant and because he is a minister will have nothing to do with him. Quintin, out of kindliness and pity, marries Jean Gemmell who is madly in love with him but is dying of tuberculosis -- she dies exactly an hour after they are married by her bedside.

Both Quintin and Sir Alexander have enemies who plot against them. Sir Alexander is charged with drunkenness and, under the disgrace of this and his old sufferings and imprisonment working on his mind, takes fits of raving madness, during one of which he curses the Presbytery for a page at a time and shoots off a musket at Quintin, who is climbing the tower stair in the hope of exorcising

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1 The Standard Bearer, p. 82.

his demon. One cannot help remembering Mad Sir Uchtred. However, all ends happily; Mary realises her love for Quintin, defies her father, marries him and goes off with him to his ministry and the United Societies among the hills. Romance and the Cameronians once more mingle oddly, but the story has a raciness and a life which are totally lacking in Lochinvar; it also has pungent Galloway talk and flashes of Galloway description which bring the landscape and the people immediately before our eyes. Any resemblance to the real John Macmillan is slight; he did in fact marry as his second wife the daughter of Sir Alexander Gordon of Earlstoun, but the marriage was one "of affection and perfect religious sympathy" and she was a widow with several children, by no means the lass of spirit Crockett makes her. Just as Dumas in the five books concerning the Three Musketeers, freely adapts the inner history of the French Royal Family, so does Crockett with his Galloway minister -- but it makes a good tale.

The Dark o' the Moon takes equal liberties with Galloway political history; this is the book about the "Levellers" in Galloway which Crockett talked of as a "pendant to The Raiders" in his letter to the Academy.

1 H.M.B. Reid: A Cameronian Apostle, p. 186.
2 S.R. Crockett: The Dark o' the Moon, being certain further histories of the folk called "Raiders" (London 1902).
3 Above, p.482.
Its plot is a curious reversed image of *The Raiders* and it would be well not to inquire too closely how its date relates to the dating of that earlier book, since the "Levellers" in Galloway were operating in 1724. Patrick Heron's son Maxwell is kidnapped by Hector Faa so that he can be married to Hector Faa's daughter Joyce; this runs alongside the rebellion of the common people against the enclosures. They gather at dead of night at Rascarrel, with the intention of knocking down the new and hated walls which are an infringement of their ancient rights, led by a slim and eloquent youth of great daring who is, in fact, the Marion Tamson, Sammle Tamson's daughter, whom Patrick and Silver Sand had rescued from the Murder Hut. The love stories work themselves out against Galloway landscapes; the plot is crowded with characters -- the magistrates of Kirkcudbright, smugglers to a man, who impersonate ghosts in Maclellan's Castle to keep their kegs safe; Harry Polwart, a jealous gipsy who forces a promise of marriage from Joyce Faa if he spares Maxwell Heron's life; the Rev. John Macmillan of Balmaghie, whose function is not very clear; Captain Austin Tredennis, a crack shot, a swordsman without equal, who falls in love with Marion, the leader of the rebels whom it is his duty to quell; the Hanoverian General George Fitzgeorge whose partiality for the ladies makes him overlook Tredennis's unprofessional 

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conduct; and in a dramatic climax Silver Sand, older but not very much changed, who, reconciled at last to his brother Hector, joins with him and Grice Baillie, another gipsy, in holding off the dragoons in a snowstorm at Duchrae Bank, saving the Levellers at the cost of their lives. Crockett's foot is on his native heath; but Dark o' the Moon is the mixture not as before but diluted. There is too much event, too little thought; after the romantic musical comedy of the sequel, one realises afresh the strength and originality of The Raiders.

Another Covenanting variation came in 1905 in The Cherry Ribband, which had run as a serial in the British Weekly under the title Peden the Prophet. Raith Ellison, the son of a Covenanting family in Irongray who in their time have sheltered Cameron, Semple and Alexander Peden, is bewitched by the charms of Ivie Rysland, daughter of Sergeant-Major Grif Rysland of His Majesty's dragoons stationed at Dumfries. His stern blind father casts him off, though his mother, from the east of Scotland and a gentler tradition than Galloway's, keeps him in her heart:

"There is one God, it is true. But we look at him with other spy-glasses here in the east. Smoked they make be, but yet with them we may the better see His brightness unveiled."

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1 S.R. Crockett: The Cherry Ribband (London 1905). This book is hereafter referred to as The Cherry Ribband.

2 The Cherry Ribband, XVII, p. 112.
Raith enlists with the dragoons, and after crossing Scotland and meeting Cornet Graham, Grierson of Lag, Morton and the Laird of Shieldhill, we find him one of the Garrison on the Bass Rock, where to his horror his father and remaining two brothers are landed as prisoners along with Peden -- the other brother has been killed by Lag.

Crockett here makes use of an old tradition. When an impertinent young girl mocked Peden on the Bass, he is said to have prophesied that disaster would befall her, and shortly thereafter, she was walking upon the rock, and there came a blast of wind, and swept her off the rock into the sea where she was lost. 

Ivie Rysland does not mock anyone; on the contrary, she brings food and comforts to the prisoners; but it is she who is swept off the rock. But she is not lost; she is picked up by smugglers and taken to a cottage in Cantie Bay under Tantallon Castle where Raith's mother and sister are staying, communicating with the prisoners through the smugglers. Ivie begins to learn something of Mrs Ellison's kindly religion but Lag finds them and takes them prisoner to Houston-in-the-Hollow, the home of one of his licentious cronies who is in love with Ivie and has reason to hate Grif. But Ivie has not been brought up a soldier's daughter for nothing; she fights a duel with Lag and runs him through the shoulder, much to the amusement of Lord Liddesdale, Secretary of State; she is later taken to

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Kingsberry House and befriended by Lady Kingsberry.
Liddesdale instead of Lauderdale, Kingsberry instead of
Queensberry — Crockett is at it again.

Raith has followed her, and is caught by Stephen
Houston, alone in his deserted and eerie house except for
an aged servant. Houston has been brooding on his wrongs
and is drunk; there is in addition an insane streak in
his family. When Raith climbs the creaking staircase
and pushes open the door of the room where Houston is
awaiting him, a wolftrap springs and fastens him against
the door, a cunningly placed rope tightens round his neck
and the old servant ties his feet. Houston has been
playing at target-practice just as Sherlock Holmes did in
Baker Street, only more elaborately; Holmes outlined
"V.R.", whereas Raith sees

everywhere ornaments smashed, above the mantel-piece
a family portrait with the eyes represented with
black holes, a row of dents in the shape of a cross
driven in a great silver tankard, the black oak of
the walls perforated in curious patterns, the ceilings
marked with common catchwords and phrases, mostly in
Latin — "Atra Cura Sedet Post —" and then, done with
monstrous ability, the figure of a horseman at full
gallop.¹

He proceeds to outline Raith's body as it is pinned to the
door with bullet holes in precisely the same way; Ivie
and my Lady Kingsberry rush in just as he is about to kill
Raith, and are in time to see the aged servant Sue Fairfoul
shoot Houston in revenge for some wrong hitherto
unmentioned. This whole scene of overdone melodrama may

¹The Cherry Ribband, XLVI, pp 361-362.
have been suggested to Crockett by an article in the St. James's Gazette, a solemn and witty parody reporting the forthcoming trial of Dr Watson for the murder of Sherlock Holmes at the Reichenbach Falls which describes how Holmes

used to amuse himself in this room with target practice. He was such a scientific shot that one evening while Watson was writing, he fired all round the latter's head, shaving him by an infinitesimal part of an inch. The result is a portrait on the wall, in pistol-shots, of Watson, which is considered an excellent likeness. It is understood that, following the example set in the Ardlamont case, this picture will be produced in Court. It is also in contemplation to bring over the Falls of Reichenbach for the same purpose.¹

Incredible as it may seem, the resemblances are so striking -- just so does Houston narrowly miss Raith, clipping his hair² -- that there must be a relationship. We know that Crockett was interested in crime reports and knew of the Ardlamont case; it is only too likely that his imagination, consciously or unconsciously, dredged up the parody when he was stuck for a thrilling climax, even when he was supposedly writing of real Covenanters.

These examples are perhaps sufficient to show how Crockett's imagination ran wilder and wilder in his later historical stories; it is not surprising that among

¹ "The Late Sherlock Holmes. Sensational Arrest. Watson Accused of the Crime. (By Our Own Extra-Special Reporters)", St James's Gazette XXVII December 29th 1893, pp 4-5.
² The Cherry Ribband, XLVI, p. 363.
serious readers his reputation sank over the years. And when he does this in Scottish scenes, it is easy to understand what blemishes he could and did incorporate in his historical romances set in France, in Spain, in Italy, in Switzerland. They rollick along in adventure after adventure, full of coincidences, hairbreadth escapes, brigands, traitors, villains, swash-buckling duels, pasteboard lovers, settings reminiscent of old-fashioned musical comedy, with historical movements and events proceeding vaguely in the background as an excuse for the extravagances going on in the foreground. They all manifest some of Crockett's peculiar life and vigour; some manifest a great deal of it, with idiosyncratic and lively comments; but today when the historical novel has grown serious and sophisticated far beyond the mere love affairs of Principal Boys and Principal Girls, they are unreadable except by those whose scholarly duty it is to read them.

But there was one area in which Crockett was able to let his imagination range as far as it liked in romance and horror without outraging anyone, in books almost completely forgotten today. In his imaginary European duchies of the Wolfmark and Hohenstein, set in the fifteenth century when printing was a novelty and gunpowder just invented, loosely attached to the Holy Roman Empire, the one ruled tyrannously and bloodily by Duke Casimir, the other charmingly if equally authoritatively by the Duchess Joan, there is no intrusive history to show him up. His
creation for the moment is the reader's reality and induces a willing if lighthearted suspension of disbelief. The Red Axe and Joan of the Sword Hand are excellent entertainment in a period manner, with Jorian and Boris, the tall thin man at arms and his short fat companion, slow-minded but stout-hearted, riding, arguing and fighting their way through both. Hugo Gottfried of The Red Axe is the son of the hereditary executioner of the Wolfsberg and is brought up in an atmosphere of death and blood in his lonely Red Tower; as a small boy he begs from Duke Casimir the life of a little girl whose father is to be executed; after many adventures, much journeying, and dramatic scenes of public trial and mob anger, in spite of the wiles of an enchantress who can see the future in inkpools, the hero remains faithful to his childhood playmate, saves her from death as a witch by exercising his hereditary right as the Red Axe to save one prisoner during his life by making her his wife, and discovers that she is the long-lost Princess Helene of Plassenburg and he therefore its Prince. Joan of the Sword Hand is the Duchess of Hohenstein who delights to disguise herself as a man and try her skill as a duellist, which is considerable; her father's will has decreed that she marry the ruler of the neighbouring state of Courtland on the Baltic, to unite the two provinces. Disguised as a man, she travels there to find what her betrothed looks like but mistakenly sees and falls in love with his younger brother, a Prince-Bishop; a year later she approaches the altar thinking she is to be married to him, but instead he
is there to marry her to his dismal brother. The marriage is carried out but the bride immediately rides home again to Kernsberg with her four hundred men at arms; war results, fanned by the ambitious Prince of Muscovy, the Wasp, who is determined to marry Margaret, Princess of Courtland. She, however, has fallen in love with the disguised Joan and waywardly flouts her hateful lover; fortunately a young man of mysterious origin is among Joan's entourage and bears an inexplicable resemblance to her. Joan is taken for safety to a lonely castle by the northern sea and he goes to Courtland as the Duchess, which solves the Princess Margaret's problem in one way but leads to splendid complications. In the end it is revealed that Maurice de Lynar is the Duchess's half-brother by her father's secret marriage to a noble lady who in a dramatic climax succeeds in blowing up the Prince of Muscovy with his own gunpowder. Maurice is married to the Princess Margaret and inherits both the princedom of Courtland and the Duchy of Hohenstein; Joan counts her rank well lost in marriage to Prince Conrad who has contrived to buy his freedom from his political priesthood and his cardinal's hat by a generous contribution to the Vatican coffers of Pope Sixtus. In both tales there features a wise old councillor who could have been played magnificently by the late C. Aubrey Smith.

It is all delightful and witty nonsense, comedy mingling with the drama so as to make it read easily and pleasantly, and as one would expect of Crockett the
imaginary duchies and princedoms have plains and cities, rivers and towers that are described with fairytale delicacy or folklore grimness, whichever is appropriate. All the medieaval trappings are there, ready to be made into a film — the snow-covered city of Thorn spread out "like a painted picture, with its white and red roofs bright in the moonlight"\(^1\) waiting for the Duke Casimir to ride home with his marauders, the Duke who "loved to come home amid the red flame of torches, the trail of bituminous reek, and with a dashing train of riders clattering up to the Wolfsberg behind him, through the streets of Thorn lying black and cowed under the shadows of its thousand gables";\(^2\) or in contrast, the morning of the Duchess Joan's bridal day which "dawned cool and grey. A sunshade of misty cloud overspread the city and tempered the heat. It had come up with the morning wind from the Baltic, and by eight the shops at the quays, and the tall beflagged festal masts in the streets through which the procession was to pass, ran clear up into it and were lost, so that the standards and pennons on their top could not be seen any more than if they had been amongst the stars".\(^3\)

The Black Douglas and Maid Margaret of Galloway\(^4\) receive the same picturesque and imaginative treatment;

\(^1\)The Red Axe, I, p. 3.
\(^3\)Joan of the Sword Hand, XIV, p. 93.
\(^4\)S.R. Crockett: Maid Margaret of Galloway. The Life Story of her whom Four Centuries have called "The Fair Maid of Galloway". (London 1905). This book is hereafter referred to as Maid Margaret.
their personages belong to history but in such a shadowy way that Crockett is not trammelled in the least. A tournament is spread out on the green meadows before Threave Castle, ladies and knights pass to and fro in elegant array and William Douglas meets the Lady Sybilla in a silken tent shimmering with enchantment and rich perfume. Malise the Smith and his sons dare the werewolves and the dark forests of La Vendée to snatch Maid Margaret and Maud Lindsay from the hideous fortress of Machecoul. At least one critic thinks highly of it. Roger Lancelyn Green who speaks affectionately of what he calls Crockett's "historical adventure romances"¹ and regards Joan of the Sword Hand as "one of his few first-class romances",² declares The Black Douglas to be his best:

The exaggerated gallantry of William Douglas, it is true, annoys us, but the supreme character of Malise the master armourer, whose one solution to every problem is to "clout" everyone within reach, more than compensates for any such lapses. As for Giles (sic) de Retz, we do not feel his wickedness to be so impossibly black as that of Crockett's other villains, on account of the supernatural powers so cleverly introduced, and the chapters about the werewolves and the sacrifice of the "Red Milk" are as pleasantly horrible as most things in Poe.³

As one who first discovered Crockett in The Black Douglas, I am grateful for this kindly appraisal, even although I find Maid Margaret, its continuation, much better.

¹Roger Lancelyn Green: Tellers of Tales (Leicester 1946) p. 186. This book is hereafter referred to as Green.
²Green: p. 188.
³Green: pp 187-188.
Maid Margaret is a longer, slower, more carefully conceived book; the psychology of Margaret, the Countess of Douglas, is worked out with remarkable delicacy and understanding. She is the lady of noble birth who is trapped in the political and war-like manoeuvres of her time, shut up in Threave while events go on at a distance beyond her control. She tells her own story, through her convent schooling in France after her rescue from Gilles de Retz to her happy return to Threave and the company of her maid Maud Lindsay, now the wife of Sholto McKim, the commander of the Castle. Margaret is married to two Earls of Douglas, her cousin William, noble but cold and ambitious, who is murdered by James II at Stirling, and then to his brother James, courtly, charming but untrustworthy, who seduces the daughter of Malise McKim the smith and is defeated at Arkinholm, the battle near Langholm which marks the final fall of the Black Douglases.  

He ultimately frees her from her involvement with him by taking up with a lady whom he calls "poor Jack Neville's Anne"; her marriage to him is declared null by a specious argument in canon law and she marries Laurence McKim, the Abbot of Dulce Cor, whom she has in her heart loved ever

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2 Maid Margaret, XLVI, pp 387-388.
since he made toy water-mills for her in the River Dee
when she was a child -- he is able, in the manner of those
far-off days when "we of the Southern House did much as
we liked, in the Church as in the State, our yea being yea,
and our nay nay",¹ to free himself from his Abbacy, never
having been fully a priest.

