

## **New Letters from Thomas Seltzer and Robert Mountsier to D.H. Lawrence**

**Edited and with an introduction by  
Jay A. Gertzman and Michael Squires**

**W**hile D.H. Lawrence was living in Taormina, on the island of Sicily, he received a letter from a New York publisher named Thomas Seltzer (1875-1943) who had begun publishing books in 1919 and had included on his list the American edition of Lawrence's play *Touch and Go*. Seltzer hoped to issue more of his work. Even though Benjamin Huebsch, the American publisher of *The Rainbow*, had hoped for that honor, Lawrence sent Seltzer the manuscript of *Women in Love*. Neither he nor his agent James Pinker had been able to place it in England, and Lawrence assumed that Pinker had already tried Huebsch. When Seltzer bravely accepted the novel, he sent Lawrence an advance and then published a private edition of 1,250 copies in November 1920. Thus began a close association between Lawrence and Seltzer that lasted until 1924, when Seltzer's firm began to lose money and Lawrence, worried about his future, left him for Alfred Knopf.

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Yet few of Seltzer's letters to Lawrence have survived. Gerald Lacy's *D.H. Lawrence: Letters to Thomas and Adele Seltzer* includes only one. And so it is surprising that those published here were saved. They were probably placed in a trunk and kept at the Los Pinos Ranch in El Prado until after Frieda's death, when her third husband Angelo Ravagli apparently sold them. They are now in the Copley Library in La Jolla, California.

Written in early 1923, the six letters published here for the first time are, with one exception, from Seltzer to Lawrence. Bridging gaps in Lawrence's own letters (see Appendix), they tell us much that is new.

They freshly elucidate Lawrence's break with Robert Mountsier, his American agent since October 1920, whose letter to Lawrence is no. 6 in the series. Mountsier had long treated Seltzer with disdain, judging him disorganized and inefficient. But in these letters Seltzer shows himself capable of quick riposte, and makes Mountsier seem both petty and mean, particularly about contracts. The letters also show Seltzer's open and frank admiration for Lawrence, his efforts to publicize Lawrence's work, and his sincere friendship: "You know that there is not another author on my list for whom I have worked so hard and with so much devotion, to whom I have given so much of the best that there is in me," he wrote in letter no. 2 (February 1, 1923). This level of personal and professional commitment cannot easily be inferred from Lawrence's letters to Seltzer, which mostly address professional concerns rather than nurture a close friendship, although after Seltzer courageously published *Women in Love*, Lawrence said with gratitude, "Thomas, you are the only one who gets the core of me" (Lacy 187). He liked Seltzer's willingness to print "all of me" (*L* iv. 394).

Specific matters are clarified too. For instance, Seltzer's delight that Lawrence had interpolated his wartime experiences into *Kangaroo*, thereby giving them "the widest hearing," may have bolstered Lawrence's decision to reject Mountsier's advice. Mountsier thought the chapter called "Nightmare" an intrusion into a novel about Australia. Seltzer's view was radically different. "It was a stroke of genius," he proclaimed in letter no. 1, "to put the War against such a background"—with the noise of war intensifying the silence of the vast Australian continent (January 26, 1923). Seltzer's admiration helped Lawrence see that appreciation of his work would be finer in America than in England.

Seltzer's first letter of the series arrived just a few weeks after he and his energetic wife Adele had visited the Lawrences at their log cabin on Del Monte Ranch, located in the mountains above Taos. The Seltzers stayed

for Christmas and New Year's. They helped with the household chores, rode to the hot springs for a bath, visited the Taos socialite Mabel Dodge Sterne, and were irresistibly drawn to Lawrence and Frieda—who charmed the Seltzers with their conversation, their singing of English Christmas carols, and their puddings and mince pies. Adele thought them almost divine.

Two letters clarify Seltzer's legal problems. Publishers like Seltzer had incurred suspicion because they sought the work of European writers who despised reticence and cant. The "tremendous fuss" Seltzer mentions in letter no. 5 (March 3, 1923) concerns the "Clean Books Bill," which aimed to strengthen New York's obscenity statutes. Conservatives feared that the September 1922 court decision, which had cleared Seltzer's edition of *Women in Love* (and two other books), would weaken these statutes. Hence John Ford, who was a New York State Supreme Court Justice, led the fight for this "Clean Books" revision to the state constitution. He did so after his 16-year-old daughter brought home a copy of *Women in Love* from a lending library he had for years patronized. Surprisingly, the National Association of Book Publishers balked at fighting the bill: its members shrank from seeming to support the dissemination of sexually explicit material to young people. But in May 1923 the bill failed in the legislature.

