

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff to Jenny von Laßberg in Meersburg

Rüschhaus, January 29th 1939, Tuesday

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Mama will be writing to Laßberg and enclose this letter, but I believe that I shall myself send it off, for Mama is at Hülshoff at present whence she will also go to Stapel, Havixbeck and Muenster, so I think that she will not get down to writing in the first week and apart from that I do not like enclosing. It has the disadvantage that people receive two letters at once from the same place, which makes for only half as much enjoyment. Mama will, of course, complain that I have taken up all the news but I believe that she will 'land' some new bits again in Muenster or will wait until something new has developed, if the letter to Laßberg is not to contain anything urgent. Here we are healthy, thank God; the sick children in Hülshoff continue to improve, but slowly, slowly. When one has not seen them for six weeks, it is a little noticeable. Ferdinand has, however, already crawled so far out of it that he is quite out of danger, but his shoulders are such that he looks almost dwarf-like and it will take a lot if he is to become a well built strong human being. Friedrich's little leg may well be cured, for it is healed and painless but still swollen at the knee, bent, and walking looks deplorable although it does not hurt him; his little arm is still festering but the wound is gradually becoming smaller. He is awfully backward, not exactly stupid, but much too childish for his age, as though he were three years old; also speaks quite unclearly. Little Theresa who is, indeed, also no different from other children, is equal to him in every way. Incidentally, he is a friendly, flattering child and looks very like Uncle Johannes. Heinrich is very pretty and is also now starting to become modest and thoughtful. He learns only passably, has a good grasp, but little zeal; is already a good shot and continues to be the most pleasant of all. Anna is very obedient and Linchen of great help in the house. As far as her goodwill goes, I cannot complain of anything except that she cuts a bad figure in school, both out of disinclination and lack of talent; and her outward appearance? *Visito, visitas, it stayed as it was.*

She still looks like fat Theresa Stapel but she may not become ugly (i.e. if her figure spreads) for she has a superb complexion, thick hair and other none too bad things. Ferdinand looks too much like a cripple, although he is quite upright; his face, too, has the frightened and spoiled look of a deformed person, otherwise the eyes would be right beautiful and the other features also good enough. You know him; he has scarcely changed. He speaks more now and one sees that he has much sense, but he is more than enough a nuisance. He always wants to be noticed and as soon as one sits down, he hangs round one's neck. If one wants to walk up and down, he zig-zags across one's path and has already fetched me down a couple of times. In short, he can drive one half

mad. His character is not bad, but also not pleasant; he does not care when the others are smacked, but laughs as well. But I think that will pass. Our dear departed Ferdinand was also envious as a child and became so gentle and sympathetic. Little Maxie, I feel, still has his little face like an old Moor and is not at all pretty, but most people think that he would become the prettiest of them all and I believe that too. He has an extremely fine little figure (thus distinguishing him from the others who are all a little solidly built) and very meek dear eyes; a good hearted little fellow and the darling of us all. One takes for a bit stupid, really without reason, since he neither does nor says anything stupid – his dead innocent face alone is responsible for that. He loves to hear little stories that I usually tell him of an evening after supper and is asleep every time, ere I start, which is then a great sorrow next morning. At school he takes great pains faithfully, is very happy when he is praised and can look with the greatest pleasure at a page of writing that he has managed successfully; he loves us all dearly, you too, although he cannot remember you at all and often asks “when you are coming”. I have already written to you about Friedrich. Little Theresa is pretty, very like Luise Kalstein and is fairly big for her age on the Cathedral Dean’s portrait and astoundingly fat, so much so that we are apprehensive. Fortunately she has no fat belly but is, in general, square like a cube.

She has something sly and roguish about her face, otherwise one not really be sure what she is like, since she acts shyly every time one speaks to her and never answers. Old Lisette spoils her too much; if she were not good humoured by nature she would be intolerably naughty, but all the Hülshoff children are extremely good natured, except Ferdinand. Little Theresa’s great shyness also leads to one’s overlooking her spoiltness, for she does not like to concern herself with anybody, either in a good way or bad. There was always such a great fuss about little Clemens’s beauty, who is like little Theresa; I did not agree. His eyes were too dead and he let his little mouth droop open, so that he reminded me a little of Stapels. That has now passed; he still does not look very bright, but indescribably friendly, wants to repeat everything that one pronounces for him and labours to hiss like a goose a few seconds after each word. In short, he is going through a very cute period now. I have written this in such detail to you because Mama’s taste in these things is so curious; she finds things pretty that others think are ugly, clever that which others see as stupid and *vice versa*.

