World, it has happened at last! With this inaugural issue Gros Ventre and the Two Medicine country gain their journalistic voice. The Gros Ventre Weekly Gleaner! The name flows easily from the tongue and the news of our prospering community will flow as fluently. Scarce a day goes by without newcomers arriving to enrich this locale with their endeavors, and the Gleaner is more proud than can be put into words, to now join their ranks. Let the future come!—that is our chorus here in God's favorite country.

--Gros Ventre Weekly Gleaner, April 5, 1894

A Montana spring day, which was to say breezy along with sunny, melt and mud along with greening grass and first flowers. I had ridden across the divide between the North Fork and Noon Creek, straight from the schoolhouse. Scorpion was pointed to the country where I had bought him—the Noon Creek schoolhouse that was my destination was nearby Isaac Reese's place—and I wondered if he had horse memories of it.
"Skorp Yun, lad, what about that?" I declaimed. "Is it the case with you that it's home and it's home, home where I would be? Oh home, home, home to my own country?" Scorpion's ears twitched up and I suppose that was my answer, as much as the horse clan was willing to tell a man.

The afternoon was better than my book, which was to call on the new teacher at Noon Creek. I more than half knew what to expect.

"Ramsay is her name," Ninian Uff had reported, "they're a new family to here, down from Canada. Man and wife and daughter. The Mrs. seems to be something of a battle-axe, I do have to say." Coming from Ninian, that was credential indeed. He went on, "They bought the relinquishment up there to the west of Isaac Reese, with a bit of help from Isaac's wallet from what I hear."

Given the basis that Isaac headed the Noon Creek board as Ninian did ours, I couldn't let pass the opportunity to declare: "Now there's the way for a school board to operate."

Ninian broadly ignored that and said, "When you've a spare moment, Angus, you'd do well to stop by the schoolhouse over there and offer hello. Our schools are neighbors and it wouldn't hurt us to be.

"At least not severely," I had to agree, and now Scorpion and I descended from the benchland, a prairie stream twice as twisty as the North Fork ever thought of being. The schoolhouse was much like mine--for that matter, so was its attendant pair of outhouses--except for being all but naked to the wind, Noon Creek providing only a sieving line of willows instead of the South Fork's clump of cottonwoods.
Ask any dozen people and thirteen of them would tell you my schoolsite
was the obvious superior of the two. If pleased with that and armored with
the thought that however howlingly formidable Mrs. Battle-Axe Ramsay might
try to be I still was the senior teacher hereabout, I tied Scorpion beside
the Noon Creek teacher's horse and strode to the schoolhouse.

"Hello, anyone," I called in, and followed my words through the doorway.
A woman did look up from the teacher's desk. A woman my age or less. A woman with strong round cheeks and an exactly proportionate chin and a small neat nose, and with the blackest of black hair and with direct blue eyes. She gave me a half-smile, the rest of her expression as frank as it.

"Hello," she enunciated, although what was being said was And What Is Your Business Here, If Any?

I told her me. And made about as much impression as a sparrow alighting on a stone fence.

"I am called Anna Ramsay," she stated in return.

Hers was a voice which may have paused in Canada but only after fully flowering in Scotland.

"I'm the teacher at the Fork school, over across, Mrs. Ramsay," I said to clarify.

"I am the teacher here," said she, "and it is Miss Ramsay."

I am sure there was an audible time while I traced back to the brain of Ninian the Calvinian. Ninian Duff had told me Mrs. Ramsay was an old battle-axe. He had told me the new Noon Creek teacher could stand a cordial look-in. He had never told me those two formulations did not add up to the same person.

"Yes, well. Miss Ramsay, now."

"I seem to have been misinformed," I understated. "In any case, I came by to say hello"--her look told me that had been done.

"and to see if there's any help I can offer."

"That's kind," she decided. "But I know of none."

In that case, help me and my tongue. What do you think the price of rice in China will reach? Are you the lovely thing you appear to be under the crust?"
"I'm trying to place your voice," I said, true enough in its way: trying to coax the sound of it into my ears for the rest of my days. "Your town in Scotland is--?"

"My town was Brechin." She noticeably did not ask me mine. "Mr. McCaskill, there is one matter you might be able to help me with. I'm in short supply of geography books. This school has a total of one, to be exact. Mr. Hume-right-I promised me some, but he's seeing to horses."

"I have extra," I offered as fast as I could say it. Later would be soon enough to calculate whether or not I actually had any. "You're more than welcome to them."

Anna Ramsay shook that matchless head of hers, but in general perturbation at men who would see to settle before geography, rather than at my offer. "I've had to put the pupils to making their own."

I was as flummoxed as a duck in thunder. "You've--?"

"Yes, they're a bit makeshift but better than nothing," she said and gestured to the stack of them at the corner of her desk. They were pamphlets bound with yarn, with My Montana Book and the pupil's name on the cover. More than just that, the pamphlets were scissored into the shape of the state of Montana--twice as wide as high and the entire left side that curious profile of a face looking down its long nose at Idaho.
I opened the pamphlet proclaiming Dill Egan, grade four, to be its author. Intently—not only was I curious but I was not going to forfeit this opportunity to hover in the near vicinity of Miss Anna Ramsey—as I say, intently I started through the pamphlet pages. Products of Montana, and a hand-drawn map of where gold, copper, cattle, sheep and sundry grains each predominated. Area and Population of Montana, 147,138 square miles and 132,159 persons respectively, and an enstarréd map showing Helena, Bozeman, Great Falls, Billings, Miles City and the 24 county seats. Mountains of Montana and a map showing the western throes of ranges, the Bearpaws and Little Rockies outposting the Bitterroot and Cabinet and Garnet and Mission and Tendoy Tobacco Root and and Big Snowys on and on until the Bearpaws and Little Rockies outposted the eastern majority of the state. Drainages of Montana and yet another map of all the rivers and what must have been every respectable creek as well, with the guiding message east. Drainages of Montana. The Continental Divide separates the Atlantic and the Pacific slopes. Railroads of Montana. Minerals of Montana—
I swallowed hard. Anna Ramsay's ten-year-olds all too evidently knew more about Montana than I did. Every one of them a Crockett in the bud. I took a look around me. High on the blackboard was chalked the majestically scripted single word:

**chilblain**

Other than it, the blackboard was freshly cleaned. The best I could come up with was: "Your chalk keeps talking after school, does it?"

"Yes, that's tomorrow's word," she explained. "I write a different one there for each day. That way, when the pupils' eyes wander around the room, they at least are looking at how one word of the language is spelled."

"A sound principle," I concur, wishing I'd thought of it the first day I stepped into my South Fork classroom. Contemplate the miracle of **chilblain** spelling itself, even approximately, into the mind of Daniel Rozier. My eyes moved on from the blackboard.

Her schoolroom shined like the Queen's kitchen. Adam Wilcox, could you have come into our two classrooms, I have no doubt whom you would have instantly seen to be the better teacher.

"You were a teacher in Scotland?" I somewhat unnecessarily asked.
"In a dame school." She came somewhere close to smiling as she added: "This is different."

I wanted to sing out to her, so are you, so are you. I wanted to hang Ninian Duff from a high tree by his beard. I wanted to go back out that schoolhouse door, turn myself around three times, and start this anew. I wanted—instead I managed to draw in enough breath to clear my head and free up my tongue: "I'll bring the geography books for you. Tomorrow, I even could. If there's anything else you need—"

"Mr. Fairweather will be back from his beloved house any day. It's his job to see that I have what the school needs. Mr. McCaskill, thank you for coming."

"It's been my pleasure, Miss Ramsay."
Riding home, I was the next thing beyond giddy. Scorpion must have
compassed his own route around the west shoulder of Breed Butte and down
to my homestead, or he and I would be circling there yet.

Oh, I tried to tell myself whoa and slow. And by the time I'd
cooked supper I had myself half-believing I was sane again. Steady,
don't rush in. For that matter, Miss Anna Ramsay did not look anything
like a person who could be rushed. Nor had I made a grand job of
introducing myself to her.

But I did go to bed with the thought that nothing would keep me
from delivering those geography books to her, tomorrow.
"This was kind of you"—she, even more glorious on second look.

"To make the ride over here so soon again."

"Not at all"—myself, earnest without even trying. "If one schoolkeeper can't lend a hand to another schoolkeeper, the world is a poor place."

Just over Anna's head as she stood facing me was her blackboard word for today, accommodate, which for the first time in my life I noticed contains more than one m.

"Before you go"—I had no thought of that—"I do have something further I wonder if you could advise me about, Mr. McCaskill."