Seltzer's legal problems, however, continued to bedevil him. An ominous misjudgment appears in letter no. 4 (February 24, 1923). Seltzer wrongly believed that the District Attorney would refuse to bring an indictment against *Women in Love*. After losing in Magistrate's Court, John S. Sumner, Secretary of the powerful New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, sought a grand jury indictment against Seltzer for distributing the same three books of the original case. In July, shortly after the Clean Books Bill failed, Sumner got his indictment—not for *Women in Love* but for the other two books. The judge believed that passages harmful to the sexual mores of the average person might offset a book's literary distinction. Unable to afford more legal fees, Seltzer agreed in 1925 both to withdraw a suit he had earlier filed against Sumner for false arrest, and to withdraw the two indicted books from circulation. Yet Sumner faced a problem: he could not make it appear that he had made direct deals with publishers (and thus be guilty of restraining trade), so the deal was arranged by someone else. Ironically that person—Ferdinand Pecora—was the Chief Assistant District Attorney whom Seltzer says in letter no. 4 will decline to indict. Whereas Algernon Methuen had timidly yielded to the magistrate's order that *The Rainbow* be suppressed in 1915, Thomas Seltzer had fought hard

to foster a climate of free expression.

Gradually Seltzer's legal costs ate away his profits. Already undercapitalized, he was in time unable to pay his bills. Lawrence's British publisher Martin Secker, for instance, vowed late in 1923 "to have no further business relations with Seltzer" (*L v.* 165 n.4). Seltzer's courage and enthusiasm could not rescue his waning reputation as a good businessman. Even the efforts of his attorney, Benjamin Stern, were not enough. When the Seltzers' business began to fail, Lawrence was annoyed that they did not openly discuss their difficulties, and in letters to others sometimes referred to them as "little Jews." He intentionally did not inform them of his arrival in New York in March 1924. Indeed, Seltzer's unwillingness to keep Lawrence informed about his financial problems and about the deposits he was supposed to make to Lawrence's account had forced the Lawrences to return early from Europe in order to pay their income taxes. Seltzer met him at the dock anyway and housed most of the party in his apartment. Several months later, when Seltzer, unable to pay accrued royalties, described himself as a "sacrifice to the arts," Lawrence objected to his effort to use art to make himself "a rich and prosperous publisher" (*L v.* 78-79). After their break was final, Lawrence told Seltzer: "Blame me, if you like. . . . But blame yourself, now as ever, for not knowing how to be simple and open with me." Indeed, he hoped Seltzer would "get rich one day—honestly I do" (*L v.* 574). By the time that letter was written, on November 13, 1926, Seltzer had already issued his last catalog.

#### The Six Letters

1

5 West Fiftieth Street, New York  
January 26, 1923

Mr. D. H. Lawrence  
Taos, N.M.

Dear Lawrence:

Congratulations on KANGAROO! It is superb. Entirely different from any of your other novels. I knew that if you ever wrote about the War you would say something that nobody else said, in a way that nobody else could; but I never thought that you would put it in a novel. I need not tell you how glad I am that it is in a novel, because in that form it will get the widest hearing. For myself, your book means a great deal. Every new book of yours carries one forward. One does not remain on the same spot as with most of our other writers. The two chapters that affected me deeply are "Struthers" and "Kangaroo", and the next one, about your War experiences. I mention the War element in your novel particularly because it is so close to us,<sup>1</sup> but of course it is by no means the whole novel. You have the whole country Australia in it, its depression as well as its fascination. It was a stroke of genius to put the War against such a background. The contrast between the vast silence of that large uninhabited country and the noise of the War intensifies both. And then there is the whole world besides. The Odyssey of the human soul as seen through the individual soul of Richard Lovatt and the revelation of the dark God. I think I am intimate with your dark God, I seem to know him, and let others laugh, it won't affect me and I hope it won't affect you. They will not laugh for long, I am sure.

The manuscript is bad in parts, some errors must have crept in in transcription. I will let you have galley proof and you can fix it up. What I can guess at myself I will have corrected here in the office.

I got home at nine o'clock Tuesday, the 16<sup>th</sup>. Of course a pile of work awaited me, and I had no time to write until now. Yours is the first letter I am dictating. My trip was quite worth while. Everywhere I went the bookdealers greeted me with "D.H. Lawrence." You have many enthusiastic admirers in Los Angeles and in San Francisco, and through out the West and Middle West. In Chicago, one of the literary lights told me that he had just spent an evening in which the chief topic of conversation for several hours was D.H. Lawrence. I wonder if you remember, some three years ago I wrote

you that you would come into your own. Well, you have, apparently, already. *WOMEN IN LOVE* continues to sell well and there is a steady demand for your other books. What I am glad to see especially is that there is a constant small sale for *SEA AND SARDINIA*. I shall probably have to print a second edition soon of *PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS. ENGLAND, MY ENGLAND* has received praise from practically all reviewers so far. If you are interested I will send you some of the clippings. *FANTASIA OF THE UNCONSCIOUS* they do not understand, or do not want to understand. In San Francisco I met an insistent little lady reviewer who had written a rather snippy review of *FANTASIA*, and she would discuss this book with me endlessly, though I had very little time; I had important other things to do. Nevertheless, it will do some good, as she lectures on your book. It has affected her strongly in spite of herself, and she feels she must fight back. This will no doubt create some readers, and when *FANTASIA OF THE UNCONSCIOUS* gets enough readers it will begin to be appreciated. It too, is having a steady moderate sale.

