

FCM Penicuik

Nov 17th 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

Your long and valuable letter of criticisms and suggestions for 'The Raiders' I have in mind, and it is nearly all helpful and to my mind. Tell the various authors of the suggestions that I am glad to have help in such a true, genuine and friendly spirit. Do you know that hardly in one review did I get any help whatever as to my future work such as I got from those who at your suggestion went over the Stickit before publication. I believe therefore that what you tell me will be of great assistance, and I am quite willing (and desirous) to begin at once on the MS if you send it to me (carefully packed and insured for no copy of it exists) I shall begin to send in the stuff by the fifties as I finish the revision and in some cases the rewriting of it. Of course I knew that it would need careful revision, as I wrote to you some time ago when I sent it to Mr Watt and asked him to take it to you.

It had to be finished before a certain date when other unavoidable work occupied me – and as whenever I write well I also write very quickly, I wrote practically night and day on end for three months. It was sent off after a rather hurried going over and there are many things I shall alter when once I get it in hand. Indeed you will find that there will be a great change for the better.

If you will look at the points as they occur in your letter of criticism I shall tell you what I think of them.

- 1) I shall try to 'speed the plough' when the story lags. I am well aware that I am over fond of detail and incident.
- 2) The 'polished magazine sentences' will need to be looked to and indeed I had meant to go over the MS with a single eye to the simple roughness of the narrative of Patrick Heron. The pointed notes are as far as I can make out in the [] of the contest such as would need reconsideration. When the proof begins to come, if any of my critics could look it over I should also be glad to have further queries and hints.

But 'Observation' is quite good old Scots and occurs often in Patrick Walker and also in Kidnapped – 'observe' is what it should really be, but I wrote 'observation' in pity for the Englishers.

- 3) Yes, the chapter after the carrying off of May needs rewriting. I had been thinking of that. It is most unsatisfactory. One or two others as well where I have shied from a situation, or perhaps (a more frequent fault) forced one. And I quite agree that there are some passages – notably in the dialogue with the good wives near the beginning which might come out – even a chapter or two perhaps – the only thing is that these are popular in Scotland. On the contrary they might discourage English readers where they are. I shall give some Scots words their English equivalents when I go over it, some English critic might place queries in the proof for often what seems quite clear to me is not so.

But it is a dangerous thing to soften when one feels strongly that that thing and no other is what the character would have said. Very often they say things themselves even against what I had set out to say, and I have a feeling of treachery in altering. But I am obliged to you for saying you do not wish to press the point about the Scottishisms and that as the Shorter Catechism says 'you will leave me to the freedom of my own will' on the matter.

I am glad you like 'The Raiders' as a title. It was the one which took Mr Watt's eye in a moment when he glanced down my list. I suppose you would let me add beneath:

'Being some Passages in the life of The Faa, Lord of Little Egypt' That is a title heraldically good for the Chief of the Gypsies.

Of the last criticism which was sent in writing, I shall say that the kind author perhaps exaggerates the amount of Broad Scots in the book. There is not so much as in the Stickit. It is hard to read in my scraped and mangled typewriting done in the [] fingers which never care how many mistakes I make in the spelling etc if only I get the thing precipitated on

paper. It is quite true what he says about people not understanding Barrie and being in the fashion. But Barrie, as Stevenson said the other day when comparing the Stickit with Barrie is indoors and knows nothing of the out of doors where all my action takes place. Thus Barrie does not have much action at all – mostly incident. His flood etc, what a fiasco. Being a Galloway man which that special Galloway characteristic ‘a good conceit o’ mysel’ I mean to beat B. (Pike’s Peak or Bust!) But Beat Barrie or bust. Probably bust!

About the ‘Faa’s briedbeds’ I shall consider, it had probably better be softened, but it will be with some sorry for as the critic says it is both historically true and also dramatic. It is to be found in the second volume of Pitcarins Criminal Trials, but – but it is sadly true that it had better, all things considered ‘came oot o’ that.’

Finally if you will send on the MS I shall set about the work at once, and you, on your part to meet me half way, might begin to set up currently.

I so wish you would let me have a little liberty as to the five shilling a sheet limit of corrections. It is hardly possible to carry out all you wish and all I wish on a MS when Scots is set by London printers. I never know how things will look and whether they will please me till I see a proof. In every case before, I have always seen proof and revise in serial form, and that I shall not have in the case of ‘The Raiders’ – Give me a free hand and you will not regret it. As we say in Scotland ‘I’ll do as muckle for you again,’ Ever yours truly

SRC

The Appletons are setting the ‘Lilac Sunbonnet’ which you will see later in fine old faced Pica, like the constable books. It is a pleasure to correct. Not a whit better than the Stickit though. I should like the paper like our second edition, which I like best of all.

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