

Vailima
(15Aug 1893)

Dear Mr Crockett, Thank you from my heart, and see, with what dull pedantry I have been tempted to extend your beautiful phrase of prose into three indifferent stanzas. It may amuse you to know that Weir of Hermiston (or The Hanging Judge or whatever the mischief the name of it is going to be) actually centres about the gravestone of the Praying Weaver of Balweary. And when Heathercat is written, if it ever is – O, well, there's another chance for the Societies.

I have carried out my promise and read every word, and while some of your tales are a trifle light and one at least seems too slender and fantastic – qualities that rarely mingle well, the fantastic demanding considerable solidity of texture – the whole book breathes admirably of the soil. The 'Stickit Minister,' 'The Heather Lintie' are two that recur to me particularly; they are drowned in Scotland, they have refreshed me like a visit home. Cleg is a delightful fellow; I enjoyed his acquaintance particularly, likewise that of the Junior Partner. By all accounts you have described at least a possible descent for me in your fickle maiden; daft Elliot blood I have – and now it appears I may also have some of the tide of the Red MacGregors in my veins. So you see I am, byt many directions, sib to your volume.

I have to speak of Gavin Ogilvy, however; he and you are complementary. When I read your first page, The Stickit Minister ploughing, I knew I was in Scotland – and I knew I was not with Gavin Ogilvy. You are out-of-doors; he is within doors. You could die (and I think all the rest of us might be hanged) ere we could write the inimitable tragedy called 'The Glove' in the Window. That is great literature. But ask Barrie to do the scenery and atmosphere of your Stickit one, and where is he? Look at his flood in The Little Minister; it is pitiful. Do you believe in that island? No, no more do I. By different ways ye shall attain. Might I just breathe in your lug that Angus is rather a dreary pairt of the country?

Yours very
Robert Louis Stevenson.

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.

Gray 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 pee-wees crying,
And hear no more at all.