Crockett gives us some unforgettable glimpses of
quiet days at Threave, where he had played as a boy; by
day,

the plunging splash of the cattle wading clumsily in
the shallows of the ford, the iterated calling of a
cuckoo far away in the woods of Glenlochar, belated
and forlorn, and above all the dark flashing of the
swifts' wings athwart the blue oblong of my open
window, their screaming stoop and swoop from dizzy
heights, two ofttimes clinging together, as if playing
at 'barley-break' or 'pretty pigeon', the oft-repeated
whish they made as they crossed before the sill, like
the hissing rending of fine silk, and then, seen but
all unheard, the same black wings half a mile away,
beating the air as they went;²

or by night,

that February afternoon the twilight darkened early
into the solid blackness of Egypt. Wrapped in
shawls, Maud and I sat about the fire, after we had
supped, the candles feeble behind us, and the
tapestries on the walls moving in long, regular
waves, that seemed to go from one end of the room
to the other, giving boars and hunters and steeds a
wonderful appearance of life.³

He ignores the old story that the Maid's hand was severed
by a cannon-ball during a siege just as she lifted a glass

¹Maid Margaret, II, p. 10.
²Maid Margaret, XXVI, p. 218.
³Maid Margaret, XXI, p. 181.
of wine to her lips (though Threave is most thoroughly bombarded by Malise's Mons Mag, leaving

  a great black gash, ragged and unseemly, with gilly flowers and small scaly-leaved ferns clinging droopingly to the edges of the ruin);¹

he sweeps aside the slander about the Tutor of Bombie as "Highland lies sired by the Stewarts and damned by their lick-spittle clerks"² and scornfully contradicts the country saying about the gallows-knob of Threave never lacking its tassel: "Were not the Douglases noble gentlemen, dukes of the realm of France, as well as the greatest lords in Scotland? . . Would they, then, think you, have come home to set such carrion swinging under their own nostrils and those of their ladies in their mansion of Threave?"³

Crockett works familiarly within his Galloway tradition, developing his characters in accordance with it and bringing them most warmly to life; there are occasional discrepancies -- James, Earl of Douglas, who was defeated at Arkinholm in 1455 could not have gone on to be Shakespeare's Douglas at the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403⁴ -- but Malise's second cannon, the "Royal Stewart", is splendidly invented and described; we see the wedges

¹Maíd Margaret, XL, p. 336.
²Maíd Margaret, XXII, p. 198.
³Maíd Margaret, XXII, p. 198.
⁴Maíd Margaret, XLVI, p. 387.
steeping in their pails of oil, "black, dripping, polished like glass", ready to slip from their places in the explosion as Malise had intended, to destroy at Roxburgh along with Malise himself the Stewart King and his Red Douglas sycophants and avenge the five Black Douglas earls whom he had served so loyally. The noble figures of these mediaeval Galloway times involved Crockett's imagination much more fully than the suffering Covenanters, over whose theological squabbling beliefs he was in two minds even while he delighted in their adventures; they had grown slowly in his mind to very real existence. Maid Margaret is an astonishing achievement to have appeared in the same year as The Cherry Ribband. An anonymous reviewer huffed and puffed over its alleged "coarseness" in the Scottish Review, demanding (rather coarsely, one would think) to be informed why Margaret was called the Maid of Galloway when she was three times a bride. It is difficult to understand his objections.

In these "adventurous historical romances", distanced in time, romantic in setting, written in a mannered period English, with a strong colouration of Scots in the two Galloway ones, and dealing with the affairs of lords, duchesses and earls, Crockett had discovered for

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1 Maid Margaret, XLIX, p. 411.
himself a popular form in which he could work freely. He found his way into it through one of his early Scottish novels, set not in Galloway but in early seventeenth century Ayrshire, The Grey Man, which comes in the Crockett canon immediately after Men of the Moss Hags. His theme, the feud between the Kennedies of Cassillis and the Kennedies of Bargany, had been used, unimaginatively, by an earlier writer, William Robertson, in The Kennedys and its reshaping as The Kings of Carrick.¹ Crockett undoubtedly had read Robertson, as hints taken from the plodding Victorian narrative attest, but he transforms the material and adds to it; The Kings of Carrick deals almost entirely with one incident, the murder of Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean and its avenging, but Crockett presents us with a whole panorama of the Kennedy feud.

The hints he borrows are interesting examples of his imagination at work. The entire apparatus of the Grey Man of Auchendrayne is built up from Robertson’s statement that John Mure of Auchendrane was a man of great malevolence.

He was cruel and vindictive; he never forgot an insult or an enemy; and he was tenacious as a sleuthhound (sic) in following up the track of his vengeance. Still, he preferred, whenever he could, to work behind the scenes. It was for him to plot, for others to execute; and many a blow that was struck at the Earl of Cassillis was directed by a hand that itself remained invisible.²


²Robertson, p. 17.
Robertson states this; Crockett shows it at work. Right from his first appearance at the burning of the tower of Ardstinchar by the Bargany Kennedies,

a tall man who sat on a grey horse, and was clad from head to foot in a cloak of grey, having his face shaded with a high-crowned, broad-brimmed hat of the ancient fashion.\(^1\)

the Grey Man is a menacing figure; he contemptuously flings a bloodstained Bible into the flames, shocking even the Bargany Kennedies of his own side; the hero's father, a Cassillis Kennedy, impulsively saves it from the flames, risking his life among his enemies, and Gilbert Kennedy of Bargany lets him go free and keep the Bible;

But from a knoll on the left of the entrance the man of the grey habit, he who had thrown the Bible, sat silent upon his horse and watched. And as we looked back, he still sat and watched. Him my father took to have been the devil, as he said to me many times that night ere we got to Minnochside.\(^2\)

He is a power of evil, suggested rather than described, perpetually on the edge of events, manipulating, lying, plotting, stealing, sending men to their deaths, until finally he and his son, in Robertson the more callous and open villain\(^3\) of the two but in Crockett a weak cowardly catspaw to his father,\(^4\) are executed at the Mercat Cross of Edinburgh, and even here he is triumphant; he promised

\(^1\)The Grey Man, I, p. 11.

\(^2\)The Grey Man, I, p. 11.

\(^3\)Robertson, p. 224.

\(^4\)The Grey Man, XVI, pp 122-123.
a confession if only his son be executed first, then after the son is dead refuses it scornfully. (It is at least probable that Crockett borrowed this fatherly subterfuge from Stevenson's "Heather Ale" published in Ballads in 1890; the aged Pictish father preserved the secret of Heather Ale from his conquerors in precisely this manner. 1 )

Asked what religion he dies in, he answers smilingly:

"Of the ancientest persuasion," he said, "for I am ready to believe in any well-disposed god whom I may chance to meet in my pilgrimng. But in none will I believe till I do meet him."

This is confident assured drama, carried out without a false note.

The first-person narrator is taken from Robertson too, but how enlarged and made human! Robertson describes how, as Sir Thomas rode to his death, he was

in high spirits, and as he rode along he chatted familiarly to his servant, Lancelot Kennedy, an humble member of the family -- far-removed, but still a Kennedy. 3

This dim personage becomes Launcelot Kennedy, eighteen-year-old squire to Sir Thomas, a young man with a good conceit of himself, vain of his appearance, full of adolescent self-importance, but proud of his honour and devotedly loyal to his master. "Chatted familiarly" is developed into a most warm and touching relationship


2 The Grey Man, L, p. 344.

3 Robertson, p. 51.
between the young lad and the elderly man, loving and protective on the part of Launcelot who, though knowing he is sharper than Sir Thomas, recognises that the noble unsuspecting trust of his master derives from the goodness of his nature.

He had ever, indeed, been kindly and generous, forgiving and unsuspicuous. But during these spring months...he seemed to ripen like a winter apple when it is laid by, till there was no more sourness in him anywhere. . .

Indeed, to talk with him and watch his life was better than any sermon. I declare that before I understood his character and thought, I knew not that religion was aught more than the colour of a faction -- a thing to fight about, like the blood feuds of Cassillis and Bargany, considering the wrong and right of which not one in a thousand knows anything, and fewer still care.

Yet for all his increasing gentleness there was naught unmanly about my lord, but ever the bearing and speech of a most courteous knight. He had a great love for noble and sweet music, and often diverted himself on the viol, upon which he played most masterly. The scurril jest, indeed, he would sharply reprove; but his heart still inclined to wit and mirth, and his countenance was constantly cheerful.1

This is a new note in Crockett, that of the innate courtesy and goodness of a civilised man of birth. Religion appears mainly through this element in Sir Thomas, not an obsession as it is with the Covenanters but a quality of mind which distinguishes him from the fierce treachery which is to destroy him. Launcelot recognises it in his master, and also in his enemy Gilbert Kennedy of Bargany; he is moved to salute Bargany when they meet at the guardhouse at Holyrood,

For a more kingly-looking man did I never see -- far beyond our Earl (shame be to me for saying such a thing!), and indeed, before any man that ever I saw. But Gilbert Kennedy of Bargany was the bravest man that was to be gotten in any land, as all men that saw him in his flower do to this day admit.¹

Perhaps this knightliness which Launcelot admires and seeks is an anachronism in the Scotland of 1600, but Crockett deliberately emphasises it not only in what Launcelot says but in the style which he gives him -- there are only two passages of broad Scots in The Grey Man, the one in the kitchen of Cassillis² and the other at the farm-house of Chapeldonnan when "a tall, large-boned woman came to the gate with a pail of pigs' meat in her hand"³ and speaks uncivilly. That Crockett is consciously using language to make a distinction between the gentle and the lower-class is explicit in what Launcelot says of the cook:

Then she broke into the vulgar speech of the country, which, because I learned to write English as those at the Queen's Court do, I have used but seldom in this chronicle -- though, of course, not for lack of knowledge.⁴

It is part of Launcelot's character, but also part of the point Crockett is making -- noblesse oblige. A little priggish at first, Launcelot grows in warmth as the book proceeds, finding his values in an age of turmoil and transition. Sir Thomas and his friend Maister Robert

¹The Grey Man, VI, pp 37-38
²The Grey Man, XI, pp 75-77
³The Grey Man, XXXV, p. 233
⁴The Grey Man, XI, pp 75-76
Bruce, the Minister of Edinburgh, represent the best of the new, just as the comic Sir Thomas Tode, once Chaplain to the Earl's father before the Reformers, always garrulous about the roasting of the Abbot of Crossraguel in the Black Vault of Dunure (an Ayrshire tradition pressed into service) but bullied by his wife the Earl's cook, who hauls him about by the long yellow hair that has grown from the place where once was his tonsure, is a grotesque glimpse of the old. To the countryside in general, religion means little in comparison to the bloodshed and excitement of the feud; Maister Bruce appears now and again lamenting that "the Word of God is indeed made of none effect in Kyle and Carrick" but to no purpose; fighting is part of their lives. For the first time, Crockett is writing of the Scottish past without feeling obliged to concentrate on strife that is religious in origin.

Through Launcelot's eyes we see and experience many varying events; his narrative moves on like a chronicle from one to another, interspersing the moments of violence with quiet interludes, walking in the gardens of Culzean Castle and playing with Sir Thomas's younger children. An

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2 The Grey Man, X, p. 70.

3 The Grey Man, XII, p. 90.
insult is offered to the Crawfords of Kerse by the Cassillis party's planting a huge sow contemptuously on their land;\(^1\) fierce and bloody fighting ensues. Sir Thomas goes on a new Year's visit to an old friend at Maybole; scenting a plot against him, Launcelot takes his place and saves his life. Kelwood Tower is besieged and taken, thanks to Launcelot's quick strategy, and the Cassillis treasure, stolen from them in the past, is recaptured, to the Earl's delight; "it was ever the bitterest draught to the Earl to lose siller or gear".\(^2\) Once recaptured, the treasure is stolen again, by the Grey Man, leaving behind sinister signs of the creatures who had helped him:

> Without the door, on the trampled clay and mud, there were the steads of naked feet small and many.\(^3\)

The treasure forms an enduring thread in the plot until it is finally discovered by Launcelot in the cave of Sawny Bean the cannibal, a personage taken from Nicholson,\(^4\) linked with the Grey Man, and briefly appearing from time to time at Maybole and Culzean.

Because of the feud, the two factions clash in Edinburgh, the Grey Man once more in the background; the leaders of the Cassillis Kennedies are declared a danger

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\(^1\)"The Tethering of the Sow", Ayrshire Tales pp 72-83.


\(^3\)The Grey Man, V, p. 35.

\(^4\)Nicholson: Tales, pp 72-82
to the king's peace:

I rode forth from Edinburgh town with infinite glee and assurance of spirit. No longer would I be slighted as a boy, for that day I, even I, Launcelot Kennedy, had been put to the horn -- that is, I had been proclaimed rebel and outlaw at the Cross of Edinburgh with three blasts of the king's horn, "Against John, Earl of Cassillis, Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean, called the Tutor of Cassillis, and Launcelot Kennedy, his esquire!" So had run the proclamation. I wondered what that unkempt lassie, Nell Kennedy, would say to this. But the honour itself even she could not gainsay.

Nell Kennedy is the younger of the two daughters of Sir Thomas who come into the story; although a lady, she is a tease and taunts Launce with his youth and his vanity and his past affairs with other girls, damaging his dignity but present in the back of his mind more than he realises. It is with the older daughter, Marjorie, that he imagines he is in love, a fact which Nell maliciously laughs over, being human and a little jealous.

Marjorie is a heroine of old romance, a "princesse lointaine" who is both beautiful and apart:

For myself, I declare that when she came down and walked in the garden, I became like a little waggling puppy dog, so great was my desire to attract her attention. Yet she spoke to me but seldom, being of a nature as noble as it was reserved. Silent and grave Marjorie Kennedy mostly was, with the lustre of her eyes more often on the far sea edges, than on the desirable young men who rode their horses so gallantly over the greensward to the landward gate of Culzean.

She favours Launce on one occasion and walks and talks with him, holding his hand, so that he behaves like any love-sick

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1. The Grey Man, VI, p. 36.
this was so sweet to me and precious, that I slept with my right hand in a glove of silk for many days — ay, and even forebore to wash it. For I bethought me that though, as a man of war, I had forswor the company of silly girls, yet every true knight had a lady for his heart's mistress, whose colours he might wear in his helmet, and whose lightest word he might treasure in his heart.¹

But, alas! Marjorie's heart is not for him. Nell knows better.

At the garden gate I met Nell Kennedy, and made to pass without seeing her. But she stood in the middle of the way.

"I know," she said, pointing scornfully with her finger. "Maidie has been talking to you behind the hedge. She has given you the French brooch she would not give me yesterday, though she has another."

Then I walked silently past her, with as great dignity as I could command, for that is ever the way with forward children.

But she turned and cried after me, "I know who will get that other."²

Marjorie is in love with Gilbert Kennedy of Bargany, her house's sworn enemy, and he with her; her interest in Launce is because he praises Bargany and can give her news of him. She knows, however, that their love is hopeless; Bargany will never acknowledge the overlordship of Cassillis, and is bound in honour to one of the Queen's ladies. She sends him away (Launce by accident and to his grief overhears their last meeting, beside the seashore, close

¹The Grey Man, VII, p. 48.
in under the walls of Culzean) and agrees to marry James Mure of Auchendrayne to please her father, who believes the marriage will bring peace to the feuding sides. Instead, because the Earl of Cassillis once more breaks his word, fighting erupts again and Gilbert Kennedy is killed by one of Auchendrayne's men, a spy amongst the Cassillis Kennedies.

The poised lance struck young Bargany full in the neck and stayed. So in the midst of his foes, and striking at them to the last, he fell, who was the bravest man of his age. And at his overthrow there fell a silence for a space, and the battle another cleared. Only the snow fell and scarce melted off the face that was already white and set in death.

We crossed our spears and made a bier with our cloaks, whereon we laid him. Then very gently I drew away the deadly lance, though the wound bled not much, but inwardly, which was worse. We thought to bear him to some castle of his own folk, as it might be to the house of Auchendrayne. But the Earl John came and looked at his foe and kinsman as he lay on the snow with his eyes closed.

"Carry him to my castle at the town end of Maybole," said he, "for that is near by."

Now I thought that not the best place in the world for the young man's recovery, but, being bidden, it was not mine to reply, but only to obey.

We came to the portcullis gate of Maybole, and were bearing him in upon our shoulders, when down the road to the town there came, riding like the wind, first a lady and then a man that followed hotly in pursuit. When they came nearer, I saw that the lady was she who had been Marjorie Kennedy, and that the man riding after was her husband, James Mure. At sight of us who bore the soldier's bier slowly upon our spears, Marjorie leaped from her horse, and left it to wander, bridle free, whither it would. But a page seized and held it...

