

## The Noted Novelist, S. R. Crockett

While S. R. Crockett's adventurous Scotch and American story, "The Isle of the Winds," is securing him a new hold on all of his old readers and winning him not a few new ones by its successful serial publication, he himself has returned, as it were, to his first passion, and is busy writing a series of short stories of the kind that composed "The Stickit Minister," the book that gave him his fame. Like many another, Mr. Crockett began the literary life as a poet, contributing occasional poems to various Scottish newspapers during that tentative period between his graduation from Edinburgh university in 1880 and his call to the ministry in 1886. In the latter year these were collected and published as a book under the title, "Dulce Cor," but even in this more impressive form they did not make Mr. Crockett's anything approaching a household name. For the world at large he remained about as non-existent as he had been before. But immediately on entering the ministry he took charge of the Free Church at Penicuik, a town of about 3,000 inhabitants, lying some twenty miles south of Edinburgh. There the editor of a religious weekly chanced to find him out and requested from him an article on the life of a minister. This was in 1891, when Mr. Crockett was 30 or 31 years old. "Somehow," says he, referring to this request, "I had no time to think it out, and the idea came into my head to scribble a kind of story of a day in the life of a lazy minister."

The idea was carried out; but the story that resulted, Mr. Crockett sent off with the greatest misgiving. It pleased the editor, however, pleased him so much, indeed, that he immediately called on the author by telegraph for more like it. Thereafter, for a long while, Mr. Crockett supplied him a story unfailingly every week, and it was from these weekly stories that the book, "The Stickit Minister," was made up. It appeared in 1893, and what the preceding book of poems had distinctly failed to do for the author, it did doubly. Within a year it had run through six or more editions, and Mr. Crockett's name was known throughout England and America.

### Savors of Scotch Soil.

Mr. Crockett's first stories, and indeed most that have followed them, savor strongly of his native soil. He was born (September 24, 1860) at Duchrae, a village in that southwestern point of Scotland that formed the historic earldom of Galloway, and he came of a sturdy line of farmers. In 1868, when he was 7 or 8 years old, the family moved to Castle Douglas, and there he got most of the schooling that preceded his entrance at Edinburgh university in 1876. This seems to have been a fair amount, notwithstanding the humbleness of the family and a certain tranquility of disposition in the scholar. He pursued some studies that were not in the prescribed course. The elders of the household were rigorous and it was only as he could hide under hayricks and behind stone fences that the more imaginative boy could gratify a desire to read Shakespeare. Following Shakespeare in the line of his literary passions came Scott and Longfellow, and later Carlyle and Stevenson. He has said that on Stevenson and Scott he looks as his masters, and indeed their deep influence on him is easy enough to see in his writings.

Crockett spent four faithful years at the university, taking his degree in 1880, and with true Scottish thrift he lived all the time he was there on less than 10 shillings (\$2.40) a week. For some years after his graduation he traveled over Europe and even into Asia and Africa as tutor to one and another of those fortunate young Englishmen who are permitted to learn their lessons as they roam. He also made a brief trial of journalism in London. But finally he settled himself in the ministry and began that residence at Penicuik, in the course of which fame was won.

To the outsider Mr. Crockett's situation at Penicuik seemed ideal for a man of letters. His ministerial charge insured him a living—small, no doubt, but quite sufficient for a man of simple tastes; and it left him a certain amount of time for study and writing. He dwelt in a cheerful, comfortable house, furnished with a library of 7,000 volumes that he had collected himself according to his own desires and tastes. In pleasant weather he wrote out of doors; for he had about him, insuring his privacy, five acres of land. Though rather out of the world here, he still remained sufficiently of it; for Edinburgh was always near by. London became available now and then and, besides, he made a practice of reading "every London paper, morning and evening, weekly and monthly." Beginning at 5 o'clock, he joyously drove his pen or his typewriter—for he is one of the few authors who compose as easily with the one as with the other—until 8:30, when he took breakfast. How much of the day that followed he was free to apply to his favorite pursuits I don't just know; but usually, as I understand it, a fair portion. So, on the whole, one would have inclined to say that Mr. Crockett could desire nothing better and would abide at Penicuik the remainder of his days. But evidently he regarded his situation a little differently, for he has lately removed from there and is now exclusively an author and submits to be shut up a good part of his time between the walls and fog of London. This is what he has chosen to do now, that the enduring popular-

ity of his writings has set him free, at 39 years of age, to do whatever he may please.

