

J.N. 44339

Wöcklabruck, April 20, 1889



My dearest dear,

With many thanks for your kind enquiry after my health, I gladly embrace this opportunity to have a hearty chat with you. Having your friendly face before my mind's eye, a face which always exhilarates me, like Strauss' fiddle, I cannot speak lugubriously about my present distemper, nor am I in that humour which makes Byron say "And if I laugh at any mortal thing, 'Tis that I may not weep". In the beginning of my seventieth year of life the dictum must needs occur to me, "arescit gramen veniente hieme" (= the grass withers as winter comes on). Upon the whole, I am just now a good deal better, than I was for several months past, the feverish thirst with which I was troubled night and day is abated, although I am still sipping more beer, of an

evening, than I was accustomed to before. But the regimen to which physicians have condemned me, is rather disagreeable, since I am forbidden all kinds of cerealia, and am allowed only meat, certain vegetables, eggs and sour milk; moreover, I find that the Carlsbad Waters could not have been Jove's nectar. Our poet Dryden tells us —

„Better to hunt in fields for Health unbought,  
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.“

Yet I patiently swallow the said Waters, in order to expel the sugar from my system, and, if I must not say with Queen Gertrude at Ophelia's grave —

„Sweets to the sweet, farewell“, I make bold to travesty it into Sweets to the Devil, who may take them hindmost.

Lest I should spin too long a yarn about my complaint, I have come to act up to the maxim „What cannot be cured, must be endured“, and so I am content, that matters are not worse, and that I may still live on to impoverish the Austrian finances by enjoying my enormous pension for some time longer.

As to our short stay in Vienna, we have,



my indisposition excepted, made the most of it, and through your kindness, which is as inexhaustible as the oil-vessel of the widow of Zarepta, we had more pleasure than we could reasonably expect within such a short time, for all of which we remain sincerely grateful to you.

Respecting "your breathless hurry-scurry of work", I am truly sorry, but hope, that in future, when united with your family, you need no longer overwork yourself, and that you may fairly come to feel a good wife and dutiful children constitute the poetry of a man's life and home. Besides you will have to attend to the forming and training the mind of your offspring. To train the mind requires hard, patient thinking and working of both father and child. The mere crude teaching a youth a bundle of facts, which he acquires with no labour, and, only retaining, neither digests nor assimilates, is no proper training at all; mere facts no way nourish his mind, but, deposited there, are utterly as raw and undigested as he swallowed them.

A father must, on the sly, bring his son's mind to grow by its own action, his books and teachers

are but helps, the work ought to be his. Children's observation is ever alive and awake to the circumstances which pass around them, and from which they are drawing their own conclusions, wherefore parents have it in their power to influence these conclusions by their actions, words, voice, and looks, all of which will work more efficiently than direct instruction or admonition. Let a child be in a fair way of becoming grateful, generous, humane, compassionate, just, and benevolent, in short cause a wholesome training of the feelings to be as judiciously attended to, as that of the understanding. I have committed many faults in educating my children, and been severely punished for them. But pardon my having insensibly struck upon the strings of an old pedagogue, and let me end with the more genial sentiment of wishing you joy for your complete family life; remember me kindly to your dear lady; my wife, as well as I, nourishes the hope of seeing you with your son in a few months, and finally I beg you will, as heretofore, consider me

your most faithful friend  
J. B. Hoegel

