

Saranac Lake, Spring 1888

Dear Minister of the Free Kirk at Penicuik -

For O, man, I cannae 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 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 read yon 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 stane. And, man! The buik was ne'er heard tell o!

The fact is an adminicle of excuse for my delay.

And now, dear minister of the illegible name, thanks to you and greeting to your wife, and may you have good guidance in your difficult labours, and a blessing on your life

Robert Louis Stevenson

(No just so young sae young's he was, though -

I'm awfae near forty, man)

Address c/o Charles Scribner's Sons,
743 Braodway, New York.

Don't but 'N.B' in your paper: put Scotland, and be done with it. Alas, that I should 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.

RLS.