

Penicuik

June 23rd 1893.

I am at war with the local PO about the first edition which went along with former letter but apparently it was never despatched from London as insufficiently paid The something on the stamps them they put on the stamps themselves. The book is now lost. I have resent. this.

Dear Louis Stevenson

It's high day and holy day when a letter of yours comes to the manse. This of yours that came today was infinitely touching to us so that for our love of you it made our hearts sore. But yet we were glad of every word even of those that told us that you would. hardly come to Glencorse and the Pentland's side. Ah, may the wind so blow [ ] athwart the world that I may clasp your hand in Samoa before I die. If ever I get a year's holiday I shall spend it in coming to see you. The gods hear my vow.

Some of your letter made me sick, sorry and ashamed of myself - which is a good thing. It was. not your fault then that you did not answer me this time - for Saranak too I am a little sorry for what I said in the "Letter Declaratory" but on that occasion the testimony was true by your own confession.

Yes, I got the letter about our poor folks and assessed Mr Charles Baxter who responded in your name. I gave him a very voluminous epistle to forward to you which he carefully stuck in the cross bands of a correspondence box before him promising to forward to you, very lightly it is there yet. Then once again I wrote, telling you about certain things in which I had to fight a battle against the mighty in Zion the temple (the temporal Zion'of the Denominations) about certain of the widows who were widows in deed but without marriage lines. The lawyers and the pharisees were alike against giving anything to such cases. But all that is by with now and only the poor remain with us. I managed to scrape through and still have to provide for half a dozen whom the fund does not cover. These were the two letters I did not get answered. If you mean that you got and answered them then they never came to the Esk waterside. At least somewhere they were lost twixt Scotland and Samoa. But I shall register in future and I thank thee for the word. I send you the 2nd edition of the Stickit Minister with a letter to yourself which I tried to make lightly touched to keep down the two florid expression of deepest reverence which comes out whenever I write about you. My wife, a wise woman says I would write better about your work if I cared less but I don't think she really means this, She cares quite as much as I about every word you write or print.

How you got into your head that I abused or thought of lightly of the "footnote" I do not know. I am suffering for some other man's misdeeds. I wrote a long article most gallantly defensive of it (in The Standard or St James I forget which) I rejoiced in every word of it - its exactness of phrases the extraordinarily adipose[ ] style, adjectives picked off the bleached bones of the sentences. - I could go on for an hour, for I am no half hearted lover. On my banner is inscribed spite even of certain works in the titles of which the ominous words BLACK and WRONG appear. "RLS can write no wrong" and at the peak "my RLS even when ""Black" and "Wrong" -alkl which is nonsense of course, but as you say of the "Ebb tide" has something in it.

Yes, I was a dumb fool to whine like a beggar at the back of a door that I had no friends; and I crave pardon and restoration to your favour. "The Stickit Minister" has had many friends - many far too friendly and went of 1500 of him in just three weeks. The second edition which has gone off to you today to Samoa before this letter is well through also. There is much to be thankful for. The "Daily Chronicle" which has taken to literature lately with great power and readableness gave me a leader; indeed all the London reviews were good but you know what reviews are and except "The Scotsman" which unfortunately had gathered that I was a free Kirk Minister (not from the book but somehow) only afflicted me for my good. I have been listening to a good deal of writing which is exceedingly friendly and kind. Of course if a man writes in Scotch at all he must be compared to Barrie. the fact that most of the sketches work published serially three years before Barrie issued "Auld Licht Idylls" is of no account. That is all right. Barrie is among the immortals and has his own place. But if I can, I shall grip a spar of the high hen baulks too when I flee up.

I know I write too much and too fast but I have had to be “milk cow” too and journalism is handy. Since the disaster I have not (till this year) got much of a stipend, my senior colleague still drawing from us and I have been able to make sitting here at my desk in Penicuik about £300 a year by journalism which has been a great help to me enabling us me to largely to insure my life and to keep an easy mind about my wife and bairnie's.

But as soon as I can I shall do not a stroke more of it. I got £100 pounds for the serial rights of “The Lilac Sunbonnet” and other £50 for the Continent and America - not much for 90,000 words but the going off of “The Stickit” has enabled AP Watt (excellent man) to get £200 for the serial rights of Rogues Island (of which about 60 pages are written) so that if The Lilac (a love story pure and simple in every sense of these words) goes off of. well as The Stickit” it may be the beginning of a new time for us. I can also get prices (or Watt can get them for me) from any short stories I write. Of course you know all this and no doubt it amuses you. Journalism is anathema of course but with a family and a house what is one to do except only keep a corner for best one's best work untouched by it.

I have finished “The Lilac Sunbonnet” and it is ready to go on Monday. Wish it.well please. Yes I will (grammar correct for a wonder) say a prayer for you at Glencorse. Just where you tell me. Will it surprise you to know that when the bairns land in the morning about us we do not forget at least by remembrance and implication a friend of ours who is in a far island of the sea. No, nor his household either. The sweetheart is also astonishingly affectionate for years she took an old and libellous portrait of you to bed with her. But I must cease and I dare not read this letter to my wife. She would not let me send it. She says that her house is a Stevenson shrine.

I am glad to hear of “The Ebb Tide”. I am on your trail in “Rogues Island” with a choice company of Galloway Blaggards, jocketlegs jabbing upwards and fist laid in the smuggling times. Weir of Hermiston should be great, Perhaps the greatest of all.

Will you give our good wishes to your wife. My wife has a hand hard job to bear with me. I think that she wishes in a kind of way to exchange sympathies with your wife having a suspicion that all writers, even great ones, are ill to leevie wi' as Carlyle's mother said .

Now fair you well. It is sad that Scotland shall see you no more -if it be, as you say. But believe that that not for a day are you out of the thought and the love of many thousands here in Scotland, of whom I and mine are only items that have (perhaps) intruded themselves on you without right or reason.

I can only say again that I if I ever write anything worth reading, I shall owe it to you in largest measure and the lord do so to me and more also if ever I forget or undervalue that fact.

Faithfully and truly yours.

SR Crockett

PS

I wrote the whole Lilac Sunbonnet in a little over two months rising between 4 and 5 and writing in the garden all day. During that time, there has not been a drop of rain. Sun[ ]very glorious above. I finished it yesterday, twenty minutes before a great rain which has now lasted 30 hours without intercession. Of this fact your 24 pages in 21 days makes me ashamed.

SRC