

S. R. Crockett

Eastwynch, Fairdene Road, Coulsdon, Surrey,

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SIR,—My father, the late Rev. William Howie Wylie, discovered Crockett, in the literary sense, in the January of 1891, accepting and publishing his first efforts in the *Christian Leader*. My father died in the August of that year, and during the last week of his illness made me solemnly promise to do all in my power to help the young writer. I carried my father's wishes out to the letter, and was able in 1893 to persuade Mr T. Fisher Unwin to join me in publishing the "Stickit Minister." This was Crockett's first book. He had in fact written a charming book of poems, "Dulce Cor," dedicated to his "Wife to be" and published in 1886 by Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. He then used the *nom-de-plume* of Ford Bereton. There is a beautiful heliograph etching by W. S. MacGeorge of Mrs Crockett as a frontispiece. This little work was more for private circulation. In 1894 Mr Unwin and myself published no fewer than four of his works, viz.:—"The Lilac Sunbonnet," "The Raiders," "Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills," and "The Playactress," the two latter being included in Mr Unwin's "Autonym Library" series.

We all agreed at the time that "The Raiders" was the only one of the five which would last. This has proved true.

As the one responsible for the introduction of Crockett to the reading public, I take this opportunity through the hospitality of your columns to thank Sir Herbert Maxwell, the veteran baronet of Monreith, for the beautiful oration he delivered at Laurieston on Saturday.

The much discussed quotation from the verse Crockett quoted in his dedication of the "Stickit Minister" to Robert Louis Stevenson is again introduced. May I be allowed as joint publisher of the book to give the correct version? It was Crockett who introduced the words:—

"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."

The real authorship of the lines is clear.

Afterwards when Mr Sidney Colvin (as he then was) sent them to Stevenson, the latter exclaimed, "Ah, by God, it does."

Later—in a poem enclosed to Crockett—Stevenson embodies the words, but does not omit to thank Crockett for the "beautiful phrase of prose."

On the fly leaf of the "Stickit Minister" Crockett very gracefully acknowledges a continual indebtedness to the memory of my father "who first gave hospitality to these storm tossed waifs and estrays." He also thanks me for my courtesy in allowing them to be reprinted from the columns of the *Christian Leader*.

I am very proud to have had my name associated and printed on the title page with that of Mr Fisher Unwin in the publication of his first five books, including the one which will live—"The Raiders."—I am, &c.

W. POLLOCK-WYLIE.