### A Prolific Writer.

In 1894 Mr. Crockett followed "The Stickit Minister" with "The Raiders." Then came, in the order named, "The Lilac Sunbonnet," "Mad Sir Uchred," "The Play Actress," "Bog Myrtle and Peat," "The Men of the Moss Hags" and six or seven other novels, down to "The Isle of the Winds," the one which is just now appearing serially. He is able to produce so abundantly because he produces like his master, Scott, from an accumulated fund of good material. His romances accord with the theory enunciated by himself when he said, a year or two ago: "What people want nowadays is something objective, an artistic version of the facts of real life. The day of the subjective is over for the present—we are all tired of hearing persons analyzing their emotions." Of such of "the facts of real life" as suit his purpose he has made an immense collection. In his library are 200 volumes or more of classified clippings and articles, gathered especially to forward him in his literary work. Then he is all the time running through old books of Scottish history and legend, like the "Galloway legends," a curious volume published about 1840, and he is a great rummager among old unpublished documents, legal, official and family. The choice parts of the matter thus gathered he fuses in the heat of a strong imagination and so produces a story of the life that real men and women have lived, but still a story eminent and individual—no mere mosaic of the commonplace.

Mr. Crockett shows in his person something of the sturdiness and aptitude for good fighting that appear in his novels. He stands nearly six feet in height, shows a breadth of shoulders to match his stature, and in his reddish brown beard and hair, his ruddy cheek and his blue eyes quite meets one's ideal of a man of adventure. Along with his literary, historical and antiquarian interests he has a fondness for the natural sciences, especially for astronomy. He maintains, or at one time did maintain, his own telescope, not a Lick observatory telescope, to be sure, but still a telescope. And he is as versatile in his sports as in his studies; he wheels, he plays golf, he has been a cricketer, he climbs mountains. In short, he exactly meets, both intellectually and physically, our popular phrase, being, if ever there was one, "a mighty good all-around man." May he live long to divert us! E. C. MARTIN.

### The Christmas Feast

By George Du Maurier.

They wrote over to friends in London for the biggest turkey, the biggest plum pudding that could be got for love or money, with mince pies and holly and mistletoe and sturdy, short, thick English sausages; half a Stilton cheese and a sirloin of beef—two sirloins, in case one should not be enough.

For they meant to have a Homeric feast in the studio on Christmas day—Taffy, the Laird, and Little Billee—and invite all the delightful chums I have been trying to describe—Durien, Vincent, Antony, Lorriemer, Carnegie, Petrolicoconese, l'Zouzou and Doder.

The cooking and waiting should be done by Tribby, her friend Angele Boisse, M. and Mme. Vinard and such little Vinards as could be trusted with glass and crockery and mince pies and if that was not enough they would also cook themselves and wait upon



S. R. CROCKETT—AUTHOR OF THE "ISLE OF THE WINDS," A SERIAL NOW RUNNING IN THE SUNDAY BEE.

each other. When dinner was over supper was to follow, with scarcely any interval to speak of; and to partake of this other guests should be bidden—Svengali and Gecko and perhaps one or two more.

Wines and spirits and English beers were procured at great cost and liqueurs of every description—chartreuse, curaca, rotafia de cassis and anisette; no expense was spared.

Also truffled galatines of turkey, tongues, hams, rillettes de Tours, pates de frites gras, fromage d'Italie (which has nothing to do with cheese), saucissons d'Arles and de Lyon, with and without garlic; cold jellies, peppery and salt—everything that French charcutiers and the wives can make out of French pigs, or any other animal whatever, beast, bird or fowl (even cats and rats), for the supper; and sweet jellies and cakes and sweetmeats and confections of all kinds from the famous pastry cook at the corner of the Rue Castiglione. Mouths went watering all day long in joyful anticipation. . . .

Two o'clock—3—4—but no hamper! Darkness had almost set in. It was simply maddening. . . . At length the Laird and Tribby went off in a cab to the station, and lo! before they came back the long-expected hamper arrived, at 6 o'clock.

Suddenly the studio . . . became a scene of the noisiest, busiest and cheerful-

est animation. The three big lamps were lit and all the Chinese lanterns. The pieces of resistance and the pudding were whisked off by Tribby, Angele and Mme. Vinard to other regions, and every one was pressed into preparations for the banquet. There was plenty for idle hands to do. Sausages to be fried for the turkey; stuffing made, and sauces, salads mixed, and punch; holly hung in festoons all round and about—a thousand things. Everybody was so clever and good-humored that nobody got in anybody's way. The cooking of the dinner was almost better fun than the eating of it; and though there were so many cooks, not even the broth was spoiled (cockaleekie, from a receipt of the Laird's).