Then she that had been so proud and haughty to young Bargany when he was alive, took the fair, wounded head in her arms, crouching beside him in the dun, trampled snow, while the flakes blew in upon her unbound hair. She crooned and hushed him like
a bairn, while we that had borne him stood wide from her, some turning away altogether. But, because I knew all and loved her, I stood near.¹

This, the most romantic episode in *The Grey Man*, is handled with a slow simplicity that is poetic; one can almost hear Malory behind the sadness of the prose and its brief clauses linked mainly by co-ordinating conjunctions or simple "then" and "so" and "when"; perhaps it would be more realistic to think of Tennyson and *Morte d'Arthur*.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonness about their Lord,
King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.

The cadences, allowing for the different rhythm of the prose, are very similar in the inevitability with which they fall on the ear, tolling sadly and solemnly. The incident could have been sentimental and unreal if it had not been so firmly held in young Launce's narrative. In *Men of the Moss Hags*, Crockett is inclined to jerk from one extreme to the other, but here he has found a style that can compass changes of mood without any sense of strain; Launcelot the chronicler is in control of his story, takes each episode as it comes, and passes from this dramatic scene to the more humdrum passages that follow — his running back to ask Marjorie to come with them to

¹The *Grey Man*, XXV, pp 174-175.
Culzean, her refusal and departure, Nell's stopping the boys playing tennis -- without a break in continuity. Like Feste, he can sing both high and low.

The next episodes are gentle and ordinary. Launces sees his old love Kate the grieve's daughter married, then rides south with Sir Thomas and Nell to visit Sheriff Agnew of Lochnaw. This gives a chance to mention

the village of Stranrawer -- a long, clarty, Irish-looking street with pigs and bairns running about it, set on the shore of a fine loch.\(^1\)

On the journey home they visit Kirrieoch, where Launce's parents welcome them, and

... it was more than pleasant to see Nell rise to help my mother to spread the cloth and lay out the silver spoons. We had the best of muirland fare -- mutton of the sweetest, black-faced and small, toothsome fed on the sweet tender grasses that nestle among the heather-knowes. Also we had sweet milk, oatcakes crisp, a kebbuck of rich cheese, and butter, as the Scriptures say, in a lordly dish, for the vessel was of silver, and had upon it the arms of the Kennedies.

The Tutor picked it up and looked at it.

"These are the bearings of my great-grandfather!" he exclaimed, much astonished.

"Yes," said my father; "and he was also my grandfather."

"Bless me!" cried the Tutor of Cassillis; "I knew not that we were no nearly related."

And all through the remainder of our stay he called my father 'cousin'.\(^2\)

The happiness of this visit makes all the more cruel the next incident, the murder of Sir Thomas Kennedy. In

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\(^1\) *The Grey Man*, XXVI, XXVII, p. 184.

Robertson’s account, this is heavy, slow and laboured, the stiff theatrical revenge of the murdered Gilbert’s brother, himself now Bargany. He and several accomplices lie in wait in a wood and seize the bridle of Sir Thomas’s horse:

The animal reared on its hind legs, but Wallace never for a moment lost his hold.

The Knight of Culzean realised the situation. It flashed on him in an instant. He put his hand to his belt, where he carried a heavy pistol, and was in the very act of drawing it when Cloncaird sprang upon him, thrusting at him with his lance, and inflicting a wound which made him reel in his seat. Turning to face his assailant he was met, not by Cloncaird, but by Bargany, who, thrusting his associate aside, waved his naked sword on high, and, with eyes flashing fire, stood for a moment face to face with his victim. Bargany spake never a word; he was in too stern and grim a mood for that; but attacked Culzean so impetuously that with the first blow he fell from his saddle.

"Ah, traitors!" was all he muttered as he sank helpless upon the ground and fixed his eyes on Bargany, who, instead of at once following up his advantage, stood gazing upon him with a mingled expression of hatred and of satisfied revenge.

"No time to lose," said Irving, the borderer, as he drew his long dagger, "we must away," and, without further preface, he despatched Sir Thomas Kennedy by a savage blow in the chest, which all but pinned him to the ground.

"Come, Bargany," said Cloncaird, "it is all over with him. Your brother’s spirit can rest now. We must be gone."

Bargany felt the necessity for instant flight, and calling his associates, they mounted their horses and rode off southwards towards Carrick. Irving remained behind and robbed the body of the murdered knight of his money, completing the infernal transaction by cutting the gold buttons off his coat.¹

¹Robertson, pp 56-57.
Crockett vitalises this to instant reality. He leads up to it carefully, amplifying details which he found in Robertson. Launce is sent to ask John Mure of Auchendrayne to meet Sir Thomas on business; he misses him but sends a letter by a schoolboy who can run quickly. The boy returns, frightened, with the letter opened, but no answer, only a tale that he could not find Auchendrayne. Sir Thomas and Launce set off for Edinburgh, Sir Thomas regretting that he has not been able to meet Auchendrayne and talking happily about the hopes he has for peace. They pass Greenan castle and reach the sandy links above the bay at Ayr.

"Launcelot, ride a little way in front. It approaches the hour of noon, and I would do my devotion and meditate a little alone," said Sir Thomas to me. So I drew myself a bowshot before him, riding upon Dom Nicholas, and taking my hat in my hand. I rode easily, enjoying the sea breeze that cooled my brow and tossed my hair. I wondered if ever the time would come, when I also should be thinking about my religion at noon of a fine heartsome day. It seemed a strange enough time for a hale, well-to-do gentleman to set to his prayers.

Presently I saw a man standing upon my right hand somewhat above me upon the crown of a sandhill. And he raised his hand as one that cried to clear the course in the game, so I thought no more of the matter. But I looked round, thinking perchance that he cried to my master, who was riding with bared head and holding his little red Testament in his hand.

Suddenly, even as I looked at him, I heard the sound of shots behind me, and, turning Dom Nicholas, I saw my master reel in his saddle, with white blowing puffs of gunpowder rising all about him, from behind the desolate sandhills among which the murderers had hidden themselves. Drawing my sword, I set spurs to the side of Dom Nicholas and galloped towards them. I was aware, as I rode, of my master lying on his back on the sand, and his palfrey galloping away with streaming mane. A little crowd
of men stood and knelt about him, and I saw the flash of steel again and again as one and another of them lifted a knife and struck.

I yelled aloud to them in my agony and bade them wait till I came. So they hasted to make front against me, some of them leaping on their horses and others biding a moment to put as it had been booty into their saddle wallets.¹

Once again, as with the Murder Hut, Crockett has improved on his source, with his naturalness of detail — the careless enjoyment of the squire in the pleasant day, his mistaken interpretation of the stranger’s gesture as something to do with a game of golf, the quickness of the sounds, the spurt of gunpowder, the sandhills, and the futile helpless shout to the men to wait.

The remainder of The Grey Man consists of Launcelot’s search for the murderers, all the more keen because he knows that the treasure of Kelwood, the killing of Sir Thomas and his own future with Nell Kennedy are linked together. He and the Dominie of Maybole question the boy Dalrymple who took but did not deliver the fatal message which revealed that Sir Thomas would be travelling past Ayr; he admits that he had found Auchendrayne and his son, but that they had threatened him with death if he did not tell the lie about not seeing them. The boy subsequently disappears. The name Dalrymple comes from Robertson, who had described him as a poor scholar who earned his living by writing letters for the people of Ayr²

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¹The Grey Man, XXIX, pp 198-199
²Robertson, pp 72-74.
but by changing him to a schoolboy Crockett not only adds a dimension of cruelty to the Grey Man but enlists the Dominie as a companion in his search. Nell, Launcelot and the Dominie visit Auchendrayne and find the Laird about his prayers with his household, sinister and plausible. They send Nell to Kirrieoch and Launce's mother for safety, and follow clues from place to place, pretending to be merchants, talking to the people in the farmhouses, the Dominie being a skilled cross-questioner and occasionally entertaining the company with his bagpipes, like William Nicholson the Galloway Poet.¹ At Chapeldonnan, the goodman of which, Bannatyne, was on Ailsa Craig supposedly gathering solan geese, they are warned not to take the road south to Stranraer by Benane because "ye wad mak' braw pickin' for the teeth o' Sawny Bean's bairns".² At this point the plot becomes confused; it is hard to see why Launce and the Dominie go to Ailsa Craig, until one remembers that Robertson's Dalrymple is sent to Arran to be out of the way. Crockett combines these hints with his own introduction of Sawny Bean; Launce and the Dominie camp out in the ruined castle on the Craig and are attacked by Bargany Kennedies in a manner suggested by some of Crockett's boyish games at Threave.³ They defeat the enemy, but their boat is stolen and they are

¹*Rambles in Galloway*, p. 87.
³*Crockett and Grey Galloway*, pp 48-49.
trapped, passing the time in talk, during which the Dominie relates the story of his lost love who had disappeared long years ago, leaving only a rosary, a stain of blood on the seashore grass, and the prints of many naked feet with great birds' claws.

Not surprisingly, when they hear a voice calling from the sea that night and see a white form moving towards them, they are transfixed with terror, but it is not a ghost; it is Nell Kennedy, come with a boat to take them back to the mainland -- her sister is missing from Auchendrayne and has sent a letter which indicates that she knows the truth about the Mures' villainy.

They row towards Ayrshire, and when the wind catches their boat, set up the sail. Soon they are in under the cliffs and steering by a moving light they see high up above them. Suddenly a familiar voice is heard from the heights, and "I saw something white descending towards us from the cliff, like a poised bird that closes its pinions and dives into the water".1 It is Marjorie, escaping from the Mures.

Once again Crockett gives us a cave, a dark sinister cavern as large as the one on Isle Rathan but for the moment less lively, except for echoes, the melancholy sound of breaking waves, and a sense of much air and great space above them. They leave the boat and make their way further into the interior, finding a flight of rough steps

1The Grey Man, XXXVIII, p. 258.
in the darkness which leads them up into warmer, drier air which should have been pleasanter than the dripping sea-cave but is not. The floor is hard, as if it had been tramped; there is a pungent smell which fills them with loathing; and Launce in the darkness stumbles against tubs and vats and feels soft cold objects brushing his face.

He also finds the treasure-chest of Kelwood, but this seems little likely to do him good; they are in Sawny Bean's cave, and soon hear sounds and see torchlight approaching.

Then the horrid brabblement filled all the cave, and seemed louder and more outrageous, being heard in darkness. Suddenly, however, the murky gloom was shot through with beams of light, and a rout of savages, wild and bloody, filled the wide cave beneath us. Some of them carried rude torches, and others had various sorts of back-burdens, which they cast down in the corners. I gat a gliff of one of these, and though in battle I had often seen things grim and butcherly, my heart now sprang to my mouth, so that I had well-nigh fainted with loathing. But I commanded myself, and thrust me before Nell, who from where she sat could only see the flickering skarrow of the torches upon the roof and walls — for the place seemed now, after the former darkness of Egypt, fairly bursting with light.¹

By this light and the flames of a fire which is lit, more of the place can be seen.

The cavern was very high in the midst, but at the sides not so high — rather like the sloping roof of an attic which slants quickly down from the roof tree. But that which took my eye amid the smoke were certain vague shapes, as it had been the limbs of human beings, shrunk and blackened, which hung in rows on either side of the cave. At first it seemed that my eyes must certainly deceive me, for the reek drifted hither and thither, and made the rheum flow from them with

¹The Grey Man, XL, pp 270-271.
its bitterness. But after a little study of these wall adornments, I could make nothing else of it, than that these poor relics, which hung in rows from the roof of the cave like hams and black puddings set to dry in the smoke, were indeed no other than the parched arms and legs of men and women who had once walked the upper earth — but who by misfortune had fallen into the power of this hideous, inconceivable gang of monstrous man-eaters. Then the true interpretation of all the tales that went floating about the countryside, and which I had hitherto deemed wholly vain and fantastical, burst upon me.¹

In 1896, this must indeed have been a horror; to us, after the real horrors of Belsen, Buchenwald and the gas chambers it must necessarily be less so; but Crockett builds up his details with careful variety and intensity, making his revelation slowly and with growing ugliness. Nothing seems left but merciful death for all, in order to escape the savages. Even today we are startled and delighted with the simplicity with which he frees his characters from their hopeless predicament; the Dominie suddenly has the idea of playing his bagpipes. In that confined and echoing space, with caves honeycombed around them, the sound of the pibroch must indeed have been appalling. Crockett borrowed the idea from a story which Harper quotes from Blackwood's Magazine; two Highland pipers sheltered from the weather in a cave "of incredible dimensions" in the side of Cairnsmore-of-Fleet which unknown to them was the headquarters and store-room of Billy Marshall and his band of gipsy outlaws, and were still there when the outlaws returned.

¹The Grey Man, XL, p. 272.
The pipers expected nothing but death from the ruthless gipsies. One of them, however, being a man of some presence of mind, called to his neighbour instantly to fill his bags (doing the same himself), and to strike up a pibroch with all his might and main. Both pipes accordingly at once commenced a most tremendous onset, the cave with all its echoes pealing back the "Pibroch of Donuil Dhu" or such like. At this very unexpected and terrific reception -- the yelling of the bagpipes, issuing from the bowels of the earth, just at the moment the gipsies entered the cave -- Billy Marshall, with all his band, precipitately fled in the greatest consternation, and from that night never again would go near their favourite haunt, believing that the blast they had heard proceeded from the devil or some of his agents. ¹

Sawny Bean and his crew react as did Billy Marshall; Launce and his three companions march triumphantly forth and are saved.

After the escape comes the trial of the Mures, father and son, at the Bailzie Court of Carrick held at Girvan, for the murder of Sir Thomas and the strangling of young Dalrymple, which Marjorie has witnessed. She tells her story well; Crockett extracts an additional grue from her account of how Dalrymple's body refused to be disposed of but was always driven by the wind and the sea back to shore -- once more variations on Robertson. ² At last they took him far out to sea in a boat and cast him overboard, but their doom was still with them, as Marjorie testifies,

For there, not thirty yards behind the boat, and following strongly in our wake, as a stark swimmer might do, now tumbling and leaping in the wash of the seas and now lunging forward like a boat that is towed, was the murdered boy himself. And thus he

¹Rambles in Galloway XX, pp 124-125.
²Robertson, pp 243-256.
followed with a smile on his face, or what looked like it in the uncertain light of the morning.\footnote{The Grey Man, XLIV, p. 299}

Her evidence seems to have condemned them, but Auchendrayne has a dramatic trump card; he produces King James VI himself, baggy breeches and shambling walk, who declares in lengthy learned words that Auchendrayne, a trusted councillor and a good historian, cannot possibly be guilty. Their accusers instead are under suspicion, but as they are led off to prison the crowd accompanying them is faced with the drowned body of William Dalrymple washed up on the road along the seashore, with Auchendrayne's kerchief still about his swollen neck and a rope that could be identified as Bannatyne's. The final test comes when the younger Mure is forced to touch the body as part of the medieval ordeal for a murderer, and blood wells out of the boy's mouth.\footnote{"The Blood Test", Ayrshire Tales, pp 306-323. In the course of this narrative, Robertson also mentions the case of Philip Stanfield, accused of the murder of his father, Sir James Stanfield of Newmills; his guilt was shown by his father's dead body bleeding when he touched it. Crockett's historical romance Little Anna Mark (London 1900) bases the first half of its plot on this case.}

His father prudently rides off, but Launcelot pursues on the King's horse; unfortunately he is incautious enough to be taken prisoner by the villain and finds himself once more in Sawny Bean's cave. But Marjorie and Nell
remember the way; they lead the rescuers, and all is well, with Sawny Bean and all his clan captured, John Mure, the Grey Man, also -- and Launcelot in possession of the treasure-chest. After trial, both the Mures and all the savages are executed; Marjorie takes a curious pity on her husband and moves him to repentance before his execution, then, her worldly task done, she dies herself, with visions at the end not of conventional Victorian angels but, more cheerfully perhaps, of Gilbert Kennedy of Bargany. Launcelot is in favour with the Earl because he has told no one of the treasure; he is in favour with the King and is made a knight for his bravery; and he and Nell are married by Maister Robert Bruce, minister of Edinburgh.