"Miss Ramsay, if I can I will. What?"

"How do you keep the big boys from playing pranks that have to do with"—she never blinked—"the girls' outhouse?"

With all possible discretion I outlined to her the curative effects of the boys having to go in the brush. Throughout, she regarded me steadily. Then she swung to the schoolroom window and studied the willow supply along the creek. I stored away forever the fact that her braid swung almost all the way down her back. Evidently she judged the Noon Creek willows ample to their duty, sufficient thatch of them to screen a boy but not enough to thwart the cold seeking nose of the wind, for she turned around to me and nodded. "Yes, that should do it. Thank you for that advice, Mr. McCaskill. Well. I have grading—"
"As do I," I put in, as accommodating as can be imagined. "But now

question I have for you. I've seen your school, and I'd like you to see

mine. We're holding a dance, Saturday next week. Could I see you there?"

She grew as intent as if I'd thrown her a major problem in multiplication.

"It's early to say." Seeing my hope "up", she provided me a half-smile

to "pick" it back up. "But possibly--"

"I could come for you."

"That won't be necessary."

"Oh, no trouble."

"But it would be." She was looking at me a bit askance, as if

wondering how a grown man could not see that an extra stint on horseback
equalled inconveniences for him. Anna Ramsay plainly could out-teach me

was at least one variety of

in geography, but there were kinds of arithmetic she didn't yet understand. "I'm sure others from Noon Creek will be attending," she spelled out for me, "and I can come with them."

Come in a congregation, come by your lovely lone self, but just come. come dogback or come in a purple carriage with wheels of gold, but just come.

Aloud, I granted: "A sensible solution. I'll see you then, on the night."
When Rob next came over, he greeted me with: "And how is life among you schoolkeepers?"

Already. The way news flew in a country with so few tongues to relay it, I never would comprehend. "What can I tell you, you seem to know at least as much about my doings as I do."

"Just because there's a fresh path worn this deep"—he indicated to his knee—"between the South Fork schoolhouse and the Noon Creek schoolhouse, I thought I might inquire."

"Well, you have." But I couldn't be miffed where Anna was concerned.

"She needed some help on a geography matter."

"Geography," Rob mused. "Now that's a new word for it."

However far gone Rob thought I was down romance's road, he didn't know half of it. I was Anna dizzy, in an Anna tizzy.
INSERT: Angus's mood, hopes
You could have counted the days on my face. I went from remorse again at how long it would be until I laid eyes on Anna, to fevers. I wouldn't be prepared when I did. One morning I was gravely giving arithmetic twice in one morning, that I already had done so, an hour before. And I suppose all the pupils were surprised by the onslaught of geography that hit them.
One thing I did know for dead-certain, and this was that my schoolhouse was going to be ready to dance. At the close of class that day I prevailed on Davy Erskine to stay after and help me, and we moved the rows of desks along the walls and pushed my desk into a corner. Davy took out the stove ashes while I filled lanterns and trimmed wicks. There never has been a boy enthusiastic about a broom, so I swept the floor myself in solid Medicine Lodge swamping style and put Davy to wiping the windows with old copies of the Choteau Quill.

"But Mr. McCaskill, it'll be dark out, why do the windows need to be clean?"

"On account of the moonbeams, Davy. You've got to let the moonbeams in on a dance, or people's feet will stick to the floor. Did you not know moonbeams are slick as soap, Davy?"

Davy gaped at me as if I already was askate on moonbeams, but he did the windows fine. Next I had him wash the blackboard, then fill our bucket with fresh drinking water from the creek. I swept and hummed, dusted and hummed, I even straightened the pictures of George and Abraham and gave them each a hum of joy, they always looked like they needed one.
"Do you know the tune, Davie?" I asked, for it seemed to me a dim prospect that anyone should go through life knowing only songs of 

and whistle, Willie Young!

There's sheep's head in our pot

and you'll get the tongue!"

Davie whipped through the last of his tasks as if afraid my lunacy might be catching. "Is there anything more, Mr. McCaskill?"
"Is there anything more, Mr. McCaskill?" Davy asked at last.

"You've more than earned supper, Davy. And thanks the world, for your help here." I fished in my purse and handed him a coin.

From the size of Davy's eyes it was more of a coin than I'd intended, but no matter.

There was a thing more I wanted done, but I needed to be the doer.

I went to the freshly washed blackboard and in my best hand, which was an urchin's scrawl compared to Anna Ramsay's, wrote:

"Dancing at the rascal fair,
try it only if you dare,
hoof and shoe, stag and mare,
dancing at the rascal fair."
By last light, the sun behind a peak called Phantom Woman and dusk graying the valley, people came.

Rob and Judith. The Duffs and Erskines.

I scattered oatmeal on the floor to help the moonbeams with our gliding.

George Frew as ever was our fiddler, and the night began with the high beautiful tune of Green Glens of Strathspay. I took a diplomatic first turn with Mavis toward convincing her that while I might never run a school the way she did, my dancing made up for it.

Archie and Gra Findlater came.

The Hahns and Oos and Oos. The Herring Lasses' Reel. The Roziers from

Kuvvus and Sadguvus from town.

down the main creek, the Oos from Oos, they came and came.

The first time we stopped to blow, Rob looked over his shoulder to be sure Mavis Milgrim Frew was not in hearing and said, "This place dances better since you're the schoolkeeper. What, have you put springs under the floor?"

I was gazing around fondly, waiting what—who—I knew would come. Must come. "Owe it to George, not me. He fiddles better as a married man."

Judith put in, "There's a lesson there for you, Angus."

"You mean if I married, I'd be able to play the fiddle? Judith, that's surprising. What would I have to do to be able to play the piano?"
Rob laughed and batted my shoulder while Judith mocked a huff and declared: "Angus, you are just impossible." Ah, Judith, but I no longer was.

I was purely possible. I was possibility with its wings ready, these days. But I mollified Judith though, "yet I}

Rob, there's paper and pen in my desk there, if you'd like to make note how Judith and I do this."

"I'm lending her to you with two sound feet, so bring her back unbroken, hear?"

"Unbroken, nothing. She'll be improved." And Judith and I swung away together, Rob's two closest people in this world, who once had kissed hotly at one of these gatherings and could grin a little rue at each other that we never would again.

The music flowed and the sweat rolled. Thank heaven George Frew's fiddling arm was as oaken as the rest of him. He taught us a square called Bunch to the Middle dance, and we danced it until the floor would remember every step of it.
By the holy, I loved these people. This night I loved all of the Two Medicine country. Scotch Heaven, Montana, America, the sky over and the earth under. Who could not?

What I loved strongest came through the door in a dark blue skirt and white shirtwaist and a big brooch at her throat. Anna and her mother Wainwrights and Egans and father and others from Noon Creek, the Goo Goo and Isaac Reese, all come in one wagon, and now entering our tuneful school eager for the reward of that ride.

"Welcome across the waters," Rob called out and drew a laugh along South Fork and from all. The North Fork and Noon Creek taken together, you could still skim your hat across.

"I brought the Ramsays to translate for us," responded Thad Wainwright. "I might've the only heaven I'd get into I have to learn Scotch to do it."

"God works in mysterious ways, Thad, but we're pretty sure he wears a kilt," Rob assured him.

That was more than the Duffs and a few others could listen to, so onto the dance floor they stepped. They were right, too, for why stand talking when you can be dancing?
I bided my time for a small eternity—it must have been fully the next two tunes' worth—until I saw a chance to go over and greet Anna alone. "I see your chalk keeps talking after school, too," she said of my rascally fair verse in white on the blackboard.

"It must have caught the habit somewhere. Do you know, that chalk took me by the hand as I was walking past and made me write that?"

"I suppose you objected strenuously all the while?"

"Objecting is a thing I try not to believe in, particularly the strenuous kind. Just for example, I'm hoping you won't object to a turn around the floor with me right now? Sir Patrick MacWhirr wasn't meant to be stood to."

A flicker went through her steady eyes, but if that was hesitation I'll never mind a dose so small. Here came something else I'd hoped, her sidelong smile. Then, writing in the air as if onto her schoolroom blackboard, she pronounced for me with vast deliberation: "unobjectionable."

And onto the dance floor I pranced with her.
"And would you object to a turn around the floor with me right now? The 60-kg wasn't meant to be stood to."

A flicker went through her eyes, but if that was hesitation I'll never mind it. "Unobjectionable," she said, writing it in the air as if onto her schoolroom blackboard, and in I pranced with her.

To Noroway, to Noroway,
To Noroway over the foam;
Fair bride from the King's daughter of Noroway-

oh, Sir Pat, Sir Pat, Sir Pat, Sir Pat--
'Tis thee must bring her home.

