

LETTER TO EDITOR OF '*SINN FÉIN*.'

By James Joyce.

From *Sinn Féin*, September 2, 1911.

Sir,

May I ask you to publish this letter which throws some light on the present conditions of authorship in England and Ireland.

Nearly six years ago, Mr. Grant Richards, publisher of London, signed a contract with me for the publication of a book of stories written by me entitled 'Dubliners.' Some ten months later he wrote asking me to omit one of the stories, and passages in others which, as he said, his printer refused to set up. I declined to do either, and a correspondence began between Mr. Grant Richards and myself which lasted more than three months. I went to an international jurist in Rome (where I lived then) and was advised to omit. I declined to do so and the MS. was returned to me, the publisher refusing to publish notwithstanding his pledged printed word, the contract remaining in my possession.

Six months afterwards a Mr. Hone wrote to me from Marseilles to ask me to submit the MS. to Messrs. Maunsel, publishers of Dublin. I did so; and after about a year, in July, 1909, Messrs. Maunsel signed a contract with me for the publication of the book on or before 1st September, 1910. In December, 1909, Messrs. Maunsel's manager begged me to alter a passage in one of the stories, 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room,' wherein some reference was made to Edward VII. I agreed to do so, much against my will, and altered one or two phrases. Messrs. Maunsel continually postponed the date of publication, and in the end wrote, asking me to omit the passage or to change it radically. I declined to do either, pointing out that Mr. Grant Richards of London had raised no objection to the passage when Edward VII was alive, and that I could not see why an Irish publisher should raise an objection to it when Edward VII had passed into history. I suggested arbitration, or a deletion of the passage, with a

prefatory note of explanation by me, but Messrs. Maunsel would agree to neither. As Mr. Hone (who had written to me in the first instance) disclaimed all responsibility in the matter, and any connection with the firm, I took the opinion of a solicitor in Dublin, who advised me to omit the passage, informing me that as I had no domicile in the United Kingdom I could not sue Messrs. Maunsel for breach of contract unless I paid £100 into court, and that even if I paid £100 into court and sued them, I should have no chance of getting a verdict in my favour from a Dublin jury if the passage in dispute could be taken as offensive in any way to the late King. I wrote then to the present King George V, enclosing a printed proof of the story, with the passage therein marked, and begging him to inform me whether in his view the passage (certain allusions made by a person of the story in the idiom of his social class) should be withheld from publication as offensive to the memory of his father. His Majesty's private secretary sent me this reply: -

Buckingham Palace,
11th August, 1911.

The private secretary is commanded to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. James Joyce's letter of the 1st inst., and to inform him that it is inconsistent with rule for His Majesty to express his opinion in such cases. The enclosures are returned herewith.'

Here is the passage in dispute:

'But look here, John', said Mr. O'Connor, 'why should we welcome the King of England? Didn't Parnell himself—'

'Parnell,' said Mr. Henchy, 'is dead. Now, here's the way I look at it. Here's this chap come to the Throne after his old mother keeping him out of it till the man was grey. He's a man of the world, and he means well by us. He's a jolly, fine, decent fellow, if you ask me, and no damned nonsense about him. He just says to himself: 'The old one never went to see these wild Irish. By Christ, I'll go myself and see what they're like.' And are we going to insult the man when he comes over here on a friendly visit? Eh? Isn't that right, Crofton?'

Mr. Crofton nodded his head.

'But after all, said Mr. Lyons, argumentatively, 'King Edward's life, you know, is not the very—'

'Let bygones be bygones,' said Mr. Henchy. 'I admire the man personally. He's just an ordinary knock-about like you and me. He's fond of his glass of grog,

and he's a bit of a rake, perhaps, and he's a good sportsman. Damn it, can't we Irish play fair?'

I wrote this book seven years ago, and hold two contracts for its publication. I am not even allowed to explain my case in a prefatory note; wherefore, as I cannot see in any quarter a chance that my rights will be protected, I hereby give Messrs. Maunsel publicly permission to publish this story with what changes or deletions they may please to make, and shall hope that what they may publish may resemble that to the writing of which I gave thought and time. Their attitude as an Irish publishing firm may be judged by Irish public opinion. I, as a writer, protest against the systems (legal, social, and ceremonious) which have brought me to this pass.

Thanking you for your courtesy,

I am, sir, your obedient servant,
James Joyce.

Trieste,
18th August, 1911.