Crockett has managed the ending with skill and care, knitting up his various threads into a firm and happy conclusion. For once he seems to have forgotten nothing. All the family of Culzean are present at the wedding, as well as Kate the grieve's daughter, Launcelot's father, the Earl of Cassillis and his lady. The Dominie has promised to come and help educate their children when the time comes. Peace has come to Carrick with the downfall of Auchendrayne the contriver of evil; the Union of the Crowns has taken place and new wealth and new ideas are filling the country -- or so it seems to Launce and Nell, riding home to Kirrieoch on a spring day. There is a suggestion through Maister Robert Bruce and his disagreement with the King that trouble may lie ahead, but only a suggestion. A truly tidy and classic conclusion (for
Crockett) is reached at the very end; we leave Launce and Nell just after he has on his mother's suggestion "read the chapter" in his father's temporary absence, from the very Bible, burnt and stained, that Launce as a boy had seen the Grey Man throw into the flames at the burning of the tower of Ardstinchar.

Many varied events have been covered by the story, many moods and effects, many places have been described, from the castles and towers of the Ayrshire coast to the airy heights of Ailsa Craig with the seabirds eternally crying round it. Crockett's Launcelot has taken us through them all in his strong unhurried style, conveying his own personality and the flavour of his times with likeable dexterity, and we are satisfied.

The Grey Man is a more assured and better written book than either The Raiders or Men of the Moss Hags; it is more even and sustained in its effects; it unites history and romance without offending probability very grossly. For many reasons, one can think it the best-shaped book Crockett ever wrote. It is certainly the one which requires least explanation and apology.
CHAPTER 12

Crockett and the Contemporary Scene

We have seen how heavily dependent Crockett was in his historical fiction upon sources other than himself for plots — upon the John Nicholsons, the William Robertsonsons, the John Macmillans, written historians and verbal passers-on of tradition who provided him with narrative frameworks. Given such a framework, he could fill it with vivid detail, aural, tactile and pictorial, and often improve on the original. We have also seen how he was inclined, even when using such material, to add irresponsibly elements of his own devising, sometimes with peculiar results.

When he came to writing of his own times, there were no such frameworks available. His Galloway boyhood had been quiet and uneventful so that of itself it provided few readymade plots; when he came to write Kit Kennedy he had to add to his authentic memories a theatrical structure of villainy which he was unable to make credible; he could write convincingly of Cleg Kelly because Cleg was part of his experience, but only in a string of anecdotes; his wildly improbable ending clashed ludicrously with Cleg's reality. George Eliot — another possible candidate for the title of English Kailyarder — began her writing of fiction in the same way, by using parts of her own local knowledge as the framework for sensational imaginary developments; the three stories that make up
Scenes of Clerical Life\(^1\) are based on events and places that belonged to her Evangelical youth in Warwickshire; she knew the prototype of the Rev. Amos Barton but added his pathetically long-suffering wife and the improbable Countess; she knew the mansion depicted as Cheverel Manor and its owners, but added the Italian waif adopted because of her beauty and her singing who fell victim to a stage villain's wiles and would have stabbed him as he waited for her in the Rookery if he had not died of a convenient heart attack; she knew of the evangelical clergyman who courageously faced opposition at Nuneaton but added most of the detail about Janet the reformed gin-drinker and her brutal husband Dempster and the melodramatic happiness of the end of the story.\(^2\) The difference between George Eliot and Crockett is that she developed from these crude early fictions to the sober and sobering philosophy which produced Middlemarch. Crockett had not time to do this; more fundamentally, he had not the type of mind which was interested in expressing large all-embracing ideas. He was not trying to supply panoramic studies of movements in a wide canvas; in The Banner of Blue, which through

\(^1\)George Eliot: Scenes of Clerical Life (London 1858).

two Galloway families, the aristocratic Glendonwyns and the humble Glendinnings, deals with some of the consequences of the Disruption in 1843, he states this specifically:

. . . in order that the characters of this history may be seen in their right grouping and relation, and that the reader may remark their motives and compulsions, some hint of these graver issues and deeper movements must be supplied in this place.

Yet because this is no chronicle of events national, no polemic, no special pleading cast into narrative form, but only the life-story of certain undistinguished folk at an eventful and stormy period of Scottish history, if any desire to learn further concerning these weightier matters of the law, to range arguments, to sift evidence, to weigh rights and wrongs, to adjudicate upon results — lo, the books are written. Let him go to them that sell and buy for himself.

A little sea-washed parish, a few lives writ mostly in water, half a score of green mounds ranged round the Kirk above Gower Water — that is all.¹

He has deliberately opted out of anything more philosophical than the narrative of a group of ordinary lives touched for a while by affairs going on at a distance; the affairs themselves he does not propose to examine or portray in detail. It is an unfortunate decision for his reputation, but at least he made it honestly and stood by it. A temperamental optimist, a vigorous extrovert, his notion of fiction stopped short at the "yarn", at what the Saturday Review critics called "a capital tale".

¹ S.R. Crockett: The Banner of Blue (London 1903) V, p. 47. This is an interesting chapter for another reason; in it there occur two paragraphs which W. Robertson Nicoll reproduced almost verbatim in his Obituary of Crockett in the British Weekly, without acknowledgement. He thus conferred upon Crockett the unusual privilege of having written part of his own Obituary.
He lacked the compelling message or philosophy by which daily events could be given universality; he had no urge to synthesise life’s bewildering variety into some intellectual pattern; he was entirely without the vision which could combine simple daily incidents, comic and tragic, into a thoughtful and memorable order. He was the kindly amused ironic commentator, by his own choice a mere romancer, and for this reason his popularity inevitably declined. His public, quite simply, outgrew him, for there was no development, no exploration of the new, to hold their attention.

This is not to say that what he produced was bad, it was merely limited. Within his range, he was capable of fine and striking work, especially if he could find within his own experience or the experience of friends an incident, however small, that could be "worked up" into a lively story. The story which appears in Raiderland as "How the Scholar Came Home" is based on something which happened to his Uncle John of Drumbreck’s brother-in-law, later the Rev. Adam Maxwell of Coatbridge, while he was a student at the Free Church College at Glasgow. The student took a train to Ayr, missed the train back, and decided to walk over the hills to the family farm in the Glenkens. Leaving Ayr in the evening, he walked for a while, slept in the open, wakened in the early morning and walked again, so that he reached home in time for breakfast but was immediately sent out to work in the hay-field by his practical father to whom the hay was of the
first importance. Crockett seized this simple story which must have been one of the familiar family anecdotes, sharpened it by making the student a young schoolboy and added descriptive touches. The Scholar, against his father's wishes, goes to Ayr on a day excursion for the Agricultural Show, dressed in his best Sunday clothes and full of excitement.

Think how at junctions and waiting-stations he watched the leisurely manipulations of greasy engine-drivers and grimy firemen. Never before had he been on a railway, and even now he can recall the slack drip-drip of the great leathern hose through which the engine had just taken its Gargantuan draught, the alert stiff-jointed armature of the signals up in the sky, as fresh and gay as paint could make them.²

Reaching Ayr, he passes by the Show and makes for the seashore, the shells, the rounded pebbles — "he had actually never smelt salt water before". He takes time to visit Burns' Cottage but not the Show:

Somewhere in the distance he heard the mool and brool of the showyard. He resented the very aroma as it came to him down the wind. He saw gaily-dressed girls and solid country men in black clothes and wide-awake hats of shepherd shape moving steadily to the one goal. But for him — why, Greenan Castle, the wide pleasance of the shore, the tang of the seaweed in his nostrils, the rasping saltness of the pebbles when you licked them to bring out the colours.²

Crockett is investing young Adam Maxwell with his own remembered sensations. We feel his fascinated interest

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¹ Anecdote told by Miss Nan McKnight of Dunscore, niece of the Rev. Adam Maxwell and of Mrs John Crockett. Her testimony emerged in conversation, and is the more valuable since she had not known of the retelling of the tale in Raiderland.

² Raiderland, p. 12.
in the working of railways; those of us who remember the railside watertanks and the long leather tubes which filled up the tanks of the steam engines will appreciate the exactness of the "slack drip-drip of the great leathern hose" -- he has caught the essence of something which no longer exists but comes from the time when railways were new and bright like modern airports, prosperous with new paint and flowerbeds. We see and hear the bustle of an old-fashioned country Show when the men and girls wore their best clothes, however uncomfortable, and came from far and near to the great event. We remember, especially through the "rasping saltness of the pebbles when you licked them to bring out the colours", the simple excitements of visits to the seaside. The rest of the story fills in details in the same way -- the friendly woman who gives the Scholar milk and porridge, the missing of the train, the discovery (note the exact technicality) that the excursion ticket is valid only for the train he has missed, the herd who tells him the way to Carsphairn, the lift to Dalmellington with the old farmer, the long June night during which he walks, sleeps and walks on again until he reaches home, half-sleeping, and is revived with spirits, something with a "nasty taste and a burning feeling in his mouth" and is sent out to the hayfield to teach him not to miss trains.

Elder Brother William, with a careful eye upon the coming of his father, made him a lair behind a cole

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¹Raiderland, p. 18.
of hay. Upon this the Scholar fell down, and passed (even as a candle is blown out) instantly into dreamless sleep.\footnote{Raiderland, p. 18.}

The father, with a good idea of what is going on, remains on the hill with his sheep; he wants the lesson to be learned, but not too sternly, and keeps out of the way so that the Scholar can make up his lost sleep.

It is a pleasant unpretentious little story, illustrative of childhood, country life and the values of the hard-working farming community; the vivid details are what make it live. But -- and this is the crucial point -- without Adam Maxwell and his narrative, Crockett would not have had the opportunity to recall and use these details. He is always at his best when he has an exterior source; when he is left to himself to invent a plot out of his own imagination, he flounders helplessly, without judgement. He can describe a character with vigour and sharpness, but without extraneous help he does not know what to do with him. He can give us scenes of immediate vividness, but cannot devise convincing machinery to provide a satisfactory foreground action to these scenes. He can render sound and movement with admirable exactness and realism, but when it comes to the story of which these sounds and movements are part, he too often devises childish structures of old bones and glue which collapse in silly ineptitude. Anecdotes he delights in; to some extent he was always a writer of short stories -- most of his longer
books are compact of short stories strung together. We have seen how the geography of *The Raiders* very largely decided how its plot would go; in the same way places he had visited, streets and shops with which he was familiar, trains puffing through country stations, incidents that had happened to his friends and relatives come into and in a way determine the movement of his stories of nineteenth and early twentieth century life. He could describe and suggest an atmosphere with directness and strength; he could not plot.

Embedded in even the worst of his books are vignettes of life in his own time. He was interested in and frequently visited the Wellington Reformatory Farm School near Penicuik, where delinquent boys were trained by discipline and hard work for what was hoped would be a useful life on their release; and a Reformatory Farm School appears in *Kid McGhie*, a school where

"as into a mill, boys went in at one end marked with the brand of the law, and came out at the other good soldiers, brave sailors, and, in especial, excellent colonists."

He has seen and describes the dormitory and bunk beds, the barred windows and naked lights, the boys planting

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potatoes in "lazy beds" and swabbing the floors. He knows the boys smoke illicitly, fight among themselves and from time to time are flogged, deservedly; he sketches in lightly but unsentimentally the kind of lad who is to be found in such an institution. The fact that a wicked master plots against another and contrives that one of the worst inmates burns down the building is just part of Crockett's plot. His first-hand experience of the Mauricewood pit disaster in 1889 enables him to describe just such a disaster in *Vida*\(^1\) with detailed vividness, knowing the technical terms, the tally-boys, the sinkers, the gate-boys, the long dip called the Dook, the pitprops and brattice-cloths and beam engines, all the courage and danger of being a miner and a miner's wife. The acting-manager sets Number 2 pitshaft on fire because the heroine has rejected him -- that again is just part of his plot.

He loved typewriters and at one time possessed six, bought from Peck and Company in Picardy Place -- Hammond typewriters which had shuttles which changed the typefaces for typing in Spanish or French;\(^2\) in *Ione March* he tells how his heroine takes a typist's job in London at a pound a week with a typewriting company where

> in the hushed but busy office a score of clicking machines were being driven along at different rates

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\(^1\)S.R. Crockett: *Vida, or the Iron Lord of Kirktown* (London 1907). This book is hereafter referred to as *Vida*.

\(^2\)Information supplied by the late Mr James Milroy.
of speed, each shrilling its own peculiar note of irritation as busy girlish fingers tripped lightly over the keys.\(^1\)

Ione’s work at the office and her relationship with the other typists are real and vividly handled; her improbable love affair and the dying hero whom she rescues by strong-minded defiance of convention are just the plot once more.

Railways, his permanent delight and interest, creep in frequently. He had, after all, worked as a booking clerk during student vacations and knew their ways both as employee and passenger.\(^2\) We have seen him describe them in *Cleg Kelly*. In *The Seven Wise Men* the Rev. John Davidson and the bank agent from Longwood meet for the first time beside "the domed hall with the tesselated pavement"\(^3\) now no longer at Waverley. In *Sandy’s Love Affair*\(^4\) the early chapters describe a journey by train from Galloway to London, the hero supervising the comfort of the two Glendonwyn girls and showing himself an expert in handling porters and refreshment room attendants. The hero and heroine of *Princess Penniless*\(^5\) have happy

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1. *Ione March*, XII, pp 101-102.
2. Information supplied by the late Mr James Milroy.
5. S.R. Crockett: *Princess Penniless* (London 1908) I, pp 4-7; XXI, pp 131-135; XXX, pp 195-198. This story was serialised in the *British Weekly* as *The World Well Lost*. Hereafter it is referred to as *Princess Penniless*. 
childhood memories of the cinder paths that lead up to Green Lane Station high on the moors and of watching the trains go rumbling by; in the cinder paths he records a by-product of railways now vanished for ever. In *Kid McGhie* cheerful railway workers, to oblige a friend, run the villain Algernon Hammer "doon to Sant Margaret's" where "they'll rivet a man up in a biler for twa gallon o' Usher's best".¹

They took him down in that intractable grey of the morning, which is darker than the dark of midnight, through a murk of tunnels, past the yellow wink of many gas lamps, the brassy reek of naphtha flares, to where there were digging operations going on for the new station. They left the electrics far behind, the high-bunched kaleidoscopes of the signals standing long aloft in the west. They delivered Algernon Hammer, shaking and much afraid, in a darksome place, to a gang of brawny giants who worked under a naked arc light which changes its "pitch" every quarter of a minute. These men ran little waggons into a black hole, a wet, greasy, unsatisfactory hole in the ground.²

The railway workers are real and their conditions thoroughly realistic; the unfortunate Algernon Hammer and his unlikely contrivances are just part of Crockett's plot.

It surely cannot be said that Crockett was either too sentimental or too nostalgically rural to record contemporary developments or urban scenes. He may not have used them wisely -- the number of villains or otherwise inconvenient characters who go mad in order to extricate their author from a plot that has got out of hand is

¹ *Kid McGhie*, XV, p. 193.
noteworthy — but he was grimly aware of their ugliness, their rawness, at times their strange beauty. His fault was not over-softness but on the contrary sensationalism, a fault which he shared with many of his contemporaries from Conan Doyle to Wilkie Collins, from Dickens to Hardy; Crockett never contrived anything quite as solemnly odd and unlikely as Hardy's "Barbara of the House of Grebe".1

At times — in Cinderella,2 a retelling of the fairy-story in terms of a poor cousin from Galloway who is imported to London to act as unpaid governess to the Torphichan-Stirling children in Empress Gate, London, and in The Loves of Miss Anne,3 a lively tale of an heiress, her maid and her assorted suitors — Crockett is able to couch a whole book in light-hearted open melodrama purely for entertainment, writing well and amusingly without any suggestion that these things are to be taken seriously. He offers caricatures of Galloway ministers and elders and of Anglo-Scots aristocrats with delightful gaiety, making full use of contemporary and sometimes still existing social prejudices. Many Scots Presbyterians

2 S.R. Crockett: Cinderella (London 1901). This book is hereafter referred to as Cinderella.
3 S.R. Crockett: The Loves of Miss Anne (London 1904). This book is hereafter referred to as Miss Anne.
still find Roman Catholics preferable to members of what they call the "English Church" with its rituals and its ceremonies; it is to them a half-way house, and for that reason less to be respected than more honest and extreme adherence to the errors of the Church of Rome. Crockett plays with this prejudice, half-seriously, half in amusement. His impish humour enjoys mockery and flickers through these books in a most infectious way. In spite of the wicked uncle's machinations which involve the heroine of Cinderella in an Old Bailey trial on a trumped-up charge of stealing a ruby (he has of course stolen all the rubies himself) and the drunken orgies of the heir in The Loves of Miss Anne, going to the dogs in the time-honoured fashion, the happy ending is in sight from the start. They are well-constructed romances with a delightful late-Victorian period flavour and crisp touches of social observation which lend an agreeable tartness.

