

Penicuik
September 13th 1893

Dear Master of Mine,

Your beautiful verses are heady like wine to me. That my phrase should have suggested them to you is beyond my thought or hope. All that I thought or cared was that you should not think me presumptuous in so writing of you. Yet I thought you would understand why I did it. You have no doubt much affection coming to you over the seas, but O man, I think whiles I loe ye like a lass, wild Elliot, reid hand Macgregor and a'. This also is Scots and only a Scot would understand.

Aye it's an ower true word and I'll mind it – there's some stories in the "Stickit" – yin especially, licht and fantastic – man I ken fine ye mean Hugh Hamilton 'Accepted of the Beasts' – I ken brawly, but I couldna keep him out – nor wad ye, gin ye got the wife to read it to you some Sabbath at gloamin' when ye're thinking on the brainge of the Kirk bells as ye hae heard them frae the Stane seat on the Radical Road when ye should hae been in the Kirk or doucely steppin' that gate. But I'll mind and try to keep the workmanship solid – an' that's a guid word for me. No a sylab'll be thrown awa on me.

Catriona has just come to me. I got Saunders o' Drumquhat to scribe doon what him an John Macmillan of Glen Enoch thought o't yae day when they forgathered up by the yowe buchts on the hill. I hae sent it to my freen' Maister Watt to pit in some Magazine or paper. I'll send ye yin when its prentit. Man some pairs o't fair dang me doited, half for joy in ye, an' half because I wanted to gang to my front door an' cry to the world – 'There's no yin o ye fit to haud a candle to Allan.' This I say also that Catriona is the sweetest, windomest maid, but had I been in Dawvid's shoon, its Barbara Grant that I wad hae driven to the deil for. I wad hae hangit half Appin and a' Argyle for her. O what a match Allan and her wad hae made o't! But it's ower late noo to think on that.

I'm delighted to hear of Weir of Arniston (sic) O for a sicht o' him. Haste ye fast.

Gavin is great, and it rejoices me to see that you see that I did not derive from him – as said sometimes the common (or Tom) reviewer. It is useless to say that 'The Stickit Minister' himsel' was written and published in a little paper years before Auld Licht Idylls. It is never worth saying these things and if there is any good in the work, it rights itself, besides Gavin could not help them saying it. I don't think they will say it next time. Yes 'the Glove' is great – nothing less, and the 'registrary' letter – serene, unapproachable but as you say the 'flood' and the 'island' are not good enough for the Surrey side, let alone the Lyceum.

Indeed all his action is not seen but only described – he does not write out the oot o' doors as if he had leaved there – and Angus is, as you say, uninteresting and the feck o' its folk a kennin' driech. His friend Nicoll, whom I ken well, tells me that when he gangs oot walkin' he sees nocht bu the roadslidin' atween his richt fit an' his left, an' that when Gavin wants to describe a scene in a story, he gangs his way oot and looks at something, syne comes ben an' writes it doon. Which seem to explain mony things.

To my mind 'The Window' is so far finer than 'The Little Minister' that it's a peety he wrote that ava' – and another word in your lug. D'ye think Babbie wad no hae tired o' her guidman, an the bairns saps, an teas to the congregation. There wad hae been aither 'evasion' as Mulvany would say and mair ongauns ower the tongs – besides ither things we needna mention. But gin a body said that they wad say 'Sceptic and scoffer'. Ye dinna believe in the poo'er o' love!' Aye, do I that, but I've been a marriet man a matter o' seeven years and seen life an' death and I ken.

Man, this hoose is a blessed hoose the nicht, wi' that poem o' yours about the whaups. I think I'll hae to mention it a the 'buik' when the lasses come ben sae doucely – though no juist by name. It's something to be thankfu' for. Ye'll no say me nae to prent it on tha page opposite the next edition, noo the Letter Declaratory has dune its work. The second edition (2000) gaed in a month, and the thirds weel through by noo.

What wark am I at? My Love Story is feenished 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' but it's keepit back for American Copyright and the weary 'serial publication' that brings in the sillar. I think there's something in it, though some o't is fantastic, but the grund o' the thing is dour and wull no ding – but I tried to put a' the sunshine o' love intilt, and the heartsome life o' a bettermous farm toon o' sixty years ago. Ye'll ken gin I hae managed it.

'A Cry Across the Black Water' I doot ye'll no like. It's to rin a month or twa in the new 'Pall Mall Magazine'. It's a tragedy but telled as if it were a plain sang; but the atmosphere is as real is I can make it. It's the auld thing a lass' love (gaen wrang) an what it brocht till her. We canna get by that – even you that has juikit it for near aughteen year! Unto this last maun ye come.

Then 'Rogues Island' grows slowly. It's adventure – smugglers, caves, prevantatives, jocketlegs 0- and is I misdoot, aihter sib to Jim Hawkins – thirty second cousin wi a bar the wrang road – that kind o' relation – nae credit to the family I fear. But we maun try oor hand. If it'll no dae, we maun e'en try again.

Again greeting you and that very cordially
I am,
as ever
S.R.Crockett.