

Penicuik Jan 1st

My dear Friends,

I was rejoiced to get your letter this morning and for my wife and myself reciprocate your friendly wishes with much affection to you both. As you say I am as busy as ever, and I have no chance of getting away for a month or two yet, I fear me. But if you were setting up a first class storm and covering up the hills with a mantle of storm I should be tempted to take a Sabbath off and have a service at Glenhead Kirk (Marion Macmillan, precentor) that day. But I fear it is not to be thought of till the wife gets a wee stronger. She has been pretty well on the whole, but still she is weak. She walked down stairs yesterday for the first time, and today she is going to be up most of the day. Young George is a healthy chap and does his level best at sleeping. We don't hear his voice often, but when he wants anything or gets his temper ruffled, my word, all the manse hears about it. We call him 'The Graven Image' because he looks like one when he sleeps (and he is mostly sleeping) and for another reason, all the women folk draw near and fall down and worship him, being born idolators all of them.

I have got a large number of drawings of the Loch Dee Country including a beautiful drawing of Loch Enoch and the Merrick from a young fellow Denholm Young who lived one year at the Black Laggan. He is going to be down for three or four weeks illustrating my next book in the summer of this year, so you gie him a can o' buttermilk for the sake o' ye ken what when he comes about the bit.

But I hope to see you all before that. As you say Maisie is much delighted with her new brother. Philip I grieve to say, does not join. He says that he would much rather have had a horse! The Lilac Sunbonnet begins very soon and I almost wish you were reading it in a book – serial publication is rather wearisome, I always think; but it is what makes the sillar come in to the author, so that it is not to be despised. I got Mr McKenna's letter and thank you very much for the trouble you took. I have written for the Dundee News, and hope to see it before long.

My wife sends her love to you and with all good will,

And New year Wishes

Affectionately, your friend

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