Nobody whom I met in Los Angeles and San Francisco knew much about Mexico. I went to the Chamber of Commerce in Los Angeles and spoke to the man who is supposed to know a good deal but he proved very disappointing. He said that the two chief points of interest in Mexico are Mexico City and Guadalajara, about fourteen hours from Mexico City. I think you can make the trip comfortably on about three hundred and fifty to four hundred dollars for each person, but I will find out the exact cost of the fare from the Mexican Consul here, and will write you about it soon.

I suppose Mexico is calling you, and you must go. If you change your mind and want to come East, you will have a nice house in Stamford, Connecticut, the country house of our friend I told you about. They are going to Europe and the house is at your disposal for the whole summer, so that even if you come East in June you will have the house. It is a nice place, not pretentious at all, just pleasant. It is possible also that there will be another house of theirs vacant on the same grounds, and if that is the case we may be able to stay there also, for a couple of months. Adele and I would like it

very much.

In Chicago I received word from the office, asking where the third novelette "Ladybird" is. You know that Mountsier, when he gave me "The Fox", took away "Ladybird" to submit to the Cosmopolitan. The two other novelettes are in page<sup>2</sup> proof, and we cannot go on. It puts me in a predicament. We have pretty nearly our entire Spring list complete, and not a single work of yours is in such shape that we can announce a definite publication date. It is absurd. Did Mountsier get my telegram about "Ladybird"?

I had a letter from John Macy of the Nation about little novels, returning all the stories. He wrote Mountsier, so you know the situation. No, by all means, if "Mastro-Don" is all that you and Adele think about it we must begin with this novel. Short stories even at best hardly ever sell as well as a novel that is successful, and if you have a big novel "Mastro-Don", why naturally, that should come first. I will try to read it soon.

I had never meant to pay you only ten percent on WOMEN IN LOVE, contract or no contract. I had given orders before that you are to be paid fifteen percent on all copies above five thousand, counting also the copies of the limited edition that we sold, so that after less than four thousand of the new edition, you will be getting fifteen percent, but as regards all of your books, I find that our ten percent up to five thousand is perfectly fair. I have gone into this thing carefully and I find that the best results for you and for me can be obtained on this basis only. I could explain to you in detail but it will only weary you. You will believe me if I say that it is so. I should feel miserable if we were "contractors of business" only, just as you would. With you I absolutely refuse to be that, and that alone. As to my being "innerlich" loyal to you, you know that I am, don't you? You don't want me to make protestations. But I want to say this, the relation between us with regard to your books is perfectly natural, in the natural course of things, but any interference by a third person is unnatural, unnecessary, and creates needless fuss and inconvenience both to you and me. It must be stopped even if the feelings of somebody are hurt, and the only way to do it is to put an end to it once for all. No half measures will do. I will be miserable.

It is unwise. And I am afraid I will have to make you uncomfortable occasionally against my will if the thing is not put a stop to. It is the right thing, it is the just thing. You know that it is, and if something unpleasant has got to be done it is neither your fault nor mine; it is the fault of the person who occasions all this.

We have had about four different changes of weather since my return; very cold, warm, very cold, snow and rain on the same day - a sort of indeterminate weather now. This is New York, you are lucky not to be here at this season.

Editing a volume of best stories is not for you, rather cheap. Furthermore, for use in a college one must be connected with some educational institution, because in textbooks it is usually an exchange of favors between educators. You buy my textbook, and I will buy yours; no outsider shall infringe. So I have my doubts about the advisability of it, even if it were the kind of work you ought to do. You will not let yourself be used, of course not.

Remember me to Frieda Lawrence. I should like to see you soon again.

Yours, Thomas Seltzer

TS:N

2

5 West Fiftieth Street, New York  
February 1st, 1923

Dear Lawrence:

Soon after writing to you I received your letter of January 19<sup>th</sup>

and your special delivery of January 23<sup>rd</sup>. I communicated with Hearst's International at once and found that THE CAPTAIN'S DOLL had not yet been scheduled. As they arrange their schedule three months ahead this means that it cannot appear before June. I then sent off your cable to Curtis Brown setting the date as August. The editor of Hearst's promised me to do his best. The reason for its taking so long is that the size of the story is rather unusual and they are finding difficulty in getting the space for it. But I'll do my best to get them to print it in June, and we can release the book as soon as the story appears in the magazine. Before I left for New Mexico the editor promised to publish it in time for March publication of the book. So I did not bother any more. But evidently they need looking after. They have a new managing editor who is friendly to me and a great admirer of your work, so I think he'll do all in his power to accommodate us.

