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Mann, Erika

o.O., 1958-09-12

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September 12, 1958

Mr. John Farrar
Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Publishers
101 Fifth Avenue
New York 3 N.Y.

Dear John, -

but I am innocent, I promise you of neglecting to write you as soon as the first copies of THE LAST YEAR arrived. It was S. Fischer who told me that - for some reason unknown - you had decided on a new jacket, and so I naturally waited till the book in its final form would reach me. In the meantime, some additional copies found their way to Kilchberg, but the jacket - as far as I can make out - is precisely the same as before. And why shouldn't it? I thought the booklet extraordinarily well done from the very start, even if the actual binding (that simple grey-greenish make up with the impressive "TM" on it) attracted me even more than the doubtlessly effective jacket.

For the rest, I am delighted with the way in which you stretched the text, thus producing a real book, without making that appearance seem artificial. In short, I am utterly pleased with the American LAST YEAR and want you to know that I am extremely grateful to you for this successful effort. Will you kindly also tell Mr. Vursell of my gratitude and of my awareness of the fact that this particular publication must have caused him a lot of trouble.

I wonder about what may have happened to my choir-boys? Granted, the little fellows deserved a rest, and they are having one right now, whilst any number of German editions have been sold out, and the Swiss publishing house of Alfred Scherz (one of the biggest in this small country) is preparing a novel edition - in two volumes instead of four. Even so I should very much like to know whether your daughter in law disliked my juveniles, whether they have been forwarded to any American publisher specialising in that sort of thing or whether no decision on your part (or, rather on that of your daughter in law) has as yet been reached. In case my small books are considered unsuitable for the US, I should be very glad to have them back as soon as possible. There is a distinct shortage of copies at the present time, as is only too understandable, considering the fact that the German edition cannot be had any longer, whereas the Swiss edition will not appear before the autumn of 1959. Hence my mild eagerness to have any set returned which is not going to be put to any use. Publishers of various countries are interested

in my boy-singers; yet, I am incapable of supplying them with the necessary reading-copies.

How may the press at large have reacted to THE LAST YEAR ? All I saw was Hatfield's criticism in the Saturday Review of Literature. It read, as do most of the book reviews in that famous weekly: neither fish nor fowl, neither good or bad, neither attractive nor repulsive. Even so, the last sentences, at least make the book appear modestly interesting, and this is more than may be usually expected from the super-highbrows writing away in the good old Saturday-thing. Will you be sweet enough either to let me have a few additional comments, or to inform me in a general way what they were like ? Many thanks in advance and many thanks altogether.

I am, darling John, as ever with my warmest wishes for you and yours,

cordially yours:

