

WELLWOOD (DRAINIEMAN)

The Club House,
St Andrews,
Fife.
June 18th 1898

Well, Dear Man of Drainie,

I have read your poor lad's Seaside Idylls, and in a word I'll tell you just what I think.

Your introduction is very fitting and graceful. It would have been better with more of Wellwood and less quotation. I'd have left out the long passage from Arnold and the sermon - sea experiences. Still, I don't know but you are right and that they give the right tang of crude youth, a flavour I also find in the sketches.

De mortuis, my boy, I will not forget. If the writer were alive and asking for advice I could give it him drastically, and be right.

But being of the Beloved of the gods, I will tell you only the appreciative part of my thinkings.

The sketches are just sketches. Wherever they try to be stories, they fail. Wherever they are transcripts they are admirable and the simplest are the best.

"Jane Anne" is my choice; it is right throughout and the end is admirable. It is just what Jane Anne would do.

Barring the tumbling the newly marrieds out of bed at p 21 the 'wooing' and 'wedding' are also true and rightly felt. That paragraph is true enough, but artistically a mistake - at least in a book of sketches. Don't you think so?

Helen Macleod also in "Willie's Sweetheart" is as good as possible and worthy of Barrie. Better in fact - for Barrie does not have to my mind quite the right feeling for the love in a girl's heart. It is always to him a little humorous, which when a girl means it, it hardly ever is in any aspect. One word of disliking. I don't care about "Jock's conversation" and resent the last paragraph [something] p108 very much. It is a mistake to kill Jock. He should be left well and vigorous, with the Dexterous more dexter than ever.

Wellwood

[As a postscript added at the top of the letter is the following:]

This is a d---d * letter. But I've been so shocked at [reckless] writing that I've taken to an amanuensis - yours my freend is ["ten wanrs"?]!

I couldn't make out whether it was Drainie, Darmie, Damnie, Demmie or what! Nelson publishes some good copy books.

Bank House,
Penicuik,
Midlothian.

19 Aug 1897

My Dear Wellwood,

Your letter was charming and the thanks far too profuse, especially as you sent me much more than the quid pro quo.

Your book I knew before having bought a copy of it at the time (pat me on the head!) but in my various transmigrations and transitions from Continent to Continent, I lost it!

I have re-read it with surprise and pleasure that it should be so good. It is much better than mine. I have also read Norman. he is delightful, and both in breadth and flavour you have done him full justice. Curiously enough I had been reading parts of the big biography which used so aptly but wickedly call a "quarry." It is just that and nothing more. Winstone!

I hope sometime to see you here - what a great night we would have among the books! My kindest regards to yourself and your wife. I have not forgotten your pleasant evening and nor ever will.

Faithfully yours

SR Crockett

[written diagonally across the letter is the following:]

I send this to show how a letter should not be wrote!

I agree with poor Garfield dying at Elberon, who sent Black the message, "Don't write any more 'Macleods of Dare, there is enough tragedy in the world!"

It was delightsome to see you the other night. I wish we saw more of one another.

I am deep in "The Black Douglas" and though it is Sunday I must to my last.

Ever yours

S.R. Crockett

Wellwood

Bank House,
Penicuik,
Midlothian.
The night of [Saturday]
21st August 1897

Dear Wellwood,

I had dictated a letter (and a letter dictated is a letter d---d) but there came your most pleasant and heart helping appreciation of twenty[four] verses. I am glad you see them so exactly as they were. Few, very few have seen them so. RLS the [Bayon sans pens ?] the first of all, and you the last. As you may imagine I don't give them to fools, nor yet to the merely solidly respectable. But I knew I could trust one of the writers of the Praise and Blame with my boyish verses.

Wellwood

The Lochinvar Hotel,
Dalry, Galloway.
August 10 1899

Dear Drainie-man,

Here's my statutory guinea with a great deal of pleasure. We've been "building extensions" and paying for them at Penicuik this year - a new library and dining room with "furniture and carpet most glorious" or it would have been more.

The lyric stirs an ache away back in my heart - I know not why or where or how, something connected with one's lost youth and the days that are no more.

I like "Long, long gone the auroral gold" and "In the dim unheard of seas." "The coasts of Ease" is the only flaw. It doesn't seem to belong somehow.

I bought a copy long ago when I could ill afford it - as wise men would have told me. But in my transmigrations from Continent to Continent, I lost it. I am glad you have let me replace it. I have read it all again, every word. But being wise I won't say which I like best lest they should be (some or most) of the other I [something] singing.

As Barrie sadly said when he and Hardy went to see "Walker - London" and Hardy tried hard to find anything to like, and said now and again "That's good!" "Yes," said Barrie sadly, "but it was [Toole] that put that in!"

I am busy to my ears in a kids' book you will like. I am nearing the confines of forty and little more than a trinity of years will enter me for the third decade - yet my heart is boyish and I would like a pillow fight with all my critics. Heavens but I'd give them some fine dauds about the lugs!

I wish very gladly to meet you and your wife. Sometime you will come here and eh - man, what a nicht we will hae amang the buiks.

My greetings to you, Sir fellow singer (with the clearer voice) of twenty four.

Your Comrade of the Tooth Comb

S.R. Crockett

Wellwood

The Lochinvar Hotel,
Dalry,
Galloway.
Aug 16th 1899

Dear Drainie man,

I was delighted with you not liking the “whimper” analysis and you will find that it affected your imagination more than anything for a long time. And it was true - I have spent many hours and minutes over the de Retz paper and am rewarded by your indignation for all the headaches.

It is delightful, and you couldn't have pleased me better. It is not art, sez you. D—n art, sez I. It is fact and Mr Drainie man has felt it in his tum-tum where all true emotion resides.

Also others, for both in America and here, the Black Douglas/Deil runs after “The Lilac Sunbonnet” [something] beating even “The Raiders.”

Vox populi, vox [odcotorum] say you.

Ah well - the time will tell as it runs. In the meantime the great thing is to do one's best as such days work heaves above the skyline to the east.

[Ever sir?]your friend

S.R.Crockett