Did you get the page proof of THE CAPTAIN'S DOLL and THE FOX? I sent you uncorrected proof. The printer has the corrected copy. Do you like the fountain pen? If it is too hard or unsatisfactory in any way, return it to me and I'll change it for the kind you like.

The package came with the manuscripts of STUDIES, LADY-BIRD, LITTLE NOVELS OF SICILY, Merrild's three jackets, Götsche's amusing sketch, the thousand contracts AND the letter of Mountsier, a copy of which I am enclosing.

The impudent good for nothing! The cheek and vulgarity of him. The penny soul. After this there was only one thing for me to do. I enclose my reply also. I could not do otherwise and retain my self-respect. He has ruled himself out. He does not belong with people like you and me. We are not going to haggle eternally over dollars and cents. We'll be just to each other and act with dignity. It is impossible to act with dignity with Mountsier meddling.

Evidently he has been playing up the contract of WOMEN IN LOVE as his big trump card. My last letter disposed of that. You know under what circumstances the contract was drawn up. It was the first of your books I accepted. Neither you nor I expected a sale above 5000. It was to be a limited edition. It cost several thousand

dollars to produce. It would be some time before I could even get back the investment. Surely it wasn't a profiteering proposition. Now that it turned out that the book is selling I am not so petty as to take advantage of a contract. I don't conceive of our relation as merely one of dollars and cents. I leave that to Mountsier.

He says something about TOUCH AND GO and THE WIDOWING OF MRS. HOLROYD. What about them? The royalty due on TOUCH AND GO up to date is \$3.43. I don't think the sale of MRS. HOLROYD has yet covered the amount I paid for the stock and the plates. I bought the play because I wanted to get all your books I could and subsequently bring them under one imprint. What's the great "financial expert" talking about?

Why, if another agent had represented you, would I not have gotten THE LOST GIRL? You gave me the option on it in the contract of WOMEN IN LOVE. You wrote me promising it to me absolutely. Does he think that you would go back on your word? Did he not ask me to show him the contract of WOMEN IN LOVE and was it not only after he saw the option clause that he finally gave me the manuscript of THE LOST GIRL? Did he not dilly-dally as he always does, so that Secker got ahead of us and we lost considerable sales on account of it?

A nice mess he would have made if he had the free disposal of THE LOST GIRL.

He talks about other agents. I have dealt and am dealing with almost every literary agent of any account. They have all been very nice to me. They cooperate with me and are often helpful. They don't haggle. None of them has shown himself as petty as Mountsier, none has dared to be bossy with me. We agree on the main points, than a contract is drawn up, a short, sensible contract, not the crazy Authors' League and hair splitting lawyer's contract, and all is done. Everything else they leave to me. They don't meddle, they don't attempt to print the book for me, to publish it, to advertise it and to sell it. If they can help me they do it, unobtrusively. I have not yet lost a single author I wanted to keep through the treachery of an agent. They have all been satisfied with the way I handled their books and whether I was protected by an option clause or not they

have so far always given me the author's new books. Mountsier alone is dissatisfied. This proves his utter incompetence. For if I have given satisfaction in other cases surely I must have done so in yours. You know that there is not another author on my list for whom I have worked so hard and with so much devotion, to whom I have given so much of the best that there is in me. And everybody, except those who are greedy to snatch for themselves the results accomplished by the hard work of another, recognizes that we have done well, unusually well, in fact. But Mountsier doesn't see it. A nice literary agent he is.

He complains of my advertising. What we have done before the censorship case you know. Since then *WOMEN IN LOVE* has featured for months as news in papers all over the country, and in editorials and special articles. Perhaps another publisher would have bought up all the newspapers and excluded all other news. Or perhaps Mountsier thinks that the best form of advertising is to tell the reviewers that *AARON'S ROD* is so poor a novel that he and other friends of yours had tried to keep you from publishing it. When I was in San Francisco the hotel where I stopped was invaded by reporters who came to interview me when they learned I was in the city. They came early in the morning and interviewed me when I was still in bed, they interviewed me at breakfast, at all hours of the day, and my last goodbye before I left for the East was to a reporter.

Mountsier hates me because I am not a mere merchandiser but appreciate your books in and for themselves and he did not until a lot of people said so; he hates me because I not only advertise that you are a genius, and the greatest writer in the English language, but because he knows that I believe it, and that my response is direct, from within, which is what gives me the courage to publish it abroad; while he—well, I need not tell you that he is utterly incapable of seeing the greatness and the beauty of your writings. I shall continue to declare in my advertisements that you are a genius whenever I think it appropriate. You are the greatest writer in English and I personally don't know any foreign author either whose works give me the same sense of bigness as yours do, from whom I get such a feeling of personality, of life and worthwhileness. Mountsier says,

“Lawrence’s works speak for themselves.” When did they begin to speak for themselves to him? AARON’S ROD spoke so loudly to him that he couldn’t bear the noise and wanted to stop it. Like so many who do not see the real essence of your art SONS AND LOVERS has remained your “best novel” to him and THE LOST GIRL your next best. Has he changed his mind now, has he suddenly seen a light?