Sir Sylvanus did not answer directly. He was holding his head a little more erect than usual. It was, in fact, the manner he cultivated for addressing his constituents. This, as it were, released another fold of chin, and was accompanied by that haughty throwing forward of the left knee which one sees in political statues, in company with a togaesque frockcoat and a roll of papers held in the left hand.1

At the age of twenty-four years and under, the Torphichan-Stirling girls had enough beauty and money to be attractive to three-fourths of mankind, enough sense to be tolerable to the other quarter, and what was doubtless a chief factor in rendering the house in Empress Gate an agreeable resort -- the tact to keep their father and mother in the background without appearing to do so.2

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1Cinderella, XXXIII, p. 233.
2Cinderella, XXI, p. 146.
The Ravensnuik door-bell always sounded from top to bottom of the house, and made everyone look out of the window to see if the ringer had fetched away the bell-pull in his hand. In the passages it did not sound so violently but rather squeaked like a line of tucks with wooden wheels that wanted grease. As for the kitchen, where it really did ring, everybody fled with their fingers in their ears at the first jangle. The Ravensnuik door-bell had been put up when bells were bells. Anne swore that it had been the old church bell, which Sir Tempest bought cheap when they got a new one in the belfry. And I saw nothing unlikely in the suggestion, for Sir Tempest was not only a careful man but one of the chief heritors of the parish.¹

The Reverend Septimus Gilfurly was a very different sort of pastor from our orthodox Mr. McMachar or good Mr. Heatherbrod from Drums — different indeed from any that we had seen or heard tell of in Galloway. If you had told this Mr. Gilfurly that he looked exactly 'like one of the higher clergy of the Anglican communion,' you would have pleased him all down his back. If you had added 'dipped in grease' you might not have pleased him so much, but you would have told the exact truth.

The Reverend Septimus desired to carry himself Anglicanly. He also wished to marry a fortune, which, as his tastes were expensive, would certainly be an advantage — to his creditors. He intoned the prayers as much as he dared, with the book open. For he had a Session Clerk who was a close-mouthed, watchful man, and Kirk Sessions in Midlothian are public bodies not to be trifled with. His greatest affliction was that the Kirk of Easter Hippens possessed an American harmonium instead of a pipe-organ. Septimus had it on the best authority that the Kingdom of God would never really be advanced in Easter Hippens so long as the service of praise was led by an organ made at Brattlesboro', Vt.²

Crockett manages his Duchesses and Lords, his country balls and London balls with remarkable dexterity — his eccentric lady who bullies her "scientific Scotch gardener"

¹Miss Anne, XI, p. 156.
²Miss Anne, XI, p. 164.
and reads "full-flavoured French novels which lay about on tables and couches, mixed with Dean Hole "On Roses" and copies of The Gardener's Chronicle, his pompous social-climbing doctor who sits at his roll-top desk "banked in with an array of serried pigeon-holes that rose above his head and extended on either side of him, as if the distinguished philanthropist were about to soar to tracts unknown on French-polished mahogany pinions". His manner reminds one of E.F. Benson and of 'Saki', except that in the background and as counterpoint to the society scenes there are always the woods and moors, the bookish absent-minded ministers and the argumentative elders and servants of Galloway, portrayed with Crockett's distinctive humour. The stories run on with an energy and enjoyment which carry one along pleasantly.

These suggest that in Crockett there were many possibilities which in better circumstances and with different publishers he could have explored freely. Unfortunately right from the beginning of his career he was linked with religious periodicals and publishing houses. The Christian Leader, out of all the newspapers and periodicals to which he had contributed during his student life, was the one which gave a home to his first sketches and short stories. W. Robertson Nicoll, editor of the British Weekly, the Expositor, the Bookman, and other ventures of Hodder and Stoughton, suggested that he

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1 *Cinderella*, XVI, p. 178.
2 *Cinderella*, XLIX, p. 347.
collect some of his pieces and send them to a publisher, and that publisher was T. Fisher Unwin, who had been Hodder and Stoughton's London salesman before setting up on his own in 1882.\(^1\) Woman and Home which published many of his short stories after his first success was another Hodder and Stoughton enterprise, edited by Annie S. Swan. By Crockett's time Hodder and Stoughton had moved away from its early years as a firm which, although it also published secular books which were likely to sell, tended to concentrate on the moral, the improving and the religious; the second generation of its managers and editors were more liberal-minded;

in the interests of expansion Hodder-Williams moved into general publishing with a large list of cheap novels, but the firm remained under the stigma of being a "religious" publisher because of its backlist.\(^2\)

Some of this stigma attached itself inevitably to Crockett; he was never as milk-and-watery as some of their authors like Annie S. Swan and the two Hockings but he was identified in the public mind and the minds of serious critics with this kind of author. Good Words which serialised Man of the Moss Hags was a magazine of the same earnest type. For a while, when the Cornhill, the Windsor and the Graphic took him up, there seemed to be a


chance of his escaping, and the first three of his books for children were handled by Gardner, Darton and Company, specialists in the field, who could provide the delightful illustrations of Gordon Browne. Had he been able to consolidate this secular connection and free himself from the religious press entirely, it would have been better for him and would almost certainly have improved his work. But he was never a rich man; Lord Guthrie in 1906 remarked confidently of Ian Maclaren "I don't suppose he's made so much money as Barrie, but more than Crockett". He was probably right. Circumstances, the need for haste, the necessity of quick returns to provide for his wife and four children, perhaps the habits into which he had fallen while writing for this moral and improving market whose literary standards were not so very high, combined to fetter him; he slipped back to the British Weekly and the People's Friend (in whose pages Cinderella and Vida were serialised) and never fully developed the talent for lighthearted historical romances and mildly satirical comedy which he undoubtedly possessed.

He was eternally restless as an author, possibly because of the pressure under which he had to write. He must always push on to something different. His light melodrama was successful but he could not stay with it; instead he moved into stories where the melodrama is taken

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1 Robert Low Orr: Lord Guthrie. A Memoir (London 2nd ed. 1923) p. 158.
seriously, not being content to remain a Scottish Benson or 'Saki'. These fail utterly. We can accept improbabilities lightheartedly in comedy where they do not matter; they ruin serious tales which touch on tragedy.

Kid McGhie begins with the boy's father producing a horse pistol and telling his nine-year-old son that he is going to kill them both -- death is better than trying to live with his wife Mag McGhie, the boy's mother, who is about to come out of prison yet once more. Kid McGhie very sensibly runs away, leaving his father to kill himself, and embarks on a career of crime under the supervision of his mother's new husband Knifer Jackson in Edinburgh. He becomes involved with the saintly Mr Molesay, city missionary of the Cowgate, and another family of McGhies, three girls whose father is conspiring to prove that he is chief of the Clan McGhie (the real chief of the Clan being the Kid) and to make his daughter Patricia the heiress of the Boreham-Egham fortune and the wife of Lord Athabasca, a Colonial peer who has made a fortune in Canada. The Kid is caught and sent to a reformatory whose kindly assistant superintendent is the son of Lord Athabasca and a Red Indian squaw. This young man, Hearne Mackenzie, is hopelessly in love with Patricia McGhie who is betrothed to his father. The reformatory is set on fire, and Hearne rushes to his father's nearby mansion to obtain help, but even "the call of the Sioux
on the night trail"¹ is not sufficient to rouse his father, Lord Athabasca, who sits in his great chair with a knife in his throat, murdered. Hearne is arrested for the murder; the news brings Patricia rushing to him; and in the end he is cleared. Knifer Jackson is arrested for the murder, is tried, sentenced and about to be hanged in the Calton Jail, when a magic lantern show in the Cowgate so moves the wife of the Boreham-Egham's steward Algernon Hammer that she confesses that her husband was the murderer all the time. This is only part of the "plot" which wanders through a large cast of which there is no time here to make mention; it is a relief to have Kid McGhie extracted from the melee in the final chapters and making a success of a career in Canada as a mining engineer, with a reformed Knifer Jackson as his faithful foreman. The astonishing thing is that so many of the individual scenes have so much reality -- the Cowgate mission scenes, the railway scenes when Algernon Hammer is kidnapped, the atmosphere of the reformatory. Crockett is borrowing from Dickens and trying to write a novel of sordid crime and violence -- the "training school" for young criminals is a copy of Fagin's in Oliver Twist and all its students have read Dickens' novel and think themselves much superior to that "soft" -- but he lets his plot tangle like bindweed.

Vida is equally improbable. A rich ironmaster and

¹Kid McGhie, XIX, p. 264.
mine owner, having failed to have his wife incarcerated for life in the Thorsby County Asylum, sends her off with his young daughter Vida for a cruise round the north coast of Scotland in a ship belonging to one of his companies; he has told the captain to scuttle the ship at some suitable point and abandon the two women. Vida's mother dies, but she herself is saved by two elderly lighthouse-keepers; they regard her as a foster-daughter and for five years look after her with loving care; one of them gives up the lighthouse for her sake and becomes storekeeper to her father's mine, living with her in a little cottage at her father's estate entrance, unsuspected by the father.

The lighthouse-keepers, one an Irish Catholic, the other a Scottish Presbyterian, an elder of the kirk, are characters who first appeared in Crockett's *Sir Toady Crusoe*, in those days looking after the Muckle Ross light off the Mull of Galloway but apparently promoted since to the Wolf Skerry Light off the coast of Ayrshire. There is much plotting and contriving and three separate pairs of contrasting lovers. The pit is set on fire by Vida's father's sinister middle-European secretary who wants to marry Vida and in this way have a chance to inherit her father's money. Rejected, he sets the pit on fire while she is down among the workings being shown round by one of her foster-fathers. She escapes and ultimately, after

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1S.R. Crockett: *Sir Toady Crusoe* (London 1905).
complications too numerous to relate, marries a mining engineer whom her influence has turned into a Man, is reconciled to her paralysed but contrite father, and helps her husband run a coalmine on the Solway coast somewhere near Kippford, to replace her father's fortune which the sinister secretary has made away with. He is none the better for it in the end, as he is killed as just vengeance by another middle-European character who has been pursuing him for years on account of his family, wiped out by the secretary in some little local difficulty in the Balkans.

_Princess Penniless_ tells the love story of Hubert Salveson, the son of a rich father infatuated with books on prophecy and diagrams of the end of the world; he will not hear of either of his sons working, though one is a lawyer and the other, Hubert, a doctor. Hubert is in love with Edith Dillingham, the daughter of a working-class free-thinker in Thorsby, an "Out and Outer"; she refuses to think of marrying a man who does not earn his own living. Hubert persuades James Pritchard, the owner of a large engineering works, to let him set up a clinic in the yard. Mr Pritchard approves of him, and in order to help the couple to marry he rents to them the house at Old Thorsby Quay where he and his long-dead wife started their married life -- it has stood empty but lovingly cared for by Mr Pritchard for years. But the man who lives next door to the Dillinghams is secretly in love with Edith and has poisoned his wife so as to be free to marry her. He twice tries to kill Hubert, and succeeds by accident in
poisoning Mr Pritchard. Hubert loses his position as works doctor because the Pritchard heir has no time for the welfare of the workers, and worse still, on the day of their wedding he is arrested for Mr Pritchard's murder, a charge made likely by the fact that Mr Pritchard has left the coveted Thorsby Quay properties to Hubert and Edith, including his diaries. Fortunately Edith's father, the "Out and Outer", breaks open the safe and reads the diaries, which clear Hubert's name. The real murderer tells Edith of his mad passion for her, and is about to blow the pair of them up with dynamite when help arrives and throws the dynamite into the river, where it explodes harmlessly. Hubert is free, and Edith organises him into setting up a practice of his own in Dunham Street, which prosper so well that he has to take an assistant. Edith wears herself out dispensing and keeping the books, and has to have complete quiet before her son is born; this she finds high up on the moors above Thorsby, in Station Cottage near Green Lane Station. One day as Hubert cycles home to Station Cottage, he is set on by thieves looking for the deeds of Old Quay House, agents it is suspected of the Pritchard family. He survives the chloroforming, however, and that very night his son is born. Hubert's father is reconciled by a grandson and for a while all is well, but Edith becomes obsessed by the idea that she is ignorant and uneducated, especially in comparison with Hubert's cousin May who has been to a good school. She reads works on history and architecture
and Sir Thomas More, and becomes so depressed that she takes her baby down to the railway line so that they may die together when the train comes by. Fortunately May arrives, on the point of eloping with Hubert's assistant, Dr Larkins, and Edith is made happy once more. Wise as always, she decrees that they return to live in Dunham Street and make peace with the Pritchards by giving them back the Old Quay properties. Her happiness is complete when Hubert confesses that books on history and Sir Thomas More send him to sleep, and that if anyone married above him, it was he.

It is sad to see Crockett racking his brains to find ever newer and more lively plots to keep him in the minds of publishers and readers and approaching nearer and nearer to the crime thriller of our own time. Despite their sensational plots, these books represent a genuine attempt to deal with contemporary life. Many of them are set in an imaginary county Bordershire, in the north of England, wherein lie Thorsby and East Dene which seem to represent Newcastle and Gateshead, part country and part industrialised seaport, both of them very far from the Kailyard. Crockett tackles industrialism, crime, snobbery, poverty, murder, blackmail, the clash between rich and poor, as they are exemplified in Edwardian England and Scotland. We have seen how he can describe railways; he can also describe coal mines, engineering works, working-class back streets financed by Building Societies. He shows us that new invention the motor car; Vida's father has a Mercedes
and so have the Pritchards, nicknamed a "teuf-teuf" or "touf-touf", preserving a fragment of Edwardian slang. Edith Dillingham's financial cleverness is a sharp picture of a working-class girl, who has had to count pennies and make meals out of very little, taking over a well-to-do young man and showing him how to live on two pounds a week. Women come well out of Crockett as a rule; he shows them as the efficient courageous sensible sex far more able to endure pain and face facts than their amiable but vague husbands -- possibly influenced by the knowledge that the majority of his readers would be women. _Lone Match_ depicts a modern novelty in 1899; an American girl, independent and unconventional, settling in London to earn her own living as a typist (in advance of Barrie's _The Twelve Pound Look_) and not only making a success of it but running her ineffectual husband's life and turning him into a successful author, taking care of details such as correcting his grammar. Even in the most flawed of these books there is an odd kind of life which keeps the reader interested even although distressed by loose ends and quick transitions. And there is honest realism.

We have seen the Pleasance tenements in _Cleg Kelly_; they are in _Kid McGhie_ also.

A cliff-like face of grimy gray stone, broken by rows upon rows of small windows with small panes, many of them broken, stuffed with rags, and mended with paper. Seven and eight stories the rule, ten and eleven the exception. Four families, sometimes eight, on each landing. These landings lit by day through one narrow arrow slit in the tower of the turnpike stair -- by night not lit at all. Thirty to sixty families in all, exclusive of lodgers and casuals, all
lived in that grimy barrack, all going to and fro upon their occasions up and down that winding staircase, indescribable in its filth. A faint, keen odour of packed humanity grew more and more insupportable as you mounted higher, which you did, holding on to a greasy rope, stanchioned to the wall. Children swarmed under-foot at all stages of the ascent, and it was a constant miracle how more of them did not tumble over, and so achieve (which was the best thing for them) Nirvana at the earliest possible age.

Some did, and were happy ever after. The others survived and were both sorry for it themselves and made others sorry also.¹

There is no sentimentality here, but rather the quiet downright reportage of a social worker, like Mr Molesay who has few illusions about his charges.

... with his chin buried in the raised collar of his worn overcoat, Mr. Molesay waited on the wind-thrashed quays of the great Abbotsford Station, under the changeful bluish dither of the electrics, for the train due from the south at 6.15 a.m.

There was a man to be hanged aloft yonder in the big quadrangle of the prison, and little Mr. Molesay had been most of the night up with him. Already curious folk were arriving from different parts of the city, perching on rails and walls to see the black flag go up as St. Giles tolled his eight strokes, when a man's strong-beating life would go out like an over-snuffed candle.

But as to that Mr. Molesay had now no care. The man up there, the man who had done that thing, knew all that Mr. Molesay knew. And if he abode with him he might be tempted "to lean on the creature," as Mr. Molesay expressed it, instead of passing on his way to find himself face to face with the Forgive of sins concerning whom Mr. Molesay had told him. Nevertheless, Mr. Molesay, adrift on the cold quays, where an east wind, dry and withering, seemed almost to blow the solid freestone flagging underfoot into grains of sand, sent a prayer up in the direction of the Calton Prison.