"I hope there's a floor left for my pupils, after tonight."

"If there's not, you'll have to teach outside like the ancient Greeks."

Small wonder all they ever knew how to talk was Greek. Think the tongues they'd speak if they'd gone to school to the pair of us." She had to laugh, and so did my heart. Anna was alive with loveliness, she was mine for as long as I could make the moment. "And what would they think of this at the Dame School?"

I saw the new moon, late yester e'en,
with the old moon in her arm;
and if we go to sea, my dear queen--

oh, dear queen, dear queen, dear queen, dear queen--

I fear we must come to harm.
"They would think this Scotch Heaven of yours is a shameless place," she retorted promptly. "Dancing in a place of learning. Look, even your Presidents think so." The jounce of the dancing had tilted Washington and Lincoln toward each other, and they did look like two old streetcorner solemnists, confiding the world's latest waywardness to each other.

"I hope that's not what you think."

"If a schoolhouse is the only place big enough for a dance, then the schoolhouse should be used."

"And so we'll be dancing next at Noon Creek, will we?"

I particularly meant the two of us. She only granted, "The school board has the say of that. But I'll not object."

The sails were hoist on Monday morn,

the wind came up on Wednesday;

it blew and blew and blew some more—

oh, Sir Pat and Queen, Sir Pat and Queen—

blew Sir Pat and Queen from Norway.
My aim that night was to dance with Anna enough times to ratify us as a couple, yet not so many as to alarm her. So I didn't mind—much—when Allan Frew took a turn with her.

From his doggish look toward me I knew that Allan knew I would pound him back to milkteeth if he tried seriously to get in my way with Anna.

She even went a few rounds with Isaac Reese and made him look and his drooping mustache look almost presentable. Then Rob danced with Anna while I did with Judith, and I saw Judith's eyebrow inch up at Rob's chat there, but I knew that was just him being him. I thanked my stars that Rob was not in the running with me for Anna. Indeed, peer along the lovelit road ahead as far as I could, I saw no one else who was. Which was wondrous and sobering and exhilarating and so all together, bewildering and intimidating and sublime all in the same pot together.
two women there, and she moved like a rumor.
"What, no bagpipes?" Thad wondered. No drums, no bugles, no tinsels of war. Lord of Mercy, when was the world going to quit thinking of us as wild Highlanders?

"We thought there's enough wind in this country without making more," Thad.

I told him, "With all you Scotchmen here under one roof, "It's kind of disappointing though, you know? Here Mary and I thought we were going to see some real flinging." Winian came by...

The Noon Creek rancher chuckled a regret and moved on.

My verse on the blackboard spoke to me over Thad's retreating shoulder. It made me remember aloud to Rob: "Fergus the Dervish,"

Rob roared a laugh. "Fergus and his Highland whoops! He'd show Thad some steps."

"Why don't we? We saw Fergus plenty of times."

"You think we can?"

"Man, is there something we can't do?"

"We haven't found it yet. You're right, you're right, it takes Barclay and McCaskill to show these Noon Creek geezers what dancing is."

"McCaskill and Barclay," I corrected him, "but you're right other than that.

See if our man George can play Tam Lin, why not, while I tend to something else."

Apprehensively, Judith began: "Now, you two--"

"No, love, it's we three, you're into this too. And whoever Angus can inveigle into risking her--"

I was across the room before my feet knew they were moving. I hadn't
a wisp of clue as to how this person Anna would react to a dancing exhibiton. But by the help, here was the time of times to find out.

"It's all for the cause of education, of course," I prattled to her while those direct blue eyes worked on me. "Instruction for the world at large, think of it as."

The smile I wanted began to sidle onto her face. "I'll believe you," said Miss Anna Ramsay and lightly grasped the arm I proffered, "but thousands would not."

Oh, you must beware, maidens all,
who wear gold in your hair.

Don't come or go by Linfield Hall
for young Tam Lin is there.

Dark and deep lay the wood of night
and eerie was the way
as fair Janet with hair so bright
toward Linfield Hall did stray.

I grant that other nationalities are known to dance, but it is
my belief they must have learned how from the Scots. You can't but admit that a land of both John Knox and Robert Burns is nimble, and we like to think that quality comes out both ends, head and feet. Earlier that night I danced a reel with Flora Duff, who was wide as any other
two women there, and she moved like a rumor. And now Rob and Judith
and Anna and I were the four-hearted dancer of all dancers, gliding to
and from, following the weave of the tune, saluting the night and life
with our every motion and capping them all with the time-stopping
moment when Rob and I faced one another, each with a hand on a hip and the other
bent high abovehead, and our two throats as one flung the exultant
Highland cry, hiiyuh!

Her skirt was of the grass-green silk
her cloak of velvet fine
about her neck so white as milk
fox-red furs entwine.

About the dead hour of the night
she heard Tam's bridles ring
and Janet was as glad of that
as any earthly thing.

Put away geography and numeration and the Presidents from yon to
hither, pupils of mine and of my partner in whirl Anna, and write for
us books of that dance. Scissor her lovely profile down the left of
your pages and in eternal ink say how forthright she is even when set
to music, Miss Ramsay seems to look into the face of the tune in the
air and say, yes, you are what music should be. Make an exact report,
for I will want to know from this moment on, the way she and I blend
into a single dancing figure and then sift swiftly into two again and
then next meld with Rob and Judith. Please find a line somewhere there,
too, for the Scotch Heaven serenade this schoolroom has never heard
before tonight: hiiiyuhhh!

She heard the horseman's silv'ry call,
'Come braid your golden hair
in the fine manse of Linfield Hall
for I, Tam Lin, am there.'

She went within that hall of Lin
fair Janet on her ride
and now you maidens know wherein
dwell Tam Lin and his bride.

HiiiyUHHHHH! Our final whoop, Rob and I agreed, could have been
heard by old Fergus the Dervish himself wherever he was cavorting in
Scotland just then.
I got myself beside her as the goodbying was going on, and said:

"You know, of course, tonight was a mark the Noon Creek dance will have to match."

"We'll strive," she answered.

"It'll not be easy. Much of the music of the world got used up tonight."

"We'll dust off what's left, from you needn't worry," she answered.

By now I know you're not a man for standing."

"There, you see, a mere few hours in my schoolroom and you've already learned something." Her parents were waiting at the door, I was getting heavy looks from her mother.

"Well. Goodnight, I finally had to say.

"Yes." A bit slow from her too, I noted with hope. "Goodnight, Angus."

"See, Goodnight," blurted

But before she could turn, I managed to say: "Anna, I'd like to call on you."

That direct look of hers. "Then why don't you?"
A fly buzzed uselessly against the window of the Ramsay parlor, herald of my audience thus far with Anna's parents.

"So, Mr. McCaskill, you are of Forfar," speaks the dragon. "That surprises me." Margaret Ramsay, mother of Anna, looked like she could out-general Wellington. A drawn, bony sort of woman with none of Anna's adventurous curves, she seemed to have room in herself only for skepticism toward the male race. Beside her sat probably her prime reason for that. Peter Ramsay was a plump placid man who sat with his hands resting on his belly, the first finger of his right hand gripped in his left, in the manner a cow's teat would be grasped. Ready to milk one hand with his other and evidently content to spend a lifetime at it. It stretched my imagination several ways beyond usual, as to how these two persons could have made Anna.

I was trying to be careful with my tongue, but: "I'd be interested to know, Mrs. Ramsay, in what aspect I look so different from other Forfar folk. My face, is it? I should have put on my other one."

If vinegar can smile, Margaret Ramsay smiled. "Of course I meant surprised to find someone from Forfar so near at hand here in Montana."
"You were schooled where?" she asked.

"At a 'venture school in Nethermuir."

"Anna and I both matriculated from Dame School in Brechin."

"So I understand." I am a famous scholar, see! Graddyated and trickle-ated, me. I've been to Rome in Germany and seen the snows of Araby. I swallowed that safely away and put forth: "Education is the garment that never wears, they say."

"And what of your family?"

I looked squarely at her. "Dead," I said.

Margaret Ramsay regarded me. "I mean, of course, what of them in life."

My father the ironhand, encased in his deafness; my mother the mill worker... Try sometime to put that into parlor speech. Anna was interested and encouraging--Anna could do me no wrong--but it was uphill all the way, trying to tell of the wheelshop years.