Well, Mountsier need not fear that I have done you harm with the way I advertised you. If you had been with me on my trip you’d have heard the bookdealers all over, and private people too: “You have made Lawrence.” “You have made Lawrence.” Of course I did not make you. You made yourself. I could not have made you as I have made you if your works were not what they are. But their meaning is clear enough. Your works “speak for themselves!” How clever in Mountsier! And we stupid publishers go and spend thousands of dollars every month in advertising to tell the people what the works tell about themselves.

It is too absurd. I don’t at all like to say all this. You don’t need it, I am sure. You know it all without my saying it, don’t you? But since I am wound up let me finish. The truth is, the people have learned to respect my opinion about books. More and more people know that my opinion of a book deserves a hearing. Some critics too have a great regard for what I say. Even most of the hostile critics have a sneaking regard for my opinion and it enrages them. Inferiority complex.

Shall I then keep quiet? Shall I, whenever a new novel by Lawrence or René Maran<sup>3</sup> appears, whisper in six point type:- “Kangaroo: it speaks for itself.”

To think of Mountsier telling me what is appropriate, teaching me good manners—a bully who can write a bullying, vulgar letter like this to a decent man.

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All the arrangements I have made with Mountsier in the past I will allow to stand. But on your future books I wrote you in my

last letters what I consider a fair graded royalty - 10% on the first 5000 and 15% above. I based this statement on the actual figures of last year's business. We had a good year. And if I find this year that I can increase your royalty to 15% from the start I will do so, and let you have the additional royalty of 5% on the first 5000 of each book at the end of the year. If we have great prosperity there will be a bonus also, which is a reasonable business arrangement based on what the state of the business permits. In a word, I am not greedy. I'll do what is right.

I can't bear to look at these long, foolish contracts I received. I'll have a contract drawn up which will protect you in every respect. This is thoroughly satisfactory, most frequently used, and we'll get along with it all right.

Of course I'll let you have a say whenever the question of moving picture rights arises. But if quick action is necessary and you cannot be reached in time you don't want me to miss a chance.

The royalties due you from June to January 1st amount to \$4286.46. Not bad. Added to your royalties of the first half of the year, the total of royalties for 1922 is more than \$6000. Mountsier's haggling made a difference of about \$300. Isn't it stupid? From a business point of view I must count every dollar and every penny, because it would make a difference of thousands of dollars a year which the firm could not afford to lose. But for your representative to haggle over this is pure pettiness—and worse, a lack of desire to cooperate, to help me do the best for you.

Curtis Brown writes me that Secker has at last decided to publish SEA AND SARDINIA. I am glad of that. He will print it himself.

I tried to get the two books of Melville in every bookshop I visited on my trip and in New York. They cannot be obtained. I am advertising for them now. I will also try to get the Spanish book on Mexico.

Have not yet seen Mexican consul. Will do my best to find time in a few days.

I like THE CAPTAIN'S DOLL and STUDIES jackets. Don't care for the KANGAROO one.

I will write soon again about the order in which the new books are to be published.

Best regards to Mrs. Lawrence.

Yours, Thomas Seltzer

TS:FL

3

5 West Fiftieth Street, New York  
February 17, 1923

Mr. D. H. Lawrence  
Del Monte Ranch  
Questa, N. M.

Dear Lawrence:

So the Mountsier chapter is ended. I realize how awful it was for you. It was awful for me too, but perhaps not quite so bad. But it had to be gone through with. Now I am sure it will be all right between you and me.

My last letter may explain part of Mountsier's bad conscience. I wonder if he hasn't done anything dirtier behind our backs. Time will show.

If your arrangement with him did not specify that he is to receive a commission permanently, then by all means discontinue the commission. It is all wrong that he should be getting it, besides he should not get any commission at all on WOMEN IN LOVE, as he did not place this book. I had a talk with lawyer<sup>4</sup> Stern and am fairly

convinced that his advice at the start was bad. I think I might have managed to get *SONS AND LOVERS* from Mitchell Kennerley if I had been able to treat with him some two years ago. Now the book is out in the cheap edition and what arrangement he made and whether it is possible to take away the cheap edition rights even when we get back the book from Mitchell Kennerley, I do not know. Stern says that Kennerley's lawyer promised to give him a definite answer in two weeks and hopes that Kennerley will turn over the book to us without going to court. Would it be so! Even with the cheap edition on the market it would still be nice to have the book for the collected edition of your novels. *THE RAINBOW* becomes ours automatically six months after serving the notice. If you let me have the dates of the expiration of the contracts of the other books, I shall see that notice is served in time.