Then he bent himself as best he might to help the

¹Kid McGhie, IV, pp 49-50.
next of human kind who needed him. This was Patricia.1

The lonely figure on the station platform might be a character from Raymond Chandler under the harsh lights and shadows; the black flag rising above the Calton Jail gives a picture of a vanished Edinburgh and its customs; and Mr Molesay's kindly yet experienced going on to the next problem once he has done all he can for the present one is convincingly professional.

Professional too is his account of the lantern lecture; who but Crockett would describe it from behind the lantern, in a gossipy digression which introduces it through its operators?

Now, to conduct lantern lectures is not so simple as it looks. "A few remarks about the pictures will not do. No more will a sermon with pauses for the flashing on of disconnected scenes which only distract the attention of the audience. Hand-coloured pictures only and these of the finest. That is "the tip." Above all, there must be a man, a first-class professional, or an amateur fully equal to a professional, at the lantern. There must be no mistakes. At a pathetic moment it is absolutely fatal if the Prodigal Son comes in serenely sixteen feet high and -- upside down!

But Mr. Molesay had no fears. All would go well. For was not Charlie Haddon, the best man in Edinburgh, behind the lens. It was yet in the early days of lanterns, and audiences were not surfeited with them. At least Cowgate audiences were not -- and certainly not with slides like those of Mr. Brown, evangelist enthusiast of lantern photography. Such slides as his could not be bought, and as Haddon flashed each upon the screen Mr. Brown stood at his elbow, and his heart beat fast, half with good-will for the cause, and half with a kind of motherly fear that he might see the fatal spreading crack which tells that the heat has been too great at the condenser.

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1 Kid McGhie, XIV, pp 187-188.
2 Kid McGhie, XXVIII, p. 376.
Hubert's sensations on leaving the engineering yard for the comparative quiet of the street are neatly noted, and also the social distinction which the doctor had to observe.

Never had the world appeared so bright and wholesome a place to Hubert Salveson as that morning of May when, at nine o'clock, he lifted his "topper" from the box in which it reposed, gave it a brush with his arm, and went out into the obliterating silence of the streets. They were busy enough streets, too -- workaday streets, with Tom Hime's shop, Tom Hime's foreman with the white teeth and Tom Hime's apprentice, all fulfilling various functions. Carts passed laden to the market, or rattled away empty from it. Noisy enough in all conscience. But coming out the clash and thunder of the yard, the sharp din of hammers, the graver boom of mallets, the shriek of inter-crossing and short-tempered "bunt-about" engines, it seemed to Hubert Salveson as if he had been suddenly stricken deaf.

Before going out he had, truth to tell, hesitated a little. Then, obeying a sudden professional impulse of correction, he had put on his frock-coat, and taken the tall hat out of the big hat-box. . . He made the sacrifice with pain. But he was no fool, this new, self-reliant surgeon, born in a night out of the fainéant who so lately had been Hubert Salveson of the Manor, waiter on dead men's shoes.

He knew that so long as he wore a straw hat and a tweed jacket, the men and, what is much more, their wives would never receive him as verily "the doctor." Concerning this Thorsby has no hesitations. No high hat -- no right doctor!  

Crockett is aware of pollution and the havoc which industrial advances wreak.

As Phil Calmont went home that night . . . he paused and looked at the dreary mounds of refuse and shale spread out everywhere, the complexity of level crossings and multi-coloured railway signals, the tall stagings of the pits, with swiftly spinning wheels,whirling and reversing as they wound and unwound the endless steel cords. Phil had the gift of imagination, and he could

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Princess Penniless, XVIII, pp 111-112.
see beneath him the braes of Kirktown before all this came to pass — the quiet old-fashioned white-washed hamlet, the serried rows of the corn stocks, the shy questing bairns with their mouths stained with blackberry juice in the autumn — all now passed away to give place to rows on rows of brick-built houses, each exactly the pattern of all the others, in which lived the "employees" of the Incubus Company — gardenless, pleasureless, almost crushed out of the sight of heaven by the vast mounds of debris which represented the tailings of the Romer millions.1

But it is noticeable that these passages lack the condensation and power of Crockett's best work. They are loose, often conversational, and sound as if they had been written hastily and were the first words that came to their author's mind. No man can write more than sixty books in twenty years and maintain a high standard; he cannot take time to produce masterpieces even if he be an Anthony Trollope in temperament, equable and steady, which Crockett was not. In his haste, he lost his critical judgement; one of the saddest things in these later, more trivial books is his tendency to let his characters talk to one another in floods of commonplace fashionable slang, in the hope perhaps that by being in this way up to date he could inject into his stories the freshness which he must in his heart have known they lacked. If he had stopped to think he would have known that nothing stales and goes dead so quickly as the ephemeral speech-patterns of young men and women; perhaps if he had lived in the mid-fifties of this century he might have found an outlet for the shallower part

1Vida, XVIII, pp 149-150
of his creativity in writing television scripts which by their nature are quick and ephemeral — he could have added many a colourful episode to a Galloway Coronation Street or a Crossroads. As it is, one reads the conversations in Sandy's Love Affair, for example, with a mild historical interest in the passing scene hastily sketched, the stock types of snobbish ladies, brash young cads and vivacious girls, the trifling chatter that passes between them, and feels desperately sorry for the sick man who is turning out this stuff in 1913, the year before his death.

Mistakes abound even in his early works; Meg Kissock is introduced in The Lilac Sunbonnet as the servant maid at Dullarg when she is the servant maid at Craig Ronald; Crockett has perhaps changed his mind about the name of Winsome's farm but has forgotten to make the correction in the early chapters. In The Raiders there is an elementary mistake in timing; the sentence which opens Chapter XIV, "Then for some hours we had peace", is contradicted three pages later when we are told "All this takes a long time to tell, yet the sailing away of the smugglers, and the second attack of the gypsies followed within a few moments of each other." As time goes on, the mistakes become more common; Sheriff Nicoll who sentences Christopher Kennedy has changed his name to Sheriff Macleod when the prisoner leaves hospital. Alistair French who witnessed the wedding of Lilias and Kennedy has become Nick Kennedy when he is produced at the end of the book. MacWalter is described as coming from Sandhaven in Chapter II but has become a
Yorkshire merchant in Chapter XIV. It would be tedious to list all the small but irritating discrepancies, but they exist in every book. Names are used twice over; "Heather Jock" is the name under which Wat Gordon disguises himself as Roger McGhee's gardener in *Men of the Moss Hags*; it is also the name of the packman in *Kit Kennedy*. Alison Begbie appears in *Men of the Moss Hags*,¹ a name surely suggested by Burns,² and disappears again almost immediately. A trustworthy but otherwise totally nondescript man at arms appears in *The Black Douglas* several times and also briefly in *Maid Margaret*; he is called Andro the Penman and must be a personal joke with Andrew C. Penman, friend of Crockett's boyhood. One wonders how many more private pieces of amusement may be tucked away in Crockett's books, lost because there is now no one to recognise them.

Irrelevant private jokes, careless errors, hasty proof reading, marks of an enthusiastic but ill-disciplined mind -- all these are to be found. Even the geography of the Galloway books is not worked out closely. It follows no logical pattern; one must conclude that Crockett selected names from his memory or the Ordnance Survey Map at random because he liked the sound. A wood in Wigtownshire can turn up in the middle of the Stewartry if he needs a wood. Galloway and Bordershire are in no way comparable to Hardy's neat Wessex, with the towns given imaginary names but the physical features left as they are in reality. Crockett's towns are jumbled together just as he fancied at the moment -- Lockermaben, Cairn Edward, Netherby Junction,

¹*Men of the Moss Hags*, XXXVI, pp 258-259.
Kilgour, Drummith, Drumfern, Newton Edward, Port Andrew, Kirktown. We grow dizzy if we try to identify them or work out the relationship between them, and since Crockett may have altered the gradient and the streets in order to suit himself, the task is pointless. Cheviotshire or Bordershire seems at times to stretch all the way across Scotland; at other times it has shrunk to the environs of Newcastle. If he had taken the time to make the towns and shires true portraits, how much more solidly would his Galloway books and his North of England books have held together.

To some extent, by lack of serious purpose, he doomed himself to his fate. He chose to be a teller of tales as a reaction against the "novel of purpose", forgetting that there could be an intermediate state. He made himself a romancer, a writer who flits from theme to theme in the course of a story but dwells seriously on nothing. He is a kind of Dickens who never grew beyond Pickwick Papers. His sense of injustice is real enough, his resentment of the power of money, his defence of the poor, the kindly, the strugglers with circumstance, but his first aim is to tell a story; the more sober elements occur for a moment, then are passed over as the story moves on. He pillaged his own life for situations and experiences to turn into fiction, but his imagination did not rest long enough on any one scene to make it deeply felt or fully described. That he could use the genuine anger he had felt at the suffering of the Mauricewood disaster to provide a part of Vida is significant and some would say a condemnation.
But the fact that he continued to the end of his life still writing diversely and courageously in the face of discouragement and physical weakness asks for our sympathy. In spite of the defects he must have known were in his books, in spite of the need for three books a year when he was mentally and physically exhausted and should not have been trying to produce even one, he did not complain or feel in any need of pity but soldiered on until his sudden and quite unexpected death in April 1914 set him free -- from writing, from illness, and from the 1914-1918 war which was to destroy so much of the world he had known and loved. He does not deserve the oblivion into which he has fallen; for once we can agree wholeheartedly with Robertson Nicoll that his books should not all be forgotten, if only because "there is not one of them in which his individuality is colourless and intangible".¹

Posthumously, he offers us a surprise -- a detective story, The Azure Hand,² which shows that he had read enough of that popular form to know all the tricks of the trade. It is set in a country house, that classical and favourite situation; the owner of Dent House on the Lochar Moss near the town of Quarrier in Kentigernshire (obviously Dumfries -- it calls itself the Queen of the South) is found dead in his library with a blue stain in the form of a human hand on the

rug beside his armchair and two whisky-toddy glasses beside him also, one of which has been wiped clean of fingerprints. His young second wife is frivolous, heartless and given to hysterics. His unattractive daughter Rachel hates her stepmother and has been estranged from her father because of this. His attractive niece who lives with them is so sweet that she must be a suspect. The wife and the daughter each produce differing copies of his will; the detective, a Highlander from Edinburgh called Luiz Perez Grant whose mother was Portuguese, finds yet another folded in four and hidden at the bottom of the tobacco-jar at the dead man's elbow. There are scraps of a torn-up note in the wastepaper basket saying "I propose to call upon you tomorrow night". The niece was the last to see her uncle alive, but there is a butler, there are servants, there are two young men (one in love with the niece) just back from a tour round the world, there are the wife and family of the local Chief of Police, all of whom behave oddly and imprudently and involve themselves in suspicion. Who was out in the summer-house signalling with the stable lamp? Who tried to poison Marcus, the niece's suitor? Why were he and the niece corresponding secretly by means of letters hidden in a tree trunk?

A Judge, retired from service in India, lives nearby in Laverock House and is a close friend of the family. He

1. The Azure Hand, V, p. 43.
has worked with Bertillon, has written learned articles in various legal periodicals (which Grant has read with professional interest) and is in fact Judge Thorald "of the Dacca trials, the expert who had brought to light the Upper Bengal poisoning cases".¹ Naturally he is tireless in his efforts to help Grant and co-operate with another detective from Manchester who is later called in; the Judge is a dandy who wears flowered waistcoats and possesses a snuff box with a miniature in its lid which closely resembles the attractive niece. He enjoys himself hugely, discussing clues and methods endlessly with Grant. He points out that "the most out of reach of suspicion, the person most improbable, the highest in rumour of innocence—these are the persons to be suspected. That is the modern code of the good policier".² But Grants finds it all too neat; it is "too much the regular thing"; he is tired of what the public expect of detective cases—"footprints on the soft places of the lawn, a cross in the heel of the left boot, the photograph of the murderer in the victim's clenched hand, cuffs with the name and address left on the washstand and fingerprints in red all over the place".³

Fingerprints are photographed and discussed, with much jargon about "blue engineering paper which is finished by simple washing".⁴ The murderer has worn gloves which are

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¹The Azure Hand, XIX, p. 134.
³The Azure Hand, XVI, pp 121-122.
⁴The Azure Hand, XVII, p. 124.
confidently pronounced to be suede. More scraps of the suspicious note are found in Rachel’s bedroom, but she herself is found unconscious, dying, with the missing library key in her hand, attached to her wrist by a leather bangle of Indian workmanship, a stain in the shape of an azure hand on the floor beside her. The Fiscal intervenes, and there is trouble from sightseers who crowd round the house, avidly curious -- the Judge threatens to read the Riot Act. The Judge and Grant discuss with detached interest the distinction between detection based on clues and detection based on character. The tangle proceeds cheerfully, with Marcus losing his memory and gaining it again, hasty rushes over the Lochar Moss, strange revelations from the wife’s maid who is a gipsy and has been introduced into the house by the Judge in order to spy on the family.

In the end, the Judge’s imprudent attempt to poison Grant reveals that he is the murderer; he uses two different poisons at the same time, so that Grant will have time to hear a full account of his motives and his cleverness before he dies, but the two counteract one another; Grant lives (assisted by the gipsy maid who blows her way into the Judge’s locked laboratory with dynamite to save him) and it is the Judge who dies, his wet hands imprinting two of the familiar blue stains on his waistcoat as he falls dead, declaring that "The real criminal . . . is the Government of India who retired a man like myself in the flower of his age".¹ The story, crammed with the clichés of detective

¹The Azure Hand, XLVI, p. 310.
fiction, reads like a delightful parody; it is pleasant to think of Crockett playing with this relatively new fashion in light reading.

An even greater surprise is to come. At some time before the end of 1920, there appeared another book by Crockett, The White Pope, called "The Light out of the East," a sustained and remarkably successful essay in what one could call theological science fiction, accepting Edmund Crispin's definition:

A science-fiction story is one which presupposes a technology, or an effect of technology, or a disturbance in the natural order, such as humanity, up to the time of writing, has not in actual fact experienced.

One would guess that The White Pope was written after Crockett had read Frederick Rolfe's Hadrian the Seventh, which appeared in 1904 and tells the story of George Arthur Rose, a man frustrated by his failure to be accepted as a priest in the Church of Rome, who unexpectedly, through a friend's pleading, finds himself finally accepted and even more unexpectedly, elected Pope -- an imaginative fantasy of wish-fulfillment based on Rolfe's own weird existence.

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It has come about almost by accident; the assembled cardinals have been unable to agree on a candidate because of Vatican and European political rivalries; they accept George as a safe, pious and inexperienced compromise, but find that he is an implacable reformer, forcing the princes of the church against their wills back to the original simplicity of Christianity. He names himself Hadrian the Seventh to emphasise his Englishness against their Italian assumptions; chooses attic rooms in the Vatican, furnished austerely, because those occupied by former Popes are too rich and ostentatious, though he retains smoking as a necessary luxury; and, once crowned, insists on walking on foot through the streets of Rome to the Lateran to take possession of his episcopal See, clad in pontifical white and unsupported by processions or ceremonial guards. His simple white habit is emphasised against the gorgeous robes that surround him.

He confounds the administrators by putting his beliefs into action. He creates cardinal-deacons out of five Scottish and English priests and one Welsh bishop whom he likes — his disciples. He condemns the pomp and expense of cathedrals; from now on the clergy will live on the free-will offerings of the faithful, and on nothing else. He issues an Epistle to All Christians removing the barriers between Rome and other Christian denominations and stressing the importance of the salvation of the individual soul. He issues a Bull addressed to King Victor Immanuel of Italy declaring that the Pope is not a temporal sovereign and
that the Vatican will no longer be a rival to the House of Savoy in worldly politics. To every outraged objection, he quotes the words of Christ which silence the theologians. The book works out in cunning detail the effect of such a Pope on world politics, showing the reactions of socialists, anarchists, kings, Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Japanese Emperor, the President of the United States, a miscellany of ordinary people, and ruling representatives both lay and ecclesiastical from the whole world; it ends when Hadrian is assassinated by a figure from his troubled past.

