

(Dictated.)

Mayville N.Y.

March 22nd 1887.

Roberts Bros.

Boston, Mass.

Gentlemen:

I have your letter of the 18th

inst in reply to that of my husband in regard to "Button's Inn"

I am familiar with the business of publication so far as his works are concerned, having always attended to the correspondence and accounting connected with the same and know the precise amounts paid for composition, electrotyping, paper, printing, binding and advertising of about a dozen volumes. I feel myself competent, therefore, to discuss intelligibly and decide intelligently the questions arising in the present matter.

I am the sole owner of the copyright of "Button's Inn", and shall in a short time have other works to publish by the same author, some under his own name and some under a pseudonym as it has long been his custom to write. These books I do not care to scatter but have not yet decided upon a house for the

publication. The Judge's letter to you was only tentative. He seems, for some reason to prefer negotiating with you. Whether it is from something Mr. Howard has said or a mere vague impression I do not know. At all events the circumstances are peculiar.

My husband's works as you are aware command always a distinctly remunerative sale. He has a clientele that removes all question of risk. Besides that my purpose is, not so much to arrange for the publication of a single volume as it is to ascertain what is best to be done considering all these circumstances. "Barton's Inn", though a very bright story and sure of a good sale, is really only a minor work. If I can find a publisher with whom satisfactory arrangements can be made, it will of course be pleasanter to have them all with one than with many. I am however, not inclined to accept the ordinary terms for single works as I would much rather set up, print and manufacture the works myself and put them in hand for sale on a commission.

The arrangement with Fords, Howard & Hulbert, was entirely satisfactory both to my husband, to me (in those books in which I had a distinct interest) and also I believe to them. From first to last, there was never any misunderstanding or ill-feeling on the part of either. It covered more than a decade and embraced sales amounting to more than half a million volumes. It is a regrettable fact that certain legal complications arising out of my husband's unfortunate connection with the Continental render it unadvisable, both in their opinion and in mine that they should act for me in this matter.

I attribute the fact of the universally pleasant relations with F. H. & H. to the basis on which they were placed and the absolute frankness that characterized our intercourse with them. They were, with some modifications on what is known as the "half-profit plan". The chief modification was this--The Judge furnished the manuscript and they furnished the plates, composition, electrotyping, cover-plates and all the mechanism

of manufacturing. After that, both expenses and profits were divided. That is, the cost of manufacture and advertising were taken out and the remaining proceeds equally divided. The advertising was limited both in extent and character which limit could not be exceeded at the common cost without specific consent. The rates of sale were fixed and there could be no sales under those limits without consent or rather they were required to account for books at that rate unless expressly allowed to sell for less. The plates were held jointly. On this system both parties made a great deal of money and consequently both were well satisfied.

Upon this system there was never less than 54 per-cent of list price remaining for division between the partners and in several cases it considerably exceeded that amount. The reason no doubt was that the books stood on their own merits and were not required to carry a proportionate part of the expense of a general advertising which brought no specific return.

With these facts in mind and a pretty thorough knowledge of the cost of manufacture I could not consent to the terms you propose. I would rather manufacture the books myself and pay a commission on their sale. The Judge has never published but one book on a royalty and that cost him more to get his foot out of the bog than he received for the work. If, however, you desire "Button's Inn" on the terms he indicated, 15 per cent list price on all sales, I shall be inclined to try it.

I recognize the fact that the interest of author and publisher is in a sense mutual, but the interests of all authors are not identical nor their relations to the publisher subject to empirical rule. An author whose works always yield a profit is worth much more to a publisher than many brilliant contingencies. So too a publisher who will listen to suggestions is worth more to an author than one whose stock of knowledge is not susceptible of enhancement. The Judge has made a study of the sale of his works such as the most profitable lines of ad-

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vertising, &c, for them, and not a little of their success we think attributable to that fact. F.H. & F. came to have such confidence in his judgment in this respect that he is very frequently consulted by them now as to other works. Of course upon a royalty basis all these things are left solely to the publisher. On any other they must be matter of frank consultation and agreement.

Perhaps after one work on a royalty we may be able to arrange for others upon some other plan, if we should prove mutually satisfactory to each other on the dealings this will require. Then all future matters could be put on a general plan.

I do not at all care to own the plates. I should only care for them for a uniform edition of the Judge's works at some future time for which they would be entirely useless and I understand the nature of copyright too well to think, as so many authors do, that such ownership is necessary to the protection

Very respectfully,

P.S. I fear you may think from the length of this missive that I am a garrulous old lady, but I assure you that I am not so very old and am not, I believe, given to much talking unless I have something to say.

Copy of Letter to
Robert Ross
Mar 22nd 87