The Ramsay place all but touched the mountains. Until humans learned to hang to the side of a crag with one hand and tend livestock with the other, here was as far as settlement could go. Isaac Reese, on his horse ranch was the only neighbor near. I hoped these Ramsays knew what they were in for when winter's winter, which is to say January and February, came howling down from the mountains.
I could see the rock face of Jericho Reef through the curtain, the window where they fly was OOiing. "You've seen Bell Rock, off from Arbroath?"

"I passed it on a schooner once," spoke Peter Ramsay, his full contribution to that day's conversation. "Surprising."

I told of Alexander McCaskill at Bell Rock, and if the impression was left that my great-grandfather had been the right hand of the colossal Stevenson throughout the construction, it did not bother me.

"Interesting," granted Margaret Ramsay.
"I'll walk out with you," Anna said when it came my time to go.

Air was never more welcome to me. Whoof. Mons Meg Ramsay was going to be something to put up with, but Anna was worth all.

As soon as we were out of sight around a corner of the house, I put her hand on the back of mine and urged, "Quick, give me a pinch."

She lightly did and asked, "And what was that for?" "I needed to be sure my skin is still on me."

She had to smile. "You did well. Even Mother thought so, I could tell."

"Well enough to be rewarded by my favorite teacher?"

Anna let me kiss her. Then she gave my arm a squeeze, and went back to the house.

As Scorpion and I rounded Breed Butte, the places on my body counted themselves up. That joking pinch, the squeeze of our lips, the squeeze of my arm. Not as great a total as I was capable of imagining, but a sum is worthwhile.
Not that we were alone in tint. Our steerage compartment proved to be the forward one for single men—we learned rapidly that the single women were farthest aft, and between them and us were quartered the married couples and a population of children—and while not everybody was young our shipmates were all as new as we to voyaging. Berths were in upper and lower tiers with a passageway not a yard wide between them, and the two dozen of us bumped and backed and swirled like a herd of colts trying to establish ourselves.

I am tall, and the inside of the ship was not tall. Twice in the first minutes of steerage life I cracked myself.

"You'll be hammered down to my size by the time we reach the other shore," Rob came out with, and those around us laughed. I grinned the matter away but I didn't much like it, either the prospect of a hunched journey to America or the public comment about my altitude.

Less did I like the location of Steerage Number One. So far below the open deck, down stair after stair into the iron gut of the ship.
As to our compartment mates, a bit of listening told us that some
were of a fifty going to settle in Manitoba, others of a fifty that
was choosing Alberta for a future. The two heavenly climes were
argued back and forth by their factions, with recitations of rainfall
and crop yields and salubrious health effects and imminence of railroads,
but no minds were changed, these being Scotch minds. Eventually
someone deigned to ask we neutral pair what our destination might be.

"Montana," Rob told them as if it was Eden's best neighborhood.
"I've an uncle there."

"What does the man do there," sang out an Alberta adherent,
"besides boast of you as a nephew? Montana is all mountains, like
the name of it."

"He's a mine owner," Rob reported, and this drew us new looks
from our compartment mates. Rob, though, could not quit while he
was ahead. "A silver mine, called the Great Maybe."

All of steerage except the two of us thought that deserved the
biggest laugh there was, and for the next days we were known as the
Maybe Miners. Well, they could laugh like parrots at a bagpiper. It
was worth that and more, to have Lucas Barclay there in Montana ahead of us.
"Here I am, gents," announced a new voice, that of a steward.

"Your shepherd while at sea. First business is three shillings from you each. That's for mattress and tin to eat with and the finest saltwater soap you've ever scraped yourself with." Along with everyone else Rob and I had to buy soap and straw mattress, but we'd brought our own tinware, on Crofutt's advice.

"Up?" offered Rob now, with a sympathetic toss of his head. I agreed readily and back up to deck we climbed, to see how the Jemmy's departure was done.

At high tide on the Clyde, when the steam tug arrived to tow this ship of ours to deep water at the Tail of the Bank, Rob turned to me and lifted his cap in mock congratulation.

"We're halfway there," he assured me.

"Only the wet part left, you're telling me."

"Just damp underfoot, try to think of it as."

"I am trying, man. And I'd still just as soon walk to America."

"Or we could ride on each other's shoulders, what if?" Rob kept on gaily. "No, Angus, this steam yacht is the way to travel." Like the grandest of没事, he patted the rail of the Jemmy and proclaimed:
"See now, this is proper style for going to America and Montana."

America. Montana. Those words with their ends open. Those words that were ever in the four corners of my mind, and I am sure Rob's too, all the minutes since we had left Nethermuir. I can hear that pair of words yet, through all the time since, the pronunciation Rob gave them that day. America and Montana echoed and echoed in us, right through my mistrust of journeying on water, past Rob's fondness for flippance, into the tunnels of our bones. For with the *Jemmy* underway out the Firth of Clyde, we now were threading our lives into the open beckon of those words. Like Lucas Barclay before us, we were on our way to be Americans. To be—what did they call themselves in that far place Montana? Montanese? Montanians? Montaniards?

Whatever that denomination was, the two of us were going to be its next members, with full feathers on.
As Rob and I watched Greenock vanish behind the turn of the Firth, he gave my shoulder a push. "Argus, about this water. You'll grow used to it, man. Half of Scotland has made this voyage by now." I was touched by this, Rob's concern for me, even though I'd hoped I was keeping my Atlantic apprehensions within.
The way they resounded around me. "But the way they kept resounding in there—Are we both for it?

Both. With your eyes open. With no divided heart—I suppose it was a wonder the entire ship wasn't hearing them like the thump of a drum.

"I seem to belong to the half without fins," I rejoined. "Not free all of us spent our spare time splashing in the Carrou."

"Poor River. This Clyde makes it look like a piddle, doesn't it?"

Littler than that, actually. We from an eastern town such as Nethermuir were born thinking that the fishing ports of our counties of Fife and Forfar and Kincardine and Aberdeen were the rightful entrances to the ocean, so Rob and I had the natural attitude that these emigration steamships of Greenock and Glasgow went out the back door of Scotland.

The Firth of Clyde now was our lesson to the contrary.

The water was wide everywhere around us, and arms of it reached constantly between the hills of the shore, and islands were stood here and there on the grey breadth as casually as haycocks.

Out and out the Jemmy steamed, and still there were hilly shores. Ayr. Argyll. Arran somewhere ahead. This west of Scotland perhaps all sounded like gargle, but it was handsome land. Heath and cliff
the Highlands tucked villages and the green neatness of fields for trim.

And each last inch of it everlastingly owned by those higher than Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay, I reminded myself. Those whose names began with Lord. Those who had the banks and mills. Those who could watch from their fat fields the emigrant ships steam past with us.

This day was the year's longest, first of summer, and daylight lingered along with the shore. Rain came and went at the edges of the Firth. You saw a far summit, its rock brows, and then didn't.

As if hearing my thoughts, Rob declared: "We can be our own men there."

He meant America, I knew.
Harbour Mishap at Greenock. Yesterday morning, while a horse and cart were conveying 6 creels of sugar on the quay at Albert Harbour, one of the wheels of the cart caught a mooring stanchion, which caused horse and cart to fall over into the water. The poor animal made desperate efforts to free itself, and was successful in casting off all the harness except the collar, which, being attached to the laden cart, held its head under water until it was drowned. The dead animal and the cart were raised during the forenoon by the Greenock harbour diver.

--Glasgow Caledonian, June 22, 1889

To say the truth, it was not how I expected--stepping off toward America past a drowned horse.

You would remember too well, Rob, that I already was of more than one mind about the Atlantic Ocean. And here we were, not even within eyeshot of the big water, not even out onto the Clyde yet, and here this heap of creature that would make, what, four times the sum total of Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskill, here on the Greenock dock it lay gawping up at us with a wild dead eye. Strider of the earth not an hour ago, wet rack of carcass now. A chalk lesson like that
a lot of a man who cannot swim. Or at least who never has.

But depend on you, Rob. In those times you could make light of the worst. You cocked your head in that way of yours and out came:

"See now, Angus. So long as we don't let them hitch a cart to us we'll be safe as saints."

"A good enough theory," I had to agree, "as far as it goes."

Then came commotion, the grieved sugar carter bursting out "Oh Ginger dear, why did ye have to tumble?" and various dockmen shouting around him and a blinkered team of horses being brought to drag their dead ilk away.

Hastily a whiskered geezer from the Cumbrae Steamship Line was waving the rest of us along: "You're for the James Watt? Right ahead, the step to it, please, thank you."

queue there, New York at its other end, More heartening now than noble watery example, this, and so we went and got onto line with our fellow steerage ticket-holders beside the bulk of the steamship. Our fellow Scotland-leavers, each and every of us openly staring sidelong at this black iron island that was to carry us to America.