I will be glad to attend to the business with Stern myself and keep you informed of every step and of course not do anything of importance without your consent, except in such cases where a quick decision is to be made. This will save you a lot of time and unnecessary trouble. When you are in New York, if the matter is still pending, it will be easy for you to get in touch with Stern personally.

Carl Hovey, managing editor of Hearst's magazines, has consented to let us print *THE CAPTAIN'S DOLL* book whenever we want, irrespective of the date of publication in the magazine, so now it can be released. I want, however, to have another talk with him before releasing the stories for book publication.

I sent Merrild a check for \$120. for the three jackets, \$40. a piece. This is a very good price. I do not think the *KANGAROO* jacket will show up well among other books, but I will keep the jacket anyway.

The best thing for Götsche, is to do a decorative, not a picture jacket, for *BIRDS, BEASTS and FLOWERS*. The size is 6-5/8 x 8\_. The first thing I read of your *BIRDS*, was of course "Bubbles". It is a joy! When Adele came in I showed it to her, and she was enchanted.

For the present, the following is the order of publication: *THE CAPTAIN'S DOLL* about March 15; *STUDIES* the first or second week in April; *BIRDS* will have to be postponed to the Fall. It is too

important a book not to get the best sale for it, and it will get the best sale only if published early in the Fall, say the middle of September or perhaps a little later. KANGAROO too, ought to be published about that time. However, I will have all your books set up as soon as possible so that if we decide to publish them before, we can do so. I shall see that Curtis Brown gets all information with regard to dates of any book of yours. I will try to work together so as not to conflict with each other. I would also like to publish THE WHITE PEACOCK some time this year, and THE RAINBOW when we get it.

I will send you the contracts soon containing the seven-year term clause and will let you have transfer of copyright with the contracts, so that you will be completely protected. I do not want to influence you about your English publisher, but I have my suspicions about twenty and twenty-five percent. If Secker expects to do any advertising, how in the world can he afford these royalties? We will talk about this when you are in New York. I shall probably go to England some time this year and if you want me to, I will do anything I can to get you the right terms and the right publisher.

If you want me to help you in the matter of income tax, I can arrange it for you if you let me know the exact amount.

Terry's "Guide to Mexico" has gone off to you and so has the "Oxford Book of Ballads". It seems there is no such thing as the "Oxford Book of Songs"; there are two books, the Ballads and another one, which I had ordered for you.

I saw Walter Pach<sup>5</sup> the artist the other day to find out something about Mexico. He was in Mexico for a few months last year, lecturing on art. He spoke very interesting on<sup>6</sup> Mexico. I will write you about it in my next letter soon.

Mr. D. H. Lawrence  
 Del Monte Ranch  
 Questa, N. M.

Dear Lawrence:

Your letter of February 17 just came. Also the corrected proofs of LADYBIRD. My last letter answers most of your questions, I think.

Yes, you had better withdraw your account from the Charleroi bank. I will open an account for you in the Chase National Bank, Metropolitan Branch, New York.

After April 1st, if you want to keep the money due you as royalties from July 1 to December 31 in the Seltzer corporation, I will pay you the usual interest of 6% yearly. If not, do you want me to invest it in safe securities? It would be a waste to let so much money lie idle in your bank or at the low interest which a bank pays. I shall see that you always have a balance of about \$2,000.00 in your bank for your open<sup>7</sup> account. This is enough, don't you think so?

Please let me know if the English publisher has set a definite date for the publication of the Verga novel. I'll read it as soon as possible. This book also should be an early fall publication and be brought out simultaneously here and in England.

My plan now is to have the same format for BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS as the English edition of LOOK WE HAVE COME THROUGH, which I like very much. Be sure I'll do my best to make a good-looking book. I have not yet read all the poems, but from what I have read, you are justified in laying so much store by it. So I want to give it the proper dress. It will be all right. Early next week I'll probably have the complete typescript to send to you.

Your telegram appeared in the newspapers complete exactly as you sent it. An omission of one word only - "guileless," before "Daughter." - Not my doing but the newspaper editors'. Evidently they feared libel suit.

I saw Jonathan Cape yesterday. He is eager to get your books.

Will pay 15% on the first ten thousand and 20% above, and 300 lbs. advance on every book. From what he told me, although he was careful not to say anything against Secker, there is no chance of your books getting the reading public they ought to have in England as long as they are in Secker's hands. I don't like to urge you to change you[r] publisher, but I am anxious that your books should get the right treatment in England. [It is] of course highly important. Anyway my advice is not to hurry in this matter. Cape may not be quite the right man; but he certainly would push your books. I'd like to talk this thing over with you carefully.

Next Thursday I'll see the lawyer again about SONS AND LOVERS, and will write you immediately.