It was 10 o'clock before they sat down to that most memorable repast. . . .

The waiting was as good as the cooking. Tribby, tall, graceful and stately, and also swift of action, though more like Juno or Diana than Hebe, devoted herself more especially to her own particular favorites—Durien, Taffy, the Laird, Little Billee and Doder and Zouzou—and she served them with all there was of the choicest.

The two little Vinards did their little best; they scrupulously respected the mince pies and only broke two bottles of oil and

one of Harvey sauce. To console them, the Laird took one of them on each knee and gave them of his share of plum pudding and many other unaccustomed good things so bad for their little French tummies.

Then everybody sang in rotation. The Laird, with a capital baritone, sang "He diddle dee for the Lowlands" which was encored.

Little Billee sang "Little Billee" . . . And finally, to the surprise of all, the bold dragon sang (in English) "My Sweet Dear" with such pathos, and in a voice so sweet and high and well in tune, that the audience felt almost weepy in the midst of their jollification, as Englishmen abroad are apt to do when they hear pretty music and think of their dear sisters across the sea or their friends' dear sisters.

Then Svengali and Gecko came and the table had to be laid and decorated anew, for it was supper time. Supper was even jollier than dinner, which had taken off the keen edge of the appetites, so that everyone talked at once—the true test of a successful supper.—(From "Tribby." Copyright, 1895, by Harper & Brothers, New York.)

### How They Dined in Old Times

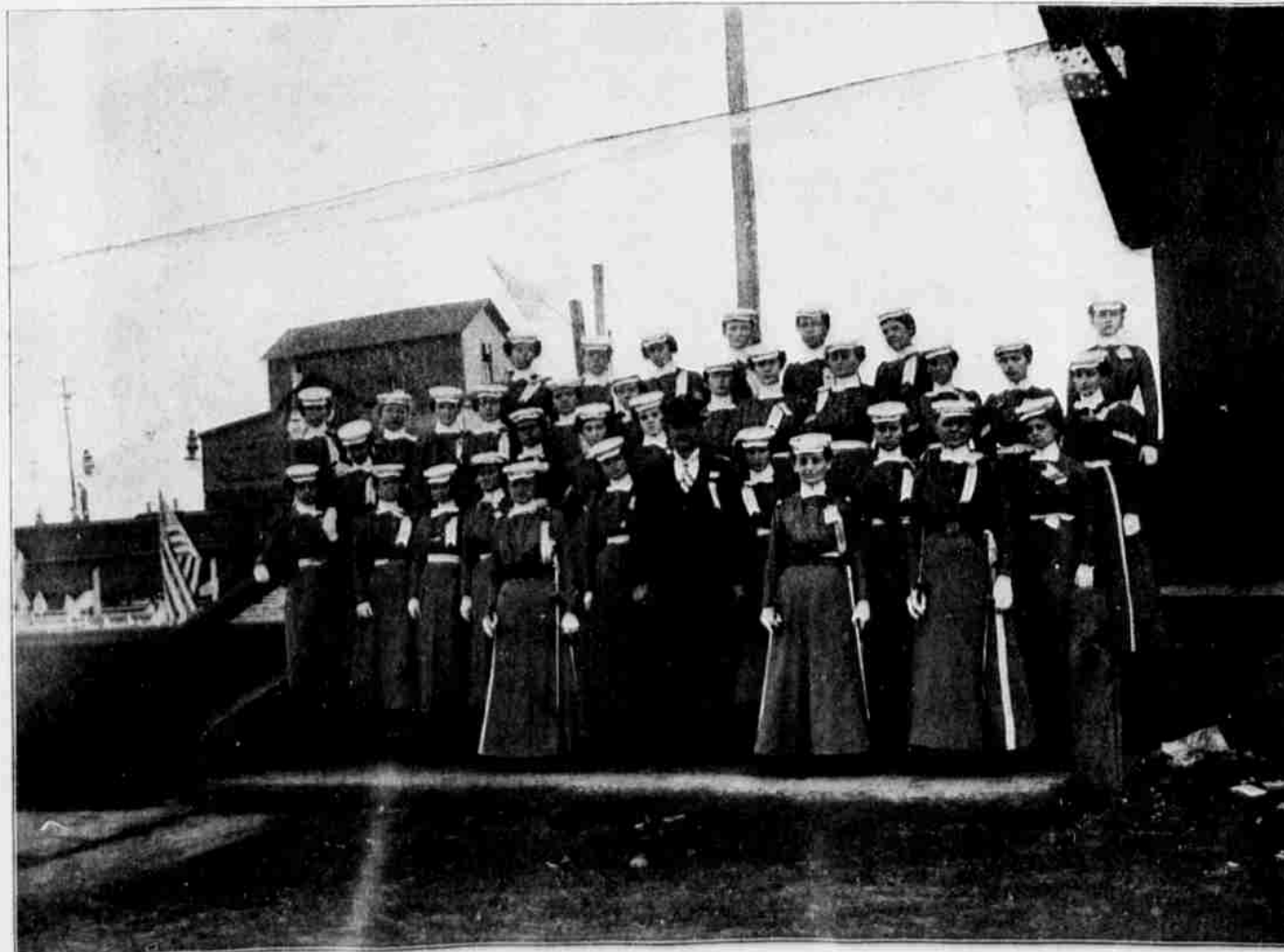
Dinner, somewhere about 10 o'clock in the morning—somewhat later than usual because of the solemnity of the occasion and the unusual extent of the preparations—was the great event of Christmas day in those good old days when knights were bold and barons held their sway. The breakfast was not a matter of so much account, being dispensed in the gray darkness of the winter dawn. This left plenty of time for the appetite to reinvigorate itself and for the clans to get over the revelry of the evening before—which was occasionally prolonged until the utterly reckless hour of 9 o'clock. Every retainer of every noble house was on hand for the dinner, if he had missed the yulelog and lords of misrule performances, for it was the one dinner of the year in which all the culinary and gastronomic resources of the age were fairly exhausted.

