

FCM Penicuik

Nov 28th 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

I have your letter of yesterday's date and am in the most willing frame of mind. I am not sure that I quite grasp the reader's point of view about 'The Playactress' or what it involves for me to put right. Of course I only thought it out from my own point of view, or rather as much as possible from that of the Great Preacher himself. As I understand the criticism the reader means that the London objective incidents do not 'touch a sympathetic chord in a London nature and that the whole latter part should be treated subjectively. Does he mean that I ought to trace the working of the minister's mind and give the objective part a secondary place? If that be the meaning I quite think that may be right, and I shall try to do it. I am not cavilling or complaining, as you will understand, I am, on the contrary, sincerely trying to benefit by the criticism. If it means that I should take a Londoner's point of view, that, I fear, is impossible. Of course a Londoner would write it differently.

But you must have had other grounds for accepting the book than that criticism or you would not say that you think, as you say today, it is fitted to be even more popular with the southern public than The Raiders. If the critic has anything to say as to how I should proceed I shall be exceedingly glad to hear it and if possible to act upon it. And in any case I shall do my best. I shall certainly let you have the MS as soon as I can but as you will readily understand there are only a certain number of hours that I can give to literature during the day. For there is another side of my life – about five or six hours a day in the houses of the poor. I shall finish The Raiders first. I am stuck at the chapter about the carrying away of the heroine. I find it the hardest thing to re-do what I have already done as well as I could. But I shall overcome that – for I do not mean to be beaten.

Re second title of Raiders. I shall of course be guided by you wholly. If you like the second title then it shall go. Only in an improved form. I shall get the original grant of title by James V of Scotland to 'Johnnie Faa, Lord and Yerl of Little Egypt.'

For frontispiece I would like a rough fashioned map, like those done in the last century of the Raiders country. Could you get it done. I shall block out my idea of it some day and send the ordinance maps to do it from. You know the kind of thing, dragons and anchors etc and curly tailed y's – I think there are some in some of your Adventure series. You are also right about the Author of the Stickit on the title. Criticisms at the Fore will do perfectly well. About corrections in the Raiders, do not fear that there will be the least friction. There shall be none, for whatever you think it right to charge me as my share I shall know to be right. I am as busy as can be, and after I get this chapter of the Raiders done – I cannot please myself with it as yet – I shall not be very long in revising the rest which is more a matter of detail.

You will see that I am not grumbling at readers opinion, I am only waiting to understand. I quite know that the Playactress must be imperfect, I wrote it, so to speak, between the chinks of 'The Raiders' and the Lilac. By the by the latter seems to me to be the book which should take with the English public, But we shall see

Tout a vous

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