Since you are going to spend a couple of months in Mexico, you will obtain all the information you want in Mexico City, and there is no need for me to give you the bit I was able to gather. Walter Pach says one must be careful about one's food in Mexico, but he was there in the summer.

Is THE WHITE PEACOCK now free for publication at any time?  
All the best things for you and Frieda Lawrence.

Yours, Thomas Seltzer

*[The postscript is in Seltzer's hand:]*

Acting Assistant District Attorney Pecora made a statement in the papers the day after Ford's attack that he is not likely to take any further action against Women in Love because he knows he cannot secure its suppression. Sumner doesn't know what he is talking about. The only one that can bring an indictment in New York is the District Attorney and Pecora is the real district attorney, Banton being only a figure head.<sup>8</sup> Sumner tried to get the District Atty to bring an indictment before the Grand Jury after he lost the case in the Magistrate's Court. Banton turned him down flat.

T. S.

Judge Ford, by the way, is known as a gas bag and a poor judge whom the other judges try to relegate to his proper place by giving him petty cases only.

5

5 West Fiftieth Street, New York  
March 3, 1923.

Mr. D. H. Lawrence,  
Del Monte Ranch,  
Questa, New Mexico.

Dear Lawrence:

Your letter of February 22nd received.

Mitchell Kennerley's lawyer is ill with pneumonia and so the decision about *SONS AND LOVERS* is delayed. Stern assures me that he will see him as soon as he is back in the office. I will let you know immediately when there is any news of importance.

The enclosed card of Lincoln Steffens will introduce you to Robert Haberman, an Hungarian-American and a newspaper man in Mexico City who Steffens says is much liked and knows people whom you will want to meet. You will have no difficulty, Steffens says, in locating him among the newspapers in Mexico City. Lincoln Steffens is a very well known journalist and writer here. He has been in Mexico a number of times and he has written out on the card an itinerary for you. This is for a quick trip. I suppose you will not follow it as you mean to spend some time in Mexico. You will, of course, make Mexico City your headquarters. The last three cit-

ies marked on the card I suppose you will visit on your way to New York after returning to Mexico City.

I have not yet been able to make out Stern. I will rent a strong box for you in a bank where you can keep all your important papers. The less lawyer the better. I only use them as a last resort in an extreme emergency.

I will read MASTRO-DON GESUALDO soon and will try to bring the book out simultaneously with its publication in England. I think the middle of September is a better date than August.

Almost all of BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS is now typewritten and a copy will go off to you early next week. I will have it forwarded special delivery so that you will be sure to get it before you leave.

I thought my letter of February 17th explained that there was to be no interior decoration for BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS but only a decorative<sup>9</sup> jacket.

Your contracts with Huebsch have a seven year term clause, have they not, and notice must be served at<sup>10</sup> the expiration of the seven years. Six months after serving notice the books are free. That is my understanding of it and I think I am right.

The contracts and the assignments of copyright will be ready early next week and I will try to let you have them before you leave. After signing them please return them, and your copies I will put in your box. If the contracts are not ready in time, I will see that you get them in Mexico City but I shall try to have them before.

Please send me the Huebsch contracts, if possible. I will get in touch with Huebsch and will let you know.

I think now that all questions are answered. In addition to the fact that I am overwhelmed with work, some questions cannot be answered immediately because there is a good deal of information to be obtained which takes time; so please be patient and be sure that all the information you desire will be given you at the earliest possible moment.

I want to say again that I think it very wrong and absurd that Mountsier should receive a commission for the rest of his life. He has done nothing whatever to further your affairs as regards your

books. You had your publisher, and it was a simple matter to let me have the manuscripts and publish them at the most favorable time. Nothing Mountsier ever did was helpful, but many things he did were an obstruction. He did do something perhaps worthwhile in placing things with the magazines but for this he has been paid. My suggestion is that you pay him a lump sum of \$200. or \$300. just as an employe who is dismissed is given<sup>11</sup> two or four weeks' notice with pay until he finds another position. That's as fair as can be. There is no reason on earth why Mountsier should expect different treatment. As far as I am concerned it, of course, does not affect<sup>12</sup> me directly, but I do not want him to take advantage of you. Don't let him do it.

Judge Ford has been making a tremendous fuss. Last Sunday all the New York papers had prominent front page news of a meeting he called together at the Astor Hotel at which he announced that he would introduce a law making any book obscene which contains even a single passage that is regarded as obscene. This would practically outlaw the entire book business. He got the backing of powerful names and organizations: the Catholic Church, the Boy Scouts Movement, the Prohibition Forces. Being a practiced politician the law might be railroaded in spite of its absurdity, unless it is counteracted by an opposition movement. So we got together and are forming an Anti-Censorship League. The majority of the public it seems clear are strongly opposed to censorship, but nevertheless this law might be passed just as prohibition was passed if it is not fought. The conservative "Times" last Tuesday came ought [sic] with a strong editorial against the proposed law, so did other papers. We will have practically the whole press with us I think and, no doubt, the law will either be killed or will never even get to the stage of being introduced, but it means a lot of hard work and is taking my time.

