



# THE *World* PUBLISHING COMPANY

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February 24, 1945

Mrs. Hilda van Stockum Marlin  
3728 Northampton St. N. W.  
Washington, 15, D. C.

Dear Mrs. Marlin:

My rudeness in failing to acknowledge receipt of the drawings for HANS BRINKER was caused by a subconscious resistance against performing an unpleasant task. The drawings have all the charm and great artistry I have come to identify with your name. Your honesty and directness, your refusal to idealize or prettify, your perfectly amazing picture-building abilities so rare in an illustrator and more commonly found in the work of only the greatest painters -- all of these are present in fullest measure in this set of illustrations. In fact, these qualities are joined here by another which I had not found in your previous books, a developing economy of means.

Then why, you may wonder, do I find myself faced with an unpleasant task? Well, the fact is that despite my admiration for each picture separately for the reasons stated above, the drawings as a whole -- as one unit expressing the book -- are somewhat disappointing. One reason I have waited so long to tell you this is that the cause of my disappointment was not at first sufficiently clear to me. I have studied the drawings for many weeks now. I've reread parts of the book, and I've studied the drawings some more, and I believe I can now articulate the reason for my slight disappointment. Here it is:

The most important quality with which your work is blessed is a wonderful human warmth. Artists can develop all kinds of technical tricks, and some can even camouflage these tricks very cleverly. But one thing that cannot be faked is humanity, love of human beings, an understanding of their weaknesses, a sympathy with their hopes and aspirations, a confidence in their future and their ability to progress upward. This and only this makes an artist out of mere technician. All the technical tricks in the world are of no avail if that all-important feeling is missing.

So few people have it. You are among the treasured few that do. If you were not so full of it -- as I know from "Francie", from "Gerritt", and

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from that marvelous "Kersti" -- I would not bother to write as I do now. What would be the use. But you do have it and it would be criminal of me to remain silent in the face of what I feel.

The human warmth of which I speak is somewhat insufficiently reflected in the smaller drawings. The full-page drawings and the color drawings do not suffer from this criticism. But an analysis of the chapter headings reveals that out of 47 drawings, fully half of them are landscapes or predominantly landscapes in which the human figures are very small and almost skeletal in treatment. I do not mean that the skeletal treatment of the figures makes them unconvincing. Far from it. But such a treatment in half of the small drawings seems to me to leave the book lacking in feeling.

I am going to New York tomorrow and will be there the entire week of February 26. If you could possibly manage to get up to New York for one day sometime during the week, it would be highly desirable. I am most anxious to have a personal discussion with you over the point I have raised. If we can arrive at some solution, I might say I have just a bit more money in my budget that I could dip into to reimburse you for any additional work it would entail for you.

If you can make it, please wire me at my New York office, 14 West 49th Street, to let me know what day and hour you can come, in order that I may leave my schedule open for your visit.

Please bring with you the book you worked from so that I can find the right places to insert the full-page drawings. I don't have another copy of that edition. If you aren't able to come, please mail it to me in Cleveland.

Sincerely yours,

THE WORLD PUBLISHING COMPANY

*Abe Lerner*

Abe Lerner, Production Manager