A useful functionary called the sewer, a man of gentle birth whose privilege it was to arrange for the details of the feast, was the mediaeval substitute for the modern steward, or major domo. When the jovial information was conveyed to him that everything was in readiness he saw to it that all the lords and ladies, knights and esquires, demoiselles and damseles, gentles and simples, down to the humblest of the members of the household, were all arranged in due order of precedence. Then he was handed the great platter, of precious metal, on which reposed the head of a mighty boar, marked long months before by the foresters as a victim for sacrifice on this auspicious occasion. There was a merry sound of trumpets and shawms, the procession moved and all sung in hungry expectation a combined grace before meat and jubilation to the effect that they returned thanks to the Lord even as they bore the brawny head to the table. This dish, garnished with rosemary and bay leaves, a great red apple within the mighty jaws with their gleaming tusks, had the place of honor, and was duly eaten with mustard and other suitable condiments. This was the first course.

The next most important viand was a testimonial to feminine grace and beauty, just as the boar's head had approved the sportsmanship and valor of the men. As the sewer brought in the one, so did the lady among the guests most distinguished for wit and beauty bring in the peacock. This, from the beginning, had been in the hands of the gentler sex. Delicate hands had stripped the skin from the body of the bird, all the feathers adhering, and, after careful and judicious roasting and stuffing with spices, savory herbs, eggs, nuts and other mouth-watering substances, the body and beak were gilded and the skin with its beauties put back.

After the two chief dishes, corresponding to the roast beef and turkey of a more degenerate and dyspeptic day, came a host of others. Mutton pie was one of these and this came to be superseded by a pie filled with ox-tongue at the end of the sixteenth century, both being the prototype of the modern mince pie, the meat being combined with spices and fruits of many sorts. Another name was shred pies, the equivalent of minced, but they were best known as Christmas pies. There was a relic of superstition clinging to these savory viands and clergymen and Quakers denied themselves its delights, with all that class of devoted folk who accepted the nickname of puritans. Another dish in high esteem was frumenty, made by boiling and cracking whole meat and mixing it with milk and eggs. As an accompaniment to venison it remained unsweetened; as a dish by itself, honey and the like was mingled with it, in default of the sugar of later introduction. Another matter which has survived in modified form down to our own time is the plum pottage or pudding. Aforetime this was prepared by adding to a rich beef or mutton broth a quantity of brown bread. This was then boiled about half and raisins, dried plums, cloves, cinnamon, ginger and other delectabilities added, the boiling concluded and the dish served with the meats. It was not as solid as the dish which has succeeded it, but was often served in a bowl or tureen and ladled out.

To wash down all these comestibles there was wine of Anjou, Gascony and France proper, with good old English ale. Many of these were warmed and spiced and huge quantities of them were consumed.



COMPANY B GUARDS OF VILLISCA, Ia.—Photo by Nickols.