Over our heads deckhands were going through the motions of some groaning chore I couldn't begin to figure. "Now if this was fresh water, like," sang out one above the dirge of their task. "I'd wager ye a guinea this harbor'd right now taste sweet as treacle."
"But it's not, ye bleedin' daftie. The bleedin' Clyde is tide
salt from the Tail of the Bank the full way up to bleedin' Glasgow,
now en't it? And what to hell kind of concoction are ye going to get
when ye mix sugar and salt?"

"Ask that bedamned cook," put in a third. "All the time he must
be doing it, else why's our mess taste like what the China dog walked
away from?" As emphasis he spat a throat gob over the side into the
harbor water, and my stomach joined my heart in doubt about this
journey of ours. A week and a half of the Atlantic and uncertain
food besides?

The steerage queue seemed eternal. Seagulls mocked the line of
us with sharp cries. What was I, or my generation, that I should get
such exaltation? A mist verging on rain dimmed out the Renfrewshire hills
beyond Greenock's uncountable roofs. Even you looked a bit ill at
ease with this wait, Rob, squinting now and again at the ship as if
calculating how it was that this much metal could float. I started
to say aloud that if Noah had taken this much time to load the ark
only the giraffes would have lasted through the deluge, but that was
remindful of the drowned horse again.

Awful, what a person lets himself do to himself. There I stood
on that Greenock dock, wanting more than anything else in this world
not to step aboard that iron ship; and wanting just as desperately
to do so. Oh, I knew what was contending within me. We had a book--
Crofutt's Trans-Atlantic Emigrants' Guide--and my ailment was in it.
Crofutt was our instructor that a shilling was worth 2½ American cents, and what postal stamps cost in the big country, and that when it was midnight in Scotland the clocks of Montana were striking just five of the afternoon. Crofutt told this, too: Do not emigrate in a fever, but consider the question in every aspect. The mother country must be left behind, all the family ties, the old associations, broken. Be sure that you look at the dark side of the picture: the broad Atlantic, the dusty ride to the great West, the scorching sun, the cold winter—coldest ever you experienced!—and the hard work. But if you finally, with your eyes open, decide to emigrate, do it like a man, with no divided heart.

Right advice, to keep your heart in one pure piece. But easier seen than followed. At least in my case.

I knew I oughtn't, but I turned and looked up the river, east up the great broad trough of the Clyde. East into yesterday, may as well say. For it was only the day before that the pair of us had been hurled almost all the way across Scotland by train from Nethermuir into Glasgow. A further train across the Clyde bridge and westward alongside mile upon mile of the river's tideflats and their smell. Then here came Greenock to us, all its shipyards and docks, the chimney stalks of its sugar refineries, its sharp church spires high, high above all and high above then its municipal tower of crisp new stone the color of
pie crust. It took just that first look to know Greenock was a more going town than our Nethermuir could be in ten centuries. For night, we bedded where the emigration agent had advised, the Model Boarding House. Which may have been a model of something but boarding wasn't it. Then this morning, Greenock true to reputation waking into rain but every Scotsman has seen rain before and so off we set, to ask our way to the Cumbrae Line's moorage, to the James Watt, and to be told in a Clydeside gabble it took the both of us to understand:

"The Jemmy, lads? Ye wan' tae gi doon tae Pa'r'ick Street!"

And there at the foot of Patrick Street was the Albert Harbor, there was the green-funnelled steam swimmer to America, there were the two of us.

The Rob you were.

For I can't but think of you then, Rob. In all that we said to each other, before and thereafter, that step from our old land to our new was flat fact with you. The Atlantic Ocean and the American continent all the way across to Montana were but the width of a cottage threshold, so far as you ever let on. No second guessing, never a might-have-done-instead out of our Rob. A silence too total, I realize at last. You had family and a trade to scan back at in Nethermuir and I had none of either, yet I was the one giving puppy looks up the Clyde to yesterday.

Man, man, what I would give to know. Under the stream of words with which we talked each other into our long step to America, what were your deep reasons?

I am late about asking, yes. Years and years and years late. But when was such asking ever not late? And by the time I learned there was so much within you that I did not know and you were learning the same of me, we had greater questions for each other, did we not?
A soft push on my shoulder. When I turned to your touch you were grinning, that Barclay mix of amusement and estimation. We had reached the head of the queue, some other whiskery geezer in Cumbrae uniform was instructing us to find Steerage Number One, go forward toward the bow, descend those stairs the full way down, watch our footing and our heads...

You stayed where you stood, though, facing me instead of the steamship.

You still had the grin on, but your voice was as serious as I ever had heard it.

"Truth now, Angus. Are we both for it?"

I filled myself with breath, the last I intended to draw of the air of the pinched old earth called Scotland.

"Both," I made myself say. And up the Jemmy's gangplank we started.

Robert Burns Barclay. That was Rob on the passenger list of the James Watt, 22d June of the year 1889. Angus Alexander McCaskill, myself. And both of us, nineteen and green as the cheese of the moon and trying our double damnedest not to show it.
Through the night and most of the next day the Jenny steamed its way along the coast of Ireland to Queenstown, where our Irish came aboard. Naturally Rob and I were on deck to see whatever there was, blinking against the sun and its sparkle on the blue Queenstown harbor.

And so we saw the boats come. A fleet of small ones, each catching the wind with a gray old lugsail. They were steering direct to us and as the fleet reared we could make out that there was a man in each boat. No. A woman in each boat.

I called to a deckhand sashaying past, "Who are these, then?"

"Bumboats," he called over his shoulder. "The Irish navy. You'll learn some words now."

A dozen of the boats nudged against the steamship like piglets against a sow, and the deckhand and others began tossing down ropes. The women came climbing up like sailors—when you think of it, that is what they were—and with them arrived baskets, boxes, creels, buckets, shawls.

Then began the chants of these Irishwomen singing their wares, the slander back and forth between our deckhands and the women hawkers, the eruptions of haggling as passengers swarmed around the deck market.

"Do you see what this is like, Angus?" Rob broke out in delight. "The rascal fair!"

Indeed, in its knots of dickering and spontaneous commotion and general air of mischief-about-to-be, this did seem more than a bit like the festive day when Nethermuir farmers and farm servants met to negotiate each season's wages and terms. I suppose from the time we could walk Rob and I had never missed a rascal fair together. The two of us like minnows in that sea of faircomers, aswim in the sounds of the ritual of the hard-bargaining versus the hard-to-bargain. --Are you looking for the right job, laddie? --Aye, I am. --And would you like to come to me? I've a place not a mile from here, as fine a field as you'll see. --Maybe so, maybe no. I'll be paid for home-going day, will I? There was a tune of that Nethermuir mix of holiday and sharp practice, which Rob began to hum now:
"Dancing at the rascal fair,

devils and angels all were there,

heel and toe, pair by pair,

dancing at the rascal fair."

The two of us surged along with everybody else of the Jemmy,

soaking in as much of the jubilee as we could. "Have your coins
grown to your pockets, there in Scotland?" demanded the stout woman
selling pinafores and drew laughing hoots from us all.

"But mother," Rob gave her back, "would any of those fit me?"

"I'd mother you, my milktooth boy. I'd mother you, you'd not

forget it."

Then we were by a woman who was calling out nothing. She simply
stood silent, both hands in front of her, a green ball displayed
in either.

Rob passed on with the others of our throng, I suppose assuming as

I did that she was offering the balls as playthings. But there were
plentiful children among and neither they nor their parents were
stopping by the one silent woman either.
Curiosity is never out of season with me. I turned and went back for a close look. Her green offerings were not balls, they were limes.

I asked, "Your produce doesn't need words, missus?"

"I'm not to name the ill they're for, young mister, else I can't come onto your fine ship."

Any schoolboy knew the story of why Royal Navy sailors came to be called limies, and so I smiled, but I had to let Madam Irish know I was not so easily gulled. "It takes somewhat longer than a voyage of nine days to come down with scurvy, missus."

"Tisn't the scurvy."

"What then?"

"Your mouth can ask your stomach when the two of them meet, out there on the herring pond."

Seasickness. "How can your limes ward off that, then?"

"Not ward it off, no. There's no warding to that. You only get it, like death. These fruit are for after. They clean your mouth, young mister. Scour the sick away."

"Truth?"

She nodded.
I fished for my coins. "Give me a pocketful."