Crockett's *The White Pope* adopts the idea of a reforming Pope, his white robe and his involvement with Italy, but simplifies greatly, as one would expect. Where Rolfe keeps the scene firmly in Rome, among the complex details of Vatican ceremony and theologico-political argument, Crockett relies on narrative and the open-air Italian and Mediterranean landscapes he had known in his travels. In his first chapter, his Pope, Brother Christopher, appears in the Italian district of Apulia, where Crockett had set *The Silver Skull*; the narrator, Lucas Cargill, a London journalist, meets him there under Mount Trastevera and is impressed by his strangely compelling appearance, his simple white woollen soutane and white skull-cap, his grey-blue eyes, piercing but not sharp. Like George Arthur Rose, he has been elected Pope because

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1 S.R. Crockett: *The Silver Skull* (London 1901)
the divided College of Cardinals thought him a meek compromise, and has left Rome immediately. Italian soldiers and the police are searching for him; when they find him among the rocky foothills, he paralyses their weapons with a quiet gesture of benediction and sweeps away in cloud and thunder a party of greedy renegades from the inn at Appiano who are out to make what they can from his capture.

From this time forth we waded knee-deep among the raw stuff of miracles. I do not attempt to explain comments Cargill.

The White Pope with his little group of followers -- the woman who had found him as a waif in Jerusalem and brought him up, Vergas a priest, Zini a brigand, the Italian general sent to seize him, a lighthouse-keeper Leo Perrone (who had already appeared in a Crockett short story) and Cargill -- make their way to the coast; Zini and Perrone remain in Italy, the others board a Red Funnel Line mail steamer, the Istria, on its way to Southampton. At Malta, the port is humming dangerously with rumours of the

1The White Pope, VII, p. 65.

2S.R. Crockett: "Maria Perrone, Murderess and Saint", For British Soldiers, ed. C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne (London 1900). This book is missing since 1974 from the National Library of Scotland and I have not been able to obtain access to a copy, but Mr William Blair of the Grange Bookshop who is compiling a Bibliography of Crockett's works assures me that the story is contained in it. It is retold in The White Pope.
White Pope; the British Mediterranean Fleet intervenes and escorts the Istria to Marseilles. There emotional mobs of all beliefs and all political parties have gathered, each thinking the Pope will give support. He supports none; from a hillside, not from the Cathedral which he rejects, he speaks to the people "with a curious timbre as of a smitten bell when the sound is dying away,"\(^1\) and condemns not only the pomp and ceremonies of the Church but the politicians, atheists and revolutionaries who have preached hatred of good and of God. Only the ordinary humble people remain to hear his simple gospel.

His fame is spreading; each country reacts in its own way.

Japan looked westward with hope, from behind homebuilt battleships, and bristling victorious bayonets.\(^2\) Russia is in revolution "for the peasants, at last abjuring their Little Father, the White Czar, cried aloud for a greater Father, even the White Pope. . . England, they now say, was calm, very calm. Yet the Times had many leaders, each day growing more informatively placid and inconclusive. The Daily Courier as usual invented head-lines, but little else.\(^3\)

The White Pope asks Cargill about England, and how the King can be head of the Church there (Crockett the Free Churchman emerges briefly, saying that more than half the church-goers in England and Scotland receive no support from the State but survive on free-will offerings)\(^3\) but they are not to reach England. An Italian warship intercepts the

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\(^1\) The White Pope, XVII, p. 151.

\(^2\) The White Pope, XIX, p. 171.

\(^3\) The White Pope, XXI, p. 189.
Istria and the White Pope and his little group are taken on board. The King of Italy, Albert Immanuel (a Crockett variation) and the Papal Secretary of State, Terni, await them; the King hesitates, then kneels. Terni, "he who had conducted the suave and far-reaching politics of Leo XIII",¹ is a different matter, but "the influence of the White Pope played about him like morning sunshine"² and he too becomes a friend and ally. In his use of light as a medium of goodness and power, Crockett reminds us of C.S. Lewis and the eldila and Oyarsa of his theological science-fiction novel Out of the Silent Planet.³

A British destroyer and three cruisers are now pursuing the Italian ship; they are quietly put out of action by a gentle sweeping movement from the White Pope which causes simple breakdowns:

Such things might happen any day and to any ship. It was only strange that they should have synchronised — that was all.⁴

By the time the British recover and bombard Spezia, the White Pope and his friends are back in Rome; seated on the Throne of St Peter with the King behind him on one side and Terni on the other — Terni who is now like Paul the

¹The White Pope, XXI, p. 189.
²The White Pope, XXI, p. 189.
³C.S. Lewis: Out of the Silent Planet (London 1938).
⁴The White Pope, XXI, p. 195.
Apostle, "a vivid, self-sacrificing energetic man"¹ who wants everything done at once -- the White Pope explains that he had to disappear for a while to consider his power and his mission. The cardinals have elected him and they cannot call him insane in order to depose him -- "their own dearest doctrine of infallibility blocked the way".² Here Crockett offers a very Protestant challenge; Rolfe, the would-be priest is more subtle:

"If We be Pontiff, We will not, and if We be pseudo-pontiff, We cannot, depose Ourself."³

The cardinals, compelled by the power emanating from the seated figure, unwillingly kneel. The Pope when he shows himself to the crowds in St Peter's Square disappoints them by performing no miracles; he says he cannot always be with them because to Roman crowds, deaf over many centuries, "The Word and the Way are become as the hum of bees among the summer lime trees".⁴ His power must work elsewhere.

Time passes and strange things happen. The Turks move back to the east; white cruisers of unknown origin patrol the coast of Palestine keeping intruders but; prominent men of all nations suddenly disappear from their places

¹The White Pope, XXIV, p. 214.
²The White Pope, XXIII, p. 206.
⁴The White Pope, XXIV, p. 217.
without warning, sometimes in mid-speech. When Cargill is summoned to Jerusalem he is astonished by what he sees. Ship-loads of rich earth have been landed at the Palestine seaports and carried up into the towns and bare hills, so that the rocks are terraced and planted and Jerusalem is a place of waving greenery. There is no Mosque of Omar, no Church of the Holy Sepulchre. A white building stands on Mount Zion among trees and men come and go in it; this is where the statesmen and leaders who disappeared have been gathered. The New Jerusalem is without crime, without police, without temples or places of worship; it is ruled by a White Council in the cool opalescent spaciousness of their meeting place, presided over by the White Pope whose new name is the Servant. The twelve members of the Council constantly change; some go "when the light is upon their faces" and others come to fill their seats. Criminals have been placed in reservations where the Servant's ambassadors visit them and make them into good citizens; the totally impenitent are kept isolated and sterile.

Above all, the New Jerusalem is a place of light; since the coming of the Servant the arid harshness of sunlight had been arrested — as it were by an invisible translucent dome over the whole series of hills on which stands the New Jerusalem. . . mild radiance filled every corner of the darkest room.

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1 The White Pope, XXVII, p. 235.
... no need of the sun or the moon to lighten it, but from the dwelling of the Servant, once the White Pope, there came the stillness of radiance, the glow of peace.¹

We are reminded of C.S. Lewis again, but also of the Book of Revelation:

And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.²

Crockett has visualised the Biblical New Jerusalem as a place created by men working under the guidance and miraculous power of the Servant, among the events and personages of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; reversing the work of the Higher Critics who questioned Christ's divinity and miracles, he has tried to show the Second Coming as a quiet and gradual working through individual human beings against realistic backgrounds. There is no tension in the book because Crockett is describing the Omnipotent; what keeps our interest is curiosity about how he will marshall his details, and ingeniously manipulate familiar facts of daily life. This, as always, he manages well, though like all science-fiction writers whose stories deal closely with their own times, the facts of the real future contradict him. The recalcitrant cardinals coming at last to pay homage are handed over to the charge of "a darkish man with

¹The White Pope, XXVII, pp 231-232.
²The Book of the Revelation of St John the Divine, XXI, vv 22-23
a slight beard of naval cut1 whom Cargill does not at first 
recognise; he is the Czar of all the Russias. Crockett 
who died in 1914 could not have foreseen the cellar in 
Ekaterinberg. But this is his only serious mis-
calculation.

Time passes; gradually the light spreads over the 
entire world "like the continuous glow of radium"2 and all 
problems are solved. The Servant grows old and frail, and 
the day comes when he is received again into Heaven. One 
Easter morning Cargill is with him on the Mount of Olives 
when suddenly

the pearly light was all about me, but I was alone. 
The White Pope was not, for God had taken him.3

Then, and only then, does Cargill realise the White Pope's 
identity.

It is fascinating to see the imagery with which 
Crockett's mind was working during what must perhaps have been 
his last years. He has taken the satirical structure of 
Rolfe's book and out of it made something gentle, hopeful 
and at the same time clear; remembering the seas and the 
landscapes of his travels, the ships and trains, the Italian 
mountains and valleys and wayside inns, the lighthouse of 
the Tremiti Islands, the squares of Rome and the sunny bare

1The White Pope, XXVIII, p. 246.
2The White Pope, XXIX, p. 247.
roofs of Jerusalem, he has depicted the journeyings and mission of the White Pope with a restraint and delicacy of which one would not have thought him capable. Yet his old prejudices and loves remain to add salt to his vision:

The middlemen of the world had been sent to practise agriculture and live on the labour of their hands and the rich and idle work willingly in his imagined earthly paradise on the railways and the White Fleet, now a transport service, having tired of their aeroplanes and motor cars. Perhaps his long illness was what turned his thoughts to mortality and made him describe death in the New Jerusalem as "The Feast of the New Life", nothing to be feared but instead a falling asleep among flowers. What has disappeared altogether is the strife, anger and conflict he had described so vividly and mockingly among his ministers, elders and Covenanters — the argument for the sake of argument which leads to confusion and not to light. Crockett's new heaven and new earth are truly the abode of active and abundant peace, perpetually renewing itself, never resting, never ending. The White Pope is not a great book but it is worth reading, if only for the unexpectedness of its extension to Crockett's range.

This, then, is Samuel Rutherford Crockett, looking at his own time and at the future of which he could only

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1 The White Pope, XXIX, p. 247.
2 The White Pope, XXIX, p. 248.
dream. Surely the last thing of which one can accuse his imperfect but lively spirit is not looking out of the Manse window to see what was going on in the world. He was constantly looking out of the Manse window while he had a Manse, and out of all the other windows behind which he lived. It might have been better for him as a writer if he had looked less and thought more about what he saw. But he saw railways, engineering works, coal mines, slums, working-class redbrick streets of terraced houses, the oppressive mansions of the well-to-do, street urchins and Tract ladies, the sufferings of the poor and the blind complacency of the comfortable, and recorded these things according to his lights -- which at times, and with luck, and if he were in the right mood, and the pictures and the plot went well, could be very bright and honest ones.
Appendix 1: The Dedication of The Stickit Minister

Stevenson's lines "To S. R. Crockett. On receiving a Dedication" are probably better known today than their recipient; to many readers S. R. Crockett is merely an unfamiliar name attached to a familiar poem, XLV of the Songs of Travel.¹

Blows the wind today, and the sun and the rain are flying,
Blows the wind on the moors today 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.

The poem was inspired by the words of dedication prefixed to The Stickit Minister in all editions after the first:

To

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
of Scotland and Samoa,
I dedicate these stories
of that Grey Galloway land,
where, about the graves of the Martyrs,
the whaups are crying --
his heart remembers how.

Stevenson makes this clear in a letter to Sidney Colvin in August 1893; the dedication has stirred in him intense nostalgia.

... if I could only be buried in the hills, under the heather and a table tomb-stone like the martyrs, where the whaups and the plovers are crying! Did you see a man who

wrote the Stickit Minister and dedicated it to me, in words that brought the tears to my eyes every time I looked at them. "Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying. His heart remembers how." Ah, by God it does! Singular that I should fulfil the Scots destiny throughout, and live a voluntary exile, and have my heart filled with the blessed, beastly place all the time!

The completed poem was sent to Crockett in manuscript, and a facsimile reproduced, along with a printed version slightly different in punctuation, in the large illustrated edition of The Stickit Minister brought out by T. Fisher Unwin in 1894; it consisted of three hundred and fifty copies, of which two hundred and fifty were signed by Crockett and intended "for sale in England".

In her edition of Stevenson's Collected Poems Dr Janet Adam Smith gives Crockett's dates as 1860-1914, having naturally been misled by an error in his birth date which has crept into his birth date in most works of reference -- and even on to his monument in Laurieston village -- and describes him as "novelist, and minister of Glencorse, in the Pentlands". The second edition of the Collected Poems in 1971 repeats the 1860-1914 dates but corrects the place of his ministry to Penicuik,

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2 S. R. Crockett: The Stickit Minister's Wooing and other Galloway stories (London 1900) Preface pp xi-xii


still placing it in the Pentlands. In both editions the note continues

The poem was printed as a prefatory poem, and reproduced in facsimile, in the eighth, limited edition of The Stickit Minister, 1894, and in subsequent editions: it was also published in the Pall Mall Gazette, 12 December, 1894, under the title *Home Thoughts from Samoa*.

This suggests that "To S. R. Crockett" appears in every edition of The Stickit Minister after the eighth illustrated one in 1894; it appears in the tenth edition in 1895, also illustrated but of the normal octavo size, but neither in facsimile nor in print in the ninth edition, also in 1895. It has not been possible to check fully, but it seems likely that, at first at any rate, the poem was kept as a luxury, not prefaced to run-off-the-mill editions.

However, this is a trifling point in comparison to the one which W. Robertson Nicoll casually raises in his obituary of Crockett in the *British Weekly*. In paying tribute, Nicoll disclaims Crockett’s expressions of gratitude to him, especially in the Preface to The Stickit Minister’s *Wooing*, as greatly exaggerated, but describes how the first edition of The Stickit Minister had been sent to him with a note from Crockett dated March 20th 1893 thanking him for his "great and unlooked for kindness to the author". Then he turns to the dedication itself.

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2 (W. Robertson Nicoll): "Correspondence of Claudius Clear", *British Weekly*, LVI (April 30th 1914) p. 121
"As it stands in my edition it reads

To
Robert Louis Stevenson
of Scotland and Samoa,
I dedicate these stories
of that grey Galloway land,
where, about the graves of the martyrs,
the whaups are crying --
his heart has not forgotten how.

I immediately pointed out to him that the last line
should be "his heart remembers how," and this was the
form adopted by Stevenson in his acknowledgment. Crockett
never admitted to me that he was wrong but in the
dedication as repeated in the preface to the second
series of "The Stickit Minister" it reads in the amended
fashion."

The implication of this is less important than at first it
appears to be. The first edition of The Stickit Minister
does indeed have the dedication to Stevenson with "his heart has not
forgotten how" as its final line, and there is no doubt that W.
Robertson Nicoll is telling the truth, but one immediately has
to wonder why, and above all why in an obituary.

Some embarrassment must have been mingled with Crockett's
delight in receiving the poem. Obviously Stevenson's copy was
from the second edition with the Nicoll amendment. The three
final lines were what set him rhyming and determined the rhythm
of the new creation; the poem paid Crockett a high compliment,
but Crockett knew that the last line was not his. Ideally, in
such circumstances, Crockett would have been better to keep the
poem as a personal pleasure rather than use it as an additional
literary flourish for the illustrated edition of his book, but
he was a young author on the threshold of his career who admired and revered Stevenson as a literary figure; it must have been an irresistible temptation to connect himself with a writer of such standing when that writer had gone out of his way to present him with the opportunity. To print the poem was to show his pride in and gratitude for it, and in a way to return the compliment.

By remaining silent about the amendment to his original dedication suggested by Nicoll and adopted in the second and later editions of The Stickit Minister, Crockett did the only thing possible if he were going to publish the poem at all. By his revelation of the true facts in the British Weekly when both the men concerned were dead, "Claudius Clear" provided a footnote to literature which is interesting but of no great significance. He neither robbed Stevenson of the distinction of a fine poem nor Crockett of the credit for having provided the primary idea and some of the wording.
Appendix 2: The Marrow Kirk

An unsigned article which appeared in the British Weekly on November 1st 1894 is so much to the point in determining the source of Crockett's double-deposition scene in The Lilac Sunbonnet — and so well written — that it seems worth while to reproduce it here in toto.

"THE TRUE STORY OF MR. CROCKETT'S KIRK OF THE MARROW"

It is interesting to know that the much criticised incident of the ministers' mutual deposition in Mr. Crockett's 'Lilac Sunbonnet' is not only based upon authority, but is (allowing for the difference between fiction and fact) actually true. The Kirk of the Marrow of the story represents the Nemesis of one of the splits into which about fifty years ago the Original Secession Kirk was rent, upon questions which to a Southern eye seem altogether infinitesimal.*

Briefly, the history of the case is as follows. The two ministers who mutually deposed one another were the Rev. James Wright, of Laurieston-street Original Secession Church, Edinburgh, and the Rev. Mr. Lambie, of Pitcairngreen, about eleven miles from Perth. With the exception of the change

* The documents and facts of the case are in the possession of Mr. William Heron, of Greenhall, Musselburgh, an office-bearer in the congregation of Dr. Walter Smith, the post-preacher of Scotland, who has obligingly furnished them to us.

