

AL/2572

Greyfriars

New Milton

Hants

Dec: 30th
1918

Dear Mr: Cavendish-Bentinck

Many thanks. 'The Sheepfold' has had a most joyous success in the opinions one cares about: and also, strangely enough, throughout the entire press - including the 'Church Times'! Only 3 reviews, I think, were adverse out of a hundred. Does that mean, I wonder, that the mind of the age is opening and changing? The book's experience began very differently: a publisher accepted it on the first seven or eight chapters: but dropped it like a red-hot burning coal when I sent him the rest. He informed me that it would be prosecuted by the police if I did not modify it! I modified one word (for 'copulating' put 'pairing': the two flies attending the funeral service hovered on the bald head of an elder); and so far the book has escaped both the clutches of the law and the ban of the Librarians. Moreover the Rector of New Milton came to call on the strength of it!

yes: but indeed I did write most of it in London, though my heart was in the country. This is the very locality where Jane's proto-type, Mrs. Goring, (mother of the Shakers) lived & died. Incidents in her life helped the book: but Jane herself was an independent creation.

I have been laughing over the election results to-day. They really have over-done it: 'Philip' was very drunk; but I'm not sure that his debauch went last a little longer than we expect. I have been very much struck by the general vergefness of the public mind; & the election does rather represent our present moral state as a nation; - 'Kaine's head in a charger' & all the silly rest of it. It will require a thoroughly material disillusionment to swing us round; a good hard hit in the stomach, prices, shortage, & unemployment combined; and the reaction will be of a spiritual quality when it does come. Still it will be fun. I'm feeling bitter & ironic about things just now: but the ghost of my dear Jane helps me to laugh. Certainly content &. Next: I'll come & speak with you at Blandford & get mobbed again.

I am only a precarious visitor to town nowadays, but I'll remember your kind proposal, & send you a line someday asking if I may come.

My latest interest is Prison Reform, & I've just gone on a Labour Research Committee to see to help derange the old system.

Rather than a rank rebel being the first woman M.P. It consoles me for the defeat of others: but I'm thankful Southwick did its duty by the promising young lady who turned judge for the beane game of Lloyd George.

Well, we are living in special times! but I fancy a Harley St. residence, with pleasant objects of art in it, is not going to be a specially safe place when the real upheaval does begin. Want you move there to the country for a while? Demos, when his blood is up, hasn't much sense of beauty, or of discretion either!

All good wishes for the Deluge - and after.

Yours sincerely

Lawrence Houseman