

PUBLISHERS' LITIGATION

MR. S. R. CROCKETT'S BOOKS

Evidence on behalf of the defendant was given yesterday in the case brought by Mr. Thomas Fisher Unwin, publisher, against Messrs. James Clarke and Co., of Fleet-street, also publishers. Mr. Unwin alleged that in June last year the defendants issued a circular containing defamatory statements concerning Mr. S. R. Crockett's "Me and Myn, Limited," which the plaintiff was about to publish. An excerpt from a letter written by the novelist to the defendant was quoted in the circular as follows:—" 'Me and Myn' is a light collection of stories on stamp collection, and is not a full-dress novel." Mr. Unwin said the statement had seriously prejudiced the sale of the book, which he declared is a novel in every sense of the word. The defendants denied that the statement was defamatory.

Mr. Percy Clarke, a member of the defendant firm, deposed that in an interview the plaintiff assured him that the publication of "Me and Myn" would not interfere with their (Messrs. Clarke's) arrangements to publish "Vida," another work by Mr. Crockett, in September, subsequent to the publication of "Me and Myn," as the latter was so different. Witness subsequently saw the plaintiff's advertisement in the newspapers describing the book as "Mr. Crockett's great new novel." His firm wrote to Mr. Crockett, who answered in the terms mentioned in the circular. In cross-examination the witness described "Me and Myn" as "a novel of a sort."

Mr. Clarke intimated that they had not unreservedly accepted Mr. Crockett's statement at the time that "Me and Myn" was a light collection of stories. "We felt," he explained, "that Mr. Crockett was probably playing one off against the other." Mr. Clarke further stated that when they italicised the word "novel" in the circular it was not with the idea of suggesting that it was improperly advertised as a novel.

The jury returned a verdict for the defendants.