Our transaction over, I made my way forward to where Rob was. He and most of the other single men from our compartment had ended up here, around the two youngest Irishwomen, plainly sisters, who were selling ribbons and small mirrors. The sight of the sisters elevated my mood too, and I stepped close behind Rob and hummed in his ear:

"Dancing at the rascal fair,

show an ankle, show a pair,

show what'll make the lassies stare,

dancing at the rascal fair."

"Where've you been, man?" Rob chided. "You're missing the best of the fair."

"I thought you might be memorizing it for me," I said, just as the boatswain's whistle shrilled. The deck market dissolved, over the side the women went like cats. In a minute their lugsails were sparkling against the water of Queenstown harbor, and the Jemmy was underway once more."
Where the storm was hiding during that day of Irish sun, I don't know. But sometime past midnight, after we had left the last of Ireland's coastline far behind, that weather came and found us.

I was awake for it, of course. My first night in steerage had shown that I was not one born to sleep on water. The berth was both too short and too narrow for me, so that I had to kink myself radically. Meanwhile Rob, who could snooze through Judgment Day, was composing a nose song below me. But discomfort and snores had been the least of my wakefulness, for in that first grief of a night—oh, yes, and the Jemmy letting forth an iron groan whenever its bow met the waves some certain way—my mind cluttered with everything I did not want to think of. Casting myself from Nethermuir. The drowned horse Ginger. Walls of this moaning ship, so close. The coffin confines of my bedamned berth. I rose in startlement once when I touched one hand against the other and felt moisture there. My own sweat. Rob, I wanted to call down to him time and again that first seagoing night, Rob, I can't do this. I can't. Can not. Now, after Queenstown and with ocean the only choice, I was determined that while this second night might rob me of sleep again, it would not see me cringe.
I lay there saying any lines of poetry I knew; over and over performed

the several verses of the rascal fair tune; did multiplication and

geography. I want to think that the chorus in me now had become 

I can do this. Barely, but I can. Awake with all this, then, I began

to notice the jolly was groaning more often; my berth was starting

to sway and dive.

I suppose it was not much of an ocean gale as those events go.

The Atlantic out for a summer evening trot. But before long at all,

the storm

was more than enough for us in steerage. I heard Rob awake with

a sleepy "What?" just before the real tumult set in. Barrels, trunks,

tins, whatever was movable flew from side to side, and we poor human

things clung in our berths to keep from flying too. Now the ship

grunted and creaked constantly, and drew yells from women and children

in the midship compartments, and yes, from some men as well, whenever

it rolled far over. Someone among the officers had a voice the size

of a cannon shot, and even all the way down where we were could be

heard his blasts of "BOS'N!" and "ALL HANDS!" Those did not improve

a nonswimmer's frame of mind, either.
But nothing to do but hold onto the side of the berth. Nothing, that is, until someone made the first retching sound, the signal to all our gullets.

I knew what Crofutt advised. Any internal discomfort whilst aboard ship is best ameliorated by the fresh air of deck. Face the world of air; you will be new again. If I'd had the strength I'd have hurled Crofutt up onto that crashing deck. As it was, I lay as still as possible and strove not think of what was en route from my stomach to my mouth.

Steerage Number One's vomiting was extraordinary. Meals from a month ago were trying to come out of us. I heaved up, Rob heaved up, every steerage soul heaved up. The stench of it and the foulness of my mouth were making me sicker yet. Until I remembered the limes.

I fumbled them out and took a suck of one. Another I thrust down to the bunk below. "Rob, here. Try this."

His hand found mine and the round rind in it.

"Eat at a time like this? Angus, you're--"

"Suck it. For the taste." I could see white faces in the two bunks across from us and tossed a lime apiece over there as well.
The Jemmy rose and fell, rose and fell, and stomachs began to be heard from again in all precincts of the compartment except ours.

Bless you, Madame Irish. Maybe it was that the limes put their stringent taste in place of the putrid linger of vomit. Maybe it was that they puckered our mouths as if with drawstrings. Maybe it was only that any remedy seemed better than none. Whatever effect it may have been managed it was, Rob and I and the other limejuiced pair were able to abstain from the general retching and spewing. We would never be mistaken for well, but we were not heaving up.

By dawn the Atlantic had got the commotion out of its system. Even I conceded that we probably were going to live, now. The steward put in an appearance and chivvied us into sluicing and scrubbing the compartment. For breakfast Rob and I put shaky cups of tea into ourselves. Then he returned to his berth, claiming there was lost sleep to be found there, and I headed up for deck.

I knew I was still giddy from the night of storm. But as I began to walk the deck, the scene that came into my eyes made me all the more woolheaded. The weather by now was clement, so that
was no matter to me. And I knew, the way you know a map fact, that
the night's progress must have carried us out of sight of land on
all sides. But the ocean. The ocean, I was not prepared for. The
ocean was a hundred times greater than I had been able to imagine.

Up on the deck of the Jemmy that morning when the world turned
into purely satin-like water and open sky, I felt like a child who
had only been around things small, suddenly seeing there is such a
thing as big. Wherever I faced, the same gray and green play
of the waves, the water always wrinkling, moving, yet other water
instantly in its place.

Hour by hour I watched and watched for the secret of how this
could endlessly go on, but only discerned more wrinkling, fresh motion.
Somewhere on the Atlantic is a line, invisible but valid, like the equator or Greenwich's meridian. East of there, Robert Burns Barclay and Angus Alexander McCaskill were leavers of Scotland; young men on the way from a life. Across that division, maybe older by maybe only a minute, we knew ourselves to be heading to a life. Call it actuality catching up with us, call it my righting myself from fear of the Atlantic and Rob making himself settle from restlessness, call it whatever. But in the end, it is that line through our lives did exist.
Strangely, it was the morning directly after the gale that I began to feel at ease on the ocean. You can say it was nothing profound, for me to come up on deck that morning feeling that the absence of seasickness was the peak of health. More than my stomach had mended, though. The fact that I would sink like a statue if the Jimmy wrecked became simply that, a standing fact, instead of the crawling fear I had known the first night in my berth. Nobody would outswim the Atlantic anyway and so why nettle yourself over it?

Too, I suppose by then I had time to become interested in myself as an ocean traveler; sought to live up to the size of this journey across the world's water. For I was the first McCaskill since my father's grandfather to go
upon the sea. And his voyage was but 11 miles. The most famous 11 miles in Great Britain of the time, though, for he was one of the stone masons of Arbroath working under the great Robert Stevenson to build the Bell Rock lighthouse. On the clearest of days I have seen that lighthouse from the Arbroath harbor and have heard the story of the years of ships and 00 and 00 involved and to this moment I don't know how they could do it, build a tower of rock on a reef that vanished beneath every high tide. But there it winks even today, Bell Rock, announcing the Firth of Forth and Edinburgh beyond, and my great-grandfather was one of its builders. Inside the back cover of Crockett I had pasted the ticket of freedom from the press gangs which otherwise would have swept him into the navy to fight Napoleon:

Alexander McCaskill, seaman in the service of the Honourable Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses, aged 26 years, 6 feet high, red of hair, light complexion, marked with the smallpox.

Robert Stevenson
Engineer for Northern Lights
(date)
His height and hair and complexion I have, although thankfully not his pocked face. And ever since him Alexander has been the first or second name of a McCaskill in each of our generations.

Resemblance and the ticket of leave saying so and his name in the middle of my own were all I had of that old storied man. Perhaps it was invention, but now those and the capacity to withstand ocean if we had to.

I tried to think myself back into that other young manhood, to feel from the skin inward what it would have been like to be Alexander McCaskill of eighty years ago.
Old gray town Nethermuir, with your High Street wandering down
drowsy
the hill the way a lazy cow would, to come to the River Carrou.

I thought at the time that you spurned those of us of River Street;

and I still think so. Weave my linen for me, you said to us...

But River Street was beginning to say things back, wasn't it.

and I spoke with our feet: America. The linen workers were learning
the word union; trying to get 8 shillings a week. Sad, that a handsome
town and a striving folk could not speak better to each other.
Nethermuir was asleep as its stones. In the dark--out went the streetlights at midnight; a Scotch town sees no need to illumine its empty hours--in the dark I walked up River Street past the O0 mill and the O0 and found my way to the O0 door of the 'wright shop.

Was that me, trudging...? The same set of bones called Angus McCaskill, anyway.
Rock, the manna of Scotland. Be what it may, a fence, a house, a town, we Scotch fashioned it out of stone. In the gray before day, Nethermuir looked like it had been sculpted instead of erected.
I was the child that lived. Of their three, the only one left to my parents after the OO had done with Nethermuir. If a friend of my mother, a widow whose children were grown and gone, had not taken me to her cottage away from River Street, I too would have become a patch of earth there with OO and OO.
My father was the smith for John Barclay's wheelwright shop.

