

Penicuik

Sept 22nd 1893

Dear Mr Fisher Unwin,

I am glad you think well of the Illustrated Edition and that you will go on with it. I have written today to Mr MacGeorge who did the plates in 'Dulce Cor' which you saw, and which were reproduced by Amand Durand of Paris. He is a landscape man, but is also clever at figure. He is a native of Galloway and is always working there. He is, I believe, now in Kirkcudbright and could soon do the drawings. I could not tell you of course whether he prefers line or wash, but I should think the latter. He did recently some beautiful drawings in that medium which were reproduced by the Meisenback process and came out very well.

I shall tell you when I hear from him and give you his address. He would go into the thing with spirit, and make it a success. It would assuredly go well in Scotland and indeed all over the world wherever the Scot dwelt. With regard to the advertising of course you know your own business far better than I and you will do what is right. It was a friend of mine, a prominent editor in London, who did not think that literary people knew what a success – from a literary point of view as far as good reviewing went that is, the book had been. He advised me to put such a note of it in the Athaeneum. I am sorry if I ought not to have offered to divide the advertising. I am not up in the etiquette of the question. My father in law, who publishes with Longmans, did as I proposed with the notice of the third edition (Silver Library) of his 'County Pleasures' and also with a new illustrated book on Arran that they are now issuing for him. My friend thought that with a few such notices we ought to have sold 8000 copies. But all comes in time. With regard to my future work, you are very kind. This is what I think. Of course I am not a rich man at all. My parish is a poor one, and all that I get from it, I put back again. I have lived by literature of the journalistic order for a long time now and done pretty well. The Christian Leader – Wylie's paper, is worth over £250 a year to me. Nicolls work and work for theological papers say £150 more. Now I want to get out of the drudgery of this if I can. Mr Watt hears of my book, reads it, comes and sees me and takes over all my affairs. I have been getting little for my fiction. He arranges that the serial rights of a story shall be worth to begin with – nearly three hundred pounds. I had not got a centime for those of the last! He gets me £20 for serial rights of short stories where I have been getting thirty shillings. He trebles my income in six months, and puts me on a different footing altogether. I am able to write more fiction and do less drudgery work. I can keep now both a literary and a church association and give my wife a better establishment. Of course the success of 'Stickit' among literary men and with the public has had much to do with this; but you can see that the forty pounds or so that I have got for the 'Stickit' directly hardly counts for more than an item. I must therefore give Mr Watt a free hand, because he has done a very great deal for me and takes a great interest in my work – placing it to such advantage as I could not have done myself. If you had had a magazine of your own it would have been different, but you see, serial publication at first, is so much more valuable. I had to give Mr Wylie the serial rights of the 'Lilac Sunbonnet' because I had (verbally) promised him my next book and though it was far more important than I had expected, I stuck to my word and took his £60 – though I had an offer of £200 cash down for it. Now you see my position. I cannot do other than give a free hand to Mr Watt. Because I want a free hand myself to write what I like, and because book rights, though most important from a literary point of view, are little compared with the serial rights that Mr Watt can arrange. But at the same time I am not ungrateful, and I shall certainly offer you before long, possibly in six or eight weeks, what I think the best thing I have ever done, which if not suitable as a Pseudonym, may possibly make, with some tales that I have by me, a new series of the 'Stickit'. Further than that I could not forecast my future in fairness to myself. I could never mortgage my work in the way of promising to publish it all one way, which would be like shutting oneself out of the market. But I do say that with the heartiest goodwill, I hope to continue to have business and other intercourse with you for many years to come.

I have been very frank with you, and of course you will treat this as a private letter, not to be filed with the letters in the office. I have told you more than I have done to any other, that you may know my position exactly.

I shall let you hear for me as soon as I have arranged with MacGeorge.

With kind regards, Very truly yours

SRS

PS Though a type letter, yet being typed with my own hand it is just as private as another in script.