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1: "The True Story of Mr. Crockett's Kirk of the Marrow", British Weekly XVII (November 1st 1894) p. 25

2 The Lilac Sunbonnet, XLI, pp 342-347
from Perth to Galloway, Mr. Crockett has fairly represented
the circumstances other than personal of the two men in the
story. They were, to begin with, both ministers of the
Original Secession Church. On the 18th May, 1842, a Union
took place. The Synod of Original Seceders was joined to the
Synod of Original Burghers, and became the Synod of the United
Original Seceders. This Union appears in the novel as "the
day of the Great Apostasy". As in the story, the two
ministers stood out from the Union, dissenting and forming
themselves into the True Blue Original Seceder Session Synod,
as they were called, though probably not by themselves. They
were the only members of that court, save their several
elders, and they made up for the sparseness of their numbers
by the multitude and fervency of their protests against all
and sundry.

Our informant bears personal witness that every Sabbath
evening, year in and year out, was occupied in the Kirk of the
True Blue Edinburgh Seceders, by the Rev. James Wright raising
"the testimony" against somebody or other; and the scanty
congregation ever went away triumphant and rejoicing that
"he had redd them up to richts this time!" After a specially
vituperative and confusing evening, the sentiments of the
congregation found vent in the beadle's characteristic phrase,
"Eh, sirs, but wasna the minister verra enterteenin' the
nicht!"

1 The Lilac Sunbonnet, VII, p. 61
Now these two associated remnants of the only true and protesting Kirk in Scotland had one student, whom they trained with all diligence for the ministry in the way wherein he ought to have gone.

It happened that one Saturday evening this student had found his way to the manse of Pitcairngreen, probably to exhibit his gifts of preaching upon the ensuing Sabbath. The evening was agreeably spent between the hot peats of the parlour fire and the hotter fire of the minister's catechising. Suddenly, however, it was revealed to the Eli of Pitcairngreen that his young Samuel was unsound in the faith. Whereupon he told him (as in the story) that he must take his departure, the Scriptures expressly declaring that the "faithful" must not keep company with unbelievers.

The student remonstrated, pointing out to his orthodox host the lateness of the hour, the snow that covered the ground, and the long eleven miles to Perth. Very likely also the scarcity of his ba'bees, as in Ralph Peden's case, and the consequent difficulty of securing a lodging, may have weighed with the young man. But all was of no avail. The Scripture command was clear and explicit. No allowance was specified in the text for such temporal difficulties, pecuniary or local. So the poor lad had unwillingly to depart, but whether he found his Winsome and lived happy ever after or not, the credible historian is not in a position to say.

Then in due course the Synod of two members had to try the
case. They met, but instead of framing a libel against the young heretic, they discovered in the heat of argument grave cause for censure in one another. Each found deadly heresy in the other, and both were warlike and "zealous unto slaying!" So without more said, Mr. Wright solemnly deposed his erring brother Lambie, and Mr. Lambie with equal solemnity deposed his colleague Wright.

Thus was truth vindicated, and in this little Armageddon of two renowned champions of denunciation, the "True Blue" Original and Only Secession divided itself finally like a split pea, to unite no more.

This is the true story of Mr. Crockett's Kirk of the Marrow."

A further reference appeared later in the British Weekly; the Rev. Mr. Lambie had it seems read the foregoing account and was moved to expostulate to the Editor and defend himself. The British Weekly dealt with him thus:

"Mr. Crockett's Marrow Kirk and the Rev. Andrew Lambie

In the note recently printed in The British Weekly upon the story of the separation of the Rev. Andrew Lambie of Pitcairngreen and the Rev. James Wright of Edinburgh, there was certainly no intention of misrepresenting the conduct and kindness of Mr. Lambie. His pamphlets explaining his action is in our hands, and contains his public reasons for companying no more with Mr. Wright.

There seems no doubt whatever that the cause of quarrel (though exceedingly difficult for an outsider to disentangle)

1: "Mr. Crockett's Marrow Kirk and the Rev. Andrew Lambie", British Weekly XVII (January 10th 1895) p. 192
had reference to the student, and to a certain expression of his which Mr. Lambie held must be "condemned, on the ground of its being in itself unscriptural," to quote Mr. Lambie's own words. The meeting of Presbytery referred to was held "in the end of August, 1894," and consisted of "Mr. Wright, the writer of this, and an elder, to hear the student in a Presbyteral capacity and to deal with him" -- which is substantially as Mr. Crockett represents it in the 'Lilac Sunbonnet', under, of course, very different conditions.

The story of the student having to travel from Pitcairn-green to Perth was told on what seemed the highest possible authority, and does not reflect in the least upon Mr. Lambie's kindness, though it casts a light upon his stern devotion to duty. He was just the man to cut off a right hand or pluck out a right eye if it offended him -- how much more this student! Certainly we had no intention of misrepresenting men so nobly true to their consciences at the risk of the loss of all, even though we cannot hold that Mr. Lambie's own motto was wholly justified -- "There was nothing froward or perverse in them."
Appendix 3: Cleg Kelly and Peter Pan

By the time the reader has finished Adventure XLVII of *Cleg Kelly* and has noted how

upon the heather-blooms Cleg Kelly flapped his thin arms against his sack and crowed like a chanticleer ¹

it may be that a parallel is growing in his mind between Cleg and another solitary boy who crows like a cock — J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan.

In the Adventure before, called "A Child of the Devil", Cleg has enjoyed himself mimicking and mocking the respectable — lawyers, doctors, Tract ladies — for the amusement of his new acquaintances Chairlie and Jock; he has acted out gestures and parodied speech as if on a stage, and, at the end of the "performance" he drops as if exhausted into a chair and

fanned himself gracefully with an iron shovel taken from the stove top, exactly as he had seen the young lady performers at the penny theatres do when they waited in the wings for their "turn". ²

Cleg is thus lightly connected in our minds with theatrical personages, and the title of the Adventure, summed up in Chairlie's comment that he is a child of the devil, suggests that there is something supernatural about his endless mocking energy.

The same scorn of mere human beings, and the same energetic exhibitionism, are evinced by Barrie's creation, who made his first stage appearance on Boxing Day in 1904, eight years after

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¹ *Cleg Kelly*, XLVII, p. 316
² *Cleg Kelly*, XLVI, p. 314
Cleg Kelly came out as a book. Peter Pan too is touched with the supernatural, immortal, never ageing, an associate of fairies who, in Scottish folklore, are closely linked with the devil -- Thomas the Rhymer's Queen of fair Elfland, like Tam Lin's, pays tithes to hell, though little of this dark alliance remains in Barrie's emasculated Tinker Bell.

Many qualities in Cleg make him similar to Peter Pan -- his impish mischief, his insistence on his own cleverness, his agility, his pleasure in his freedom and in his superiority to everyone he knows. He has a tendency to turn cartwheels and indulge in quick gymnastics to show that life is "prime". He is heartlessly amused by the havoc he wreaks in Mission Schools and among well-dressed good little boys. He capers on walls and hilltops and he crows triumphantly in defiance of dull authority, just as Peter expresses scorn of grown-ups and mocks the pirates.

Cleg in his dislike of his father and his forgetfulness of his mother has affinities with Peter; his mother's life with Tim Kelly is so wretched that her death is "a release":

"Aye, it is that," said Cleg, from whose young heart sorrow of his mother's death had wholly passed away. He was not callous, but he was old-fashioned and world-experienced enough to recognise facts frankly. ¹

There is human feeling and sympathy in Cleg of which Peter would not have been capable, so that the parallel is not exact; Cleg is a boy who grew up too fast rather than one who will not grow up at all, and his dealings with Vara would have been

¹ Cleg Kelly, XI, pp 80-81
quite beyond the inhuman Peter. Yet there are elements of Peter in Cleg --- his slowness to need Vara's affection reminds us of Tiger Lily's vain wish to be more than a mother to Peter and of Wendy's gradually-learned lesson not to be demonstrative when saying goodbye.

Scraps of Crockett make their appearance elsewhere in Barrie's play. It is the toddler Hugh, for example, who when he meets a little girl on the night when he is lost asks guilelessly "What is a kiss?", though we can be thankful that Crockett did not involve us with thimbles and other embarrassments. It is Crockett's children who taunt him with lying about liking medicine "in a big spoon"; did this perhaps inspire the incident with Mr Darling and the medicine to avoid taking which he poured it into Nana's bowl? Geordie Breerie the packman in Kit Kennedy frightens off hostile dogs by bending himself double from the thigh and looking through between his legs at his barking enemy, which was more effective than a field piece loaded to the muzzle; this, we may remember, is the Lost Boys' method of dealing with wolves. Less precisely, perhaps, Cleg Kelly fights boys from rival gangs just as Peter Pan fights the pirates as part of his honour and self-respect; and the Knuckle Dusters in their poverty and ignorance are genuinely ragged, hopeless and lower-

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1 Cleg Kelly, XXXVII, p. 248

2 S. R. Crockett: Red Cap Tales stolen from the Treasure Chest of the Wizard of the North (London 1904) p. 3

3 Kit Kennedy, V, p. 37
class Lost Boys.

Barrie himself could never explain the genesis of Peter Pan, or so he said.

No one knew where he came from, least of all his creator. Barrie was in the habit of naming his imagined characters after children he knew, and Peter Davies was there, handy. The Pan part tacked itself on quite naturally. Peter Pan. The boys soon got to know him as if he actually existed. 1

In his whimsical dedication of Peter Pan to the five Llewelyn Davies boys, Barrie admits to puzzlement; the Lost Boys, Nana, Mrs Darling, The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island, all these he can be confident about but he wonders whether he invented Peter at all.

They do seem to be emerging out of our island, don't they, the little people of the play, all except that sly one, the chief figure, who draws farther and farther into the wood as we advance upon him? He so dislikes being tracked, as if there were something odd about him, that when he dies he means to get up and blow away the particle that will be his ashes. 2

Could "that sly one" be in fact, whether Barrie were aware of it or not, Cleg Kelly? The book about Cleg was dedicated to Barrie "with the hand of a comrade and the heart of a friend", so out of curiosity or mere politeness he must surely have read it, written as it was by a man whom he and his wife had visited in Penicuik and whom he met from time to time in London.

It seems at least possible that the elfin heartless side of Cleg could have dropped into Barrie's subconscious and emerged nearly a decade later as Peter Pan, mixed up with his childhood

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2 The Plays of J. M. Barrie in one Volume, ed. A. E. Wilson (London 1942) p. 499
games by the Nith, the tales he spun for the boys in Kensington Gardens, the adventures he constructed for them round the lake by his summer cottage at Farnham. The self-sufficiency, the endless ingenuity, the sheer undaunted courage, are all there in Cleg; the "stage performance" to amuse Chairlie and Jock might have been a link between Cleg and a play about a lively mocking boy, and Loch Spellanderie in which Cleg showed off so spectacularly could have slipped into focus with the Farnham lake and become the lagoon. Cleg is the sort of fiction that lives on in the memory long after details have blurred and incidents have grown shadowy. He never said in so many words "Oh the cleverness of me!", but so often this was what he meant by "O man, sergeant, it's prime!" ¹ or "I telled ye I wad show her . . . and I hae shown her!" ²

One will never be sure, but it is at least an interesting speculation.

¹ Cleg Kelly, V, p. 43
² Cleg Kelly, XLIV, p. 300
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"A First Meeting with Mr. J. M. Barrie": Woman at Home 1895 (April - September 1895) pp 23-28. This volume and the next of Woman at Home are unnumbered.

(vii) Stories and sketches

"Pen-Portraits of Eminent Divines": a series contributed to The Christian Leader. Some of these are collected as cuttings probably by Crockett himself, in a notebook among the Crockett items in the Ewart Public Library, Dumfries:

"Dr Alexander Whyte as I know him" (Christmas 1891)
"Dr Goold"
"Prof. A. B. Davidson, D.D."
"Principal Rainy, D. D."
"Rev. H. D. Rawnsley"
"A propos Pen-Portrait of Principal Rainy"
"Dr Andrew Thomson"
"Principal Hutton"
"Prof. Wardrop"
"Dr James Moorhouse"
"Rev. James Stalker"
"Rev. John McNeill"
"Dr Alexander Maclaren"
"Rev. George Adam Smith"
"Prof. W. Gordon Blackie, D. D."
"Prof. John Laidlaw, D. D."
"Keswick Convention".
A biographical article on Crockett in the *People's Friend* XXXI (Dundee 1899) pp 10-11 lists the following five groups of sketches as having been contributed by S. R. Crockett to *The Christian Leader*:

- "Ministers of Our Countryside"
- "The New Naturalists"
- "Laureates of Labour"
- "Literary Vignettes"
- "Congregational Sketches"

A second book of cuttings headed "S. R. Crockett, F. C. Manse, Penicuik, N.B." in Crockett's handwriting is to be found in the Ewart Public Library, Dumfries; it contains sketches contributed to *The Christian Leader*, some of which appeared subsequently in *The Stickit Minister* and *Bog-Myrtle and Peat*. Their titles are:

"At the Back o' Beyont. An Old-Fashioned Love Story"
"The Cameronians Choose a Precentor"
"The Child Greatheart and her Pilgrims. A True Story of To-Day"
"The Lammas Preaching"
"The Presbyterial Examination"
"A Finished Young Lady"
"The Minister of Glen Strae Settles a Disputed Case"
"The Return of Kilbokie Easter from the Assembly"
"Kilbokie Easter has a Crack with the Minister"
"A Midsummer Idyll: The Three Bridegrooms and One Bride" (By the Author of "The Ministers of Our Countryside," "A Galloway Herd," etc.)
"The Minister Emeritus"
"30anerges Simpson's Encumbrance": *The Ministers of Our Countryside* (By the Author of "Congregational Sketches," "A Galloway Herd," etc.)

* "A Galloway Herd"
"Saucy Susy Singleton": The Young Woman II (October 1893 - September 1894) pp 185-189


"The Smugglers of the Clone": The Idler VIII (August 1895 - January 1896) pp 104-112. This was reprinted along with a similar story each from Gilbert Parker, Harold Frederic, W. Clark Russell and "Q" to make up Tales of Our Coast (London 1896)

"The Impartial Hand. A Leaf from the Diary of a Walking Tour", Woman at Home IV (October 1896 - September 1897) pp 933-936

"The Bull of Earlston": The Graphic, LIV Christmas Number 1897 pp 12-13

* "Maria Perrone, Murderess and Saint": For Britain's Soldiers, a contribution to the needs of our fighting men and their families, ed. C. J. Cutchliff Hyne (London 1900). This book has been missing from the National Library of Scotland since 1974 and I have been unable to locate another copy. Mr William Blair, Antiquarian Bookseller, who is at present compiling a Crockett Bibliography, assures me that the story appears in it.

"A Romancer's Local Colour": Windsor Magazine XII (June - November 1900. With sixteen Illustrations by the Author. This article was reprinted (London 1900) as a booklet advertising the cameras of Messrs Newman and Guardia.


(viii) Correspondence in The Academy

"A Charge of Plagiarism": The Academy XLVI (November 10th 1894) p. 376

"The Raiders": The Academy XLVI (November 24th 1894) pp 423-424
B. OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES

Crockett's Letters to John and Marion Macmillan, Glenhead of Trool, Newton Stewart, in the Hornel Collection, Broughton House, Kirkcudbright. This collection contains other miscellaneous Crockett material of which I have made use.

Crockett Collection, Ewart Public Library, Dumfries. The principal items are the notebooks containing the Christian Leader cuttings already mentioned.

Penicuik Cuttings: Volume 18: S. R. Crockett (Apart from Free Church connection); Volume 57: Free Church (South U.F.); Volume 97: Mauricewood Pit Disaster (5th September 1889). These three books of cuttings are in the possession of Mr William W. Black, Silverburn, Penicuik, along with the many similar books of cuttings relating to Penicuik and district. They were compiled by his father, the late Mr R. E. Black, and contain much material not obtainable elsewhere.

Letters from Crockett to many individual friends, relatives and acquaintances sent to me by their relatives and held by me in photocopies.

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