A keen workman, him; the best in that part of Scotland at doing a wagon wheel. But the years of anvil din had taken nearly all of his hearing, and to attract his attention you had to toss a wood chip against his shirt. At home he lived—how best to say this?—he lived side along my mother and me rather than with us. Sealed into himself, like someone of another country who happened to be traveling beside us.
Oh, there was war about that. My father could not see why I should do anything but follow into his smithy trade. My mother was just as dead set that I must should do anything but. His deafness made their arguments about me a roaring time; the teacups rattled when they went at it. The school-leaving age was thirteen, so I don't know how things would have gone if my father hadn't died when I was twelve.
Then when I was sixteen, my mother followed my father into death.

She was surprised by it, going the same way he had; a stroke that toppled her in the evening and took her in the early morning.
There is an odd thing about the wood of the ash tree. When the sawyers were working on an ash timber, in would come a smell almost like burning.

A wright shop is always thick with shavings, so to be certain against fire John Barclay would say to me, "See to its heart, Angus." Out to the saw pit I would go, to see if the ash proved to be black-hearted:

and had a streak like an ink stain along its core. (Sturt Skilled excerpt, 321)

What that odor was none of us knew, but...
Where my habit of speaking to people in my mind comes from, I don't know. My father lived within himself, but of course that was due to deafness. From my mother, you heard promptly enough whatever she was thinking.
"He'll see himself in you," I said out of nowhere while Rob and I watched Greenock vanish behind the turn of the Firth. I meant Lucas, his uncle; and I meant what I was saying, too. There was almost a red shine to Rob's cheeks and jawline always were as ruddy and smooth as if he'd just shaved, and on this largest day of our young lives he was aglow like a hot coal. Lucas Barclay had that
same burnish. I was remembering years and years back to some afternoon when my mother sent me on an errand to my father at the wheelwright shop, and Lucas and Rob's father John and mine were in the woodyard, eyeing out oak for spokes: remembering how I startled myself and then by popping around a stack of planks into their conference; the pair of bright Barclay faces and my father's pale one. Was that the last time I'd seen Lucas before his leaving of Scotland, that instant of rosy grin at a reception boy? Most probably. It was the last time, at least, "I hope he doesn't inspect too close, then," Rob tossed off. "Else we may get the door of the Great Maybe slammed in our faces."

"Rob, man," I decided to tease, "who could ever slam a door to you? Close with firmness and barricade it to keep you from their maidens, maybe, but--"

Rob gave my shoulder a shove. "I can't wait to see the surprise on Lucas," he said, laughing. "Seven years. I can't wait." That Lucas did not know we were on our way would have perturbed me if I had not spent all my life around Barcleys and known how they were.

Shipwreck a Barclay on Crusoe's island, then shipwreck another Barclay there ten years later, and the first would say to the second: "What kept you away, this long while?" There had been a letter or two from Lucas to Rob's father years and years before, telling that he had made his way to the Montana city of Helena and of his mining endeavor there, but nobody who knew Lucas expected him to spend time over paper and pen.
After the letters quit, a more characteristic Lucas message continued to arrive, each Christmas since, to the Barclays in Nethermuir. A hundred-dollar bill, alone in its envelope. The Montana money, Rob's family called it. Lucas is still Lucas, they said with affection and rue; the most freehanded man God ever set loose.

Can I make you know what it meant to Rob and me to have this uncle of his as our forerunner? As our American edition of Crockett, waiting and willing to instruct? Oh, I won't deny that Rob and I found it impressive enough that money was sent as Christmas cards in America. But the priceless truce over there, we considered, was Lucas himself. Put yourself where we were, young and stepping off to a new world, and now tell me whether or not you want to have a Lucas Barclay ahead, knowing where the best land beckons, what a fair price is for anything, whether they do so-and-so in Montana just as we are used to in Scotland, whether they ever do thus-and-such at all. Bold is one thing and reckless is another, yes?

"Aye, about this water. You'll get used to it, man. Half of Scotland has made this voyage by now, right?" I was touched by this, Rob's concern for me, even though Rob concerned for me. I'd hoped I was keeping my apprehensions within
The Jenny drove on. Three days from New York, a Mrs. 00 from Brechin gave birth to a boy. The ocean child was a matter of cheer to us all; we the pride we took, you'd have thought us all its fathers and mothers. About then, too, we began to see fishing boats of the Newfoundland bank. Summer may have been back in Scotland, but there off Newfoundland the wind said March, and Rob and I put on most of the clothes we had to stay up and watch the fishing fleet.
We passed 00, and it came time to dispose of our mattresses.

Up to deck and overboard they went, floating behind us like...
New York was Edinburgh and Glasgow and then some. Castle Garden

I remember as a portal to confusion. The world seemed to be coming

into America through there. Questions were asked of us, our pounds

and shillings became dollars and cents at the money exchange, our

baggage we guarded like life itself...

At St. Paul, we saw what the Fourth of July was.
We began with luck. After the Model Boarding House in Greenock we knew not to take the first roost we saw, and weary as we were Rob and I trudged the hilly streets of Helena until we found a comparatively clean room at Mrs. Billington's, some blocks away from Last Chance Gulch. Mrs. Billington said to us at once, "You'll be wanting to wash the travel off, won't you," which was more than true. Those tubbings in glorious hot water were the first time since Nethermuir that we had a chance to shed our clothes.

But in the greater matter of presenting ourselves to Lucas Barclay, we had no success at all. We could not find that man.

Our first Helena week we spent asking and asking. We did find the owner of the Great Maybe mine. But he was not Lucas, nor were any of the three previous owners we managed to track down. Lucas's name was six back in the record of ownership and there had been that many before him. It grew clear to Rob and me that had the Great Maybe been a silver coin instead of a silver mine, by now it would be worn smooth from being passed around.
Next we tried the post office. The offices of the newspapers.
The register of voters. The court records. Stores.
Saloons.

"Do you know a man Lucas Barclay? He owned the Gr--a mine."

"Sometimes names change, son. What does he look like?"

"More than a bit like me. He's my uncle."

"Is he now. Didn't know miners could have relatives." Tap, tap,

"We're trying to find the uncle of my friend here. Lucas Barclay is his name. Do you know of him?"

"Barkler? No, never heard of him."


"Never heard of him either."
"We know he was alive at last Christmas," Rob specified to the caretaker. He meant by that that the Montana money from Lucas had arrived as always to Nethermuir.

The caretaker shook his head. "Nobody by that name among the fresh ones. Unless he'd be there." He nodded to a low bare slope at the edge of the graveyard. The graves there had no markers.

Realization arrived to Rob and me at the same time. The paupers' field.

We followed the caretaker there. "Who are these, then?" asked Rob.

"Some are Chinamen. Others we just don't know who the hell they are. Find them dead of booze some cold morning over there in the gulch. Or a mine caves in on them." I saw Rob swallow at that.

The caretaker studied among the bare graves. "Say, last month I buried a teamster who'd got crushed when his wagon went over on him. His partner said the name was Johnson, but he didn't look like much of a Swede. Would he be yours?"

It did not seem likely to either Rob or me that Lucas would spurn a life of wagons in Nethermuir and adopt one here. Indeed, the more
we thought, the less likely it seemed that Lucas was down among the nameless dead. People always noticed a Barclay.

By week's end

Rob was beside himself, one minute angry at the pair of us for not being able to find Lucas, the next at Lucas for not being findable; then would come consternation—"Tell me truth, Angus: do you think he can be alive?"—and then back to bafflement—"Why the hell is he so hard to find?"

"We'll find him," I said to all this. "I'm stubborn, and you're worse than that. If the man exists in this Montana, we'll find him."

Yet we did not. Our second week of search was equally empty.

The middle of that week, we went by train to try Butte. That mining city seemed to be a factory for turning the planet inside out. Slag was making new mountains, while the mountains around stood with dying timber on their slopes. The very air was raw with smelter fumes and
smoke. No Butte, thank you, for either Rob or me, and we came away somehow convinced it was not the place Lucas Barclay would choose either.

We began to question stagecoach drivers, asking if they had heard of Lucas at their destination towns, White Sulphur Springs and 00 and 00. No and no and no. Meanwhile, we were hearing almost daily of some new El Dorado where a miner might have been drawn to. Castles. 00. 00.

We began to see that tracking Lucas to a mine, if he was still in that business of Great Maybes, would be like trying to find out which where a gypsy had taken up residence. Of Scotland's churches a churchmouse had chosen.
Sunday morning, our second sabbath as dwellers of Helena, I woke before the day did, and my getting out of bed roused Rob.