WOMEN IN LOVE is a big seller. It already sold over 12,500 exclusive of the limited edition and I have ordered a fourth printing. It will soon outstrip *Batouala*.<sup>13</sup>

I hope you have recovered from your cold.

Remember me to Frieda Lawrence.

Yours, Thomas Seltzer

TS/EG  
Enc.

6

Taos, New Mex.  
March 6, 1923.

Dear Lawrence,

I have your letter of the 3rd, asking me to put into writing that I am satisfied to accept ten per cent of all your receipts from Seltzer for this current year and to promise to send back to you your manuscripts and papers as soon as I go east.

You asked me to write you what I wanted in way of settlement, but neither by word of mouth nor by letter have I asked you for any particular settlement—and by no means did I ask you, as one of your letters seemed to indicate that you thought I did, for a permanent commission on your royalties. In this connection you mentioned that “Women in Love” was outside of my contracts; yes, you made the original contract with Seltzer, but consider that there were also such matters as “Sons and Lovers” and “The Trespasser” that I worked with on your behalf although I was not responsible for the original contracts—or lack of one in the case of the former—and drew nothing from them.

You have decided what you wish to pay me, and when it is paid there is an end to it so far as I am concerned. I express no dissatisfaction with the settlement; I express dissatisfaction in connection with certain things in your writings and with your allowing yourself to fall a prey to Seltzer by signing his contracts in place of the ones drawn up by Mr. Stern and me—certainly the “Women in

Love" contract and various words and doings on Seltzer's part should have been sufficient warning. And you appear to be throwing away your chance to get "Women in Love" back under your control.

Since you wish it in writing here is my promise to accept your settlement, to give your own words to me, of "ten per cent of all receipts from Seltzer for this current year" and the return of "all manuscripts and papers belonging to me as soon as you go east."

Robert Mountsier

### Conclusion

Mountsier's nagging worry about "various words and doings on Seltzer's part" was prescient. Early in 1924 Lawrence came to admit that Seltzer's business had apparently gone "very badly this winter" (*L* iv. 600), and later in the year agreed to let Curtis Brown's American agent, A.W. Barmby, send his new novel, *St. Mawr*, not to Seltzer but to Alfred Knopf, whose sumptuous, busy offices signified a "really sound and reliable" operation (*L* v. 306). To Mountsier Lawrence wrote on 18 September 1924: "You were right and I was wrong about him" (*L* v. 127).

Yet the letters reproduced here, written before either Lawrence or Seltzer could have recognized this painful truth, show how optimistic and secure, how loyal and affectionate, was Thomas Seltzer. In 1926, without the capital even to advertise his list, he finally sold his firm to his nephews Albert and Charles Boni. Ruined, he worked sporadically, then retired. All together, he had, between 1920 and 1925, published twenty of Lawrence's books. In a letter to us of 19 August 1997, Lawrence L. Levin, executor of the Seltzer estate, wrote: "Every time I read the letters of Adele and Thomas I feel saddened by these two people who struggled so hard for what they believed, who felt so passionately about so much, but who never achieved their dream. I doubt if getting rich was their goal, but remaining solvent certainly was, and in that they failed."

## Appendix

The six letters published here can be read in conjunction with Lawrence's replies as published in the Cambridge edition of his letters (cited by volume and page):

- To Seltzer's letter of 26 January 1923, DHL replied on 3 February 1923 (*L* iv. 376).
- To Seltzer's letter of 1 February 1923, DHL replied on 10 February 1923 (*L* iv. 382).
- To Seltzer's letter of 17 February 1923, DHL replied on 22 February 1923 (*L* iv. 393).
- To Seltzer's letter of 24 February 1923, DHL replied on 2 March 1923 (*L* iv. 401).
- To Seltzer's letter of 3 March 1923, DHL replied on 9 March 1923 (*L* iv. 406).
- To Mountsier's letter of 6 March 1923, DHL replied on 10 March 1923 (*L* iv. 407).

## Acknowledgments

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## Notes

1 us] it Here and below, the reading to the right of the bracket is a reading that Seltzer rejected.

2 page] galley

3 René Maran (1887-1960), whose first novel, *Batouala: Veritable Roman*

*negre* (Albin, 1921)—published by Seltzer in 1922 as *Batouala* (trans. Adele Seltzer)—described the fate of African tribes under French rule during World War I.

4 lawyer] Lawrence

5 Walter Pach (1883-1958), American painter and writer on art (e.g. *Seurat*, 1923).

6 spoke very interesting on] was interested in

7 open] OPEN

8 Joab H. Banton (1869-1949), District Attorney for New York County, 1922-29.

9 decorative] decorated

10 at] with

11 fair] far

12 affect] effect

13 See letter 2, n. 3.

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