"Where're you off to?" he asked as I dressed.

"A walk. Up to see how the day looks."

He yawned mightily. "Angus, the wheelwright shop is back in Scotland and you're still getting up to open it." More yawn. "Wait. I'll come along. Just let me figure which end my shoes go on."

We walked up by the firebell tower. The mountains stood high all around, up in the morning light which had not yet found Helena.

We looked down into the scoured streets, out to the wide valley beyond. "Where to hell can he be, Angus? A man can't vanish like smoke, can he?"

Not unless he wants to, I thought to myself. But aloud: "Rob, we've looked all we can. There's no knowing until Christmas if Lucas is even alive. If your family gets the Montana money from him again, well and good. But if that doesn't come, we have to figure."

Rob knew the rest of that. I went on to what I had been mulling. "It's not that far to Christmas now. We'd better get on with ourselves a bit. Keep
asking after Lucas, yes. But get on with ourselves at the same time."

Rob stirred. "Get on with ourselves, is it. You sound like Crofutt."

"And who better? Look at you here, five thousand miles from Scotland and your feet are dry, your color is bright, you have no divided heart. Crofutt and McCaskill, we've seen you through and will again, lad."

He had to grin. "All right, schoolman. But where is it you'd see us to next, if you had your way?"

We talked there on the hill until past breakfast and got the scolding of our lives from Mrs. Billington. Which was far short of fair, for she gained profit for some time to come from that discussion of ours. What Rob and I chose that early morning, mostly because we did not know what else to decide, was to stay on in Helena through the summer.

Of course, we needed to earn while we did. I got on as a clerk at Murdoch's Mercantile. An Aberdeen man and a bit of a conniver, Hugh Murdoch; he later became a banker and a state senator. I am sure as anything that he hired me so he could have a familiar burre
Of course, we needed to earn while we tried to learn Montana.

I took myself down to Murdoch's Mercantile. An Aberdeen man and a
bit of a conniver, Hugh Murdoch; he later became a banker and a state
senator. He fixed a hard look on me and in that Aberdonian drone asked:

"Can ye handle numbers?"

"Aye." I could, too.

I am sure as anything that old Murdoch hired me on as a clerk
just so he could have a decent Scots burr to hear. There are worse
qualifications.

And Rob found a ready job at the stagecoach company.
Statehood was a new notion to us, and we took it to mean that
Montana had advanced from out of being from afar, as Scotland
was by Parliament in London, into running its own affairs.

Look around Helena and you could wonder if this was indeed an
improvement. But the principle was there, and Rob and I drank to
it, along with everyone else, repeatedly, on that 00th of November.
So there we were, Rob, our Scotland-leaving year of 1889 drawing to a close in the new capital of new Montana. It was your notion to commemorate ourselves by having our likenesses taken. "Let them in Nethermuir see what Montanians are," you proclaimed. We hurried to OO's studio before it could close for New Year's Eve.

Lord of Mercy, Rob; whatever made us think that mutton-chop whiskers became us? Particularly when I think how red my mine were then, and the way yours bristled. We sit there in the photograph looking like the stuffing is coming out of our heads.

The faces on us were not that bad, I will say. Your hair so black and thick on top you looked as if you were wearing a cap even when you weren't, but below that you...

(for Angus, some of McC description from Eng Crk)
Though Rob had a more than bountiful head of hair, the part in it went far back on the right side, almost back even with his ear. It gave this face the look of being unveiled before a crowd, a curtain tugged aside and the pronouncement: Here, people, is Robert Burns Barclay.

As for the front of my head, I show more expanse of upper lip than I wish I did, but there is not much to be done about that except what I later did, the mustache. The jaw pushes forward a little, as if I was inspecting.

END OF INSERTS, chapter to be finished.
World, it has happened at last! With this inaugural issue Gros Ventre and the Two Medicine country gain their journalistic voice. The Gros Ventre Weekly Gleaner! The name flows easily from the tongue and the news of our prospering community will flow as fluently. Scarce a day goes by without newcomers arriving to enrich this locale with their endeavors, and the Gleaner is more proud than can be put into words, to now join their ranks. Let the future come!—that is our chorus here in God's favored country.

--Gros Ventre Weekly Gleaner, April 5, 1894

I can tell you the very day of this. The twenty-fifth of April, 1894. A Montana spring day, which was to say breezy along with sunny, melt and mud along with greening grass and first flowers. I had ridden across the divide between the North Fork and Noon Creek, straight from the schoolhouse. Scorpion was pointed to the country where I bought him—the Noon Creek schoolhouse that was my destination was nearby Isaac Reese's place—and I wondered if he held horse memories of it. "Skorp Yun, lad, what about that?" I declaimed. "Is it the case with you today that It's home and it's home, home where I would be /Oh home, home, home to my own country?" Scorpion's ears twitched up and I suppose that was my answer, as much as the horse clan was willing to tell a man.
The afternoon was better than my chore, which was to call on the new teacher at Noon Creek. I more than half knew what to expect. "Ramsay is her name," Ninian Duff had reported, "they're a new family to here, down from Canada. Man and wife and daughter. The Mrs. seems to be something of an old battle-axe, I do have to say." Coming from Ninian, that was credential for her indeed. "They bought the relinquishment up there to the west of Isaac Reese," he went on, "with a bit of help from Isaac's pocket from what I hear."

Given the basis that Isaac headed the Noon Creek board as Ninian did ours, I couldn't let pass the opportunity to declare: "Now there's the way for a school board to operate."

Ninian broadly ignored that and said, "When you find a spare moment, Angus, you would do well to stop by the schoolhouse over across there and offer hello. Our schools are neighbors and it would not hurt us to be."

"Maybe not severely," I had to agree, and now Scorpion and I descended from the benchland to Noon Creek, a prairie stream twice as twisty as the North Fork ever thought of being. The schoolhouse was much like mine—for that matter, so was its attendant pair of outhouses—except for standing all but naked to the wind, Noon Creek providing only a thin sieve of willows instead of the South Fork's broadback clumps of cottonwoods. Ask any dozen people and thirteen of them would tell you my schoolsite was the obvious superior of the two.
Pleased with that and armored with the thought that however howlingly formidable Mrs. Battle-Axe Ramsay might try to be I still was the senior teacher hereabout, I tied Scorpion beside the Noon Creek teacher's horse and strode to the schoolhouse.

"Hello, anyone," I called in, and followed my words through the doorway.

A woman did look up from the teacher's desk. A woman my age or less. A woman with perfect round cheeks and an exactly proportionate chin and a small neat nose, and with the blackest of black hair done into a firm glossy braid, and with direct blue eyes. She gave me an inquiring half-smile, the rest of her expression as frank as a clock.

"Hello," she enunciated, although what was being said was And What Is Your Business Here, If Any?

I told her me. And made about as much impression as a mosquito alighting on a stone fence.

"I am called Anna Ramsay," she stated in return. Hers was a voice which may have paused in Canada but only after fully flowering in Scotland.

"I'm the teacher at the South Fork school, over across, Mrs. Ramsay," I hurried to clarify.

"I am the teacher here," said she, "and it is Miss Ramsay."

I am sure there was an audible swale of time while I traced step by step back to the brain of Ninian the Calvinian. Ninian Duff had told me Mrs. Ramsay was an old battle-axe. He had told me the
new Noon Creek teacher could stand a cordial look-in. He had never
bothered to tell me those two formulations did not add up to the
same person.

"Yes, well. Miss Ramsay, now. I seem to have been
misinformed," I understated. "In any case, I came by to say
hello"—her look told me that had been more than amply done by
now—"and to see if there's any help I can offer."

"That's kind," she decided. "But I know of none."

In that case, Miss—not-Mrs. Ramsay, help me and my tongue.
What do you think the price of rice in China will reach? And are
you the lovely thing you appear to be under the crust?

"I'm trying to place your voice," I said, true enough in its
way: trying to coax the sound of it into my ears for as long as
possible. "Your town in Scotland is—?"

"My town was Brechin." She noticeably did not ask me mine.
"Mr. McCaskill, there is one matter you might be able to help me
with. I'm in short supply of new geography books. This school has a
total of one, to be exact. Mr. Reese promised me some, but he's
away buying horses."

"I have extra," I offered as fast as I could say it. Later
would be soon enough to calculate whether or not I actually had
any. "You're more than welcome to them."

Anna Ramsay shook that matchless head of hers, but in general
perturbance at men who would see to horses before geography, rather
than at my offer. "I've had to put the pupils to making their own."