Thus Ferdinand who presently appears to everybody to be ugly in the main, is a beauty to her; although as far as features are concerned he may become pretty enough when the crippled effect goes away. Everything at Stapels’ is much the same as before – it will do. I have made a plan for Johannes to marry the eldest Wintgen girl, which will suit him and if there were a spark of life and drive in him he would, as a preliminary, introduce himself to the parents and aunts since he is so often in Münster where he would be welcomed with open arms now that their *soirées* are thinning out year by year. The old regular guests are dead or moved away and new guests are not to be found. But nothing can be done with Johannes; he just soldiers on and thinks that everything will fall into his lap. He

complains enough. If only that were all! He must have a rich wife, that is the first thing, and she must be of noble family. I know of none whom he could have, other than a Wintgen girl whom the parents want to marry off to someone of good stock. They would not achieve this any other way; that's how it is in arithmetic; two equal quantities cancel out each other – two different sorts of necessity can help both. Uncle Fritz is in Münster now, he has been sick all autumn with a chest fever which afterwards left him with a troublesome cough and daily raised temperature, retarding his recovery. Now everything has passed and he is gaining weight which was necessary because he had become pitifully lean and limp. However, his mood is excellent he is amusing himself everywhere and even in Münster which is as dead as a cemetery, for the nobility decided not to throw, or attend, the slightest entertainment until the severe ecclesiastical situation is resolved. Thus they have all stayed out in the country. The ladies club is closed – a sign of the Day of Judgement! Even families who always dwelt in Münster, for example, Korffs, have left the city and a single coach causes a proper sensation as in a rural townlet. Only heads of families meet frequently at Nölken's or some other place and carry on disconsolate conversations or deliberations. There is now reason to hope that a peaceful agreement between Rome and Prussia will take place. There is need for it, too, for the population is very alarmed and only quiet in the tension and expectation of a possible amicable end. The determined embitterment goes on rising. The nobility wishes for peace above all and contributes much to the peace so far, although without a favourable move on Prussia's part, the worst end cannot be excluded, since to yield on our side is impossible. Society in Münster consists now, apart from our people from Senden, the Aschebergs and Kerkerings, only of what still holds together among canonesses, canons and widows and I cannot see a tea circle without thinking of Kotzbues' *'Respectable Society'*. (Sophia von) Fürstenberg who is deaf anyway, gouty and ill tempered, finds it so miserable and bleak that she wants to move from Münster for good; especially the deathly hush at the Korffs' place makes her quite melancholy. There are so many individuals adding to the general sorrow. Old Oer is dead, from a type of stroke or recurrent gout as they call it and his family quite inconsolable. He lay a good fortnight during which his death was expected by the hour, although he suffered little. Once they thought it might turn out better as the infectious matter from the chest went into both arms which became swollen like butter tubs and completely blue. The doctors said that, if he had been a younger man, it could have saved him. Auguste Droste has been down with nervous tuberculosis for a long time and there is no saving her, although she is so lively and joyful, that even her daughter Lottchen thought that she had only a few days left – that is a bad sign. Nagel von Vornholt is probably not getting any better. He started being very apprehensive and acting quite weakly, while one saw nothing sick about him. Everybody laughed about it; it became worse, he no longer wanted to walk, stopped in the middle of speaking because he had heartburn. I was at Hülshoff just at the time and Werner was just telling all sorts of laughable anecdotes about it at table when the messenger brought a letter:

"Nagel had a stroke an hour ago and has already been given the last rites". Werner left the table immediately; he was so shocked. Chance has already repeated itself and one is surprised to hear daily that he is still living. Now the doctors have declared that, if the stroke does not recur soon, it is not impossible that he will go into the deceased Fritz Korff's condition and go on living like it for long time. That would be shocking, the more so since his head is so affected and he is already almost completely simple minded. He has to be fed, his nose wiped, et cetera and less because he lacks the strength than because he lacks awareness. Engelbert Kerkering also cannot recover at all from a type of influenza that he had in late Autumn, coughs pitifully and is becoming as thin as a rake. As so often, it has happened to Mama with his young wife. You know, when she has seen someone, especially young people, for a quarter of an hour, she speaks as though she knows them very well, when others who have had relations with them for years judge otherwise. Thus it was with this Alex Rump, although she was, as Mama herself now says, only once in Mother Kerkering's room for a few minutes and did not speak a word. Nevertheless, Mama fell quite in love with her, thought her beautiful, clever, modest, domesticated and wanted to marry her off to everybody – Bocholz, Brenken, Kanne, Diderich Asseburg, in short, everybody – speaking so definitely of her good points as though she had brought her up. The first thing straight after the wedding was for her to visit there, but she came back quite crestfallen. Nothing like pretty did she seem to her, also not clever, and unfriendly, wooden. In short, so totally unlike Fanny that she was quite sad about it and is hardly likely to go back again soon. She had also let the children become so naughty and unseemly; little Anna rode on her lap without asking. But do not mention any of this to Mama, she is ashamed of her previous big talk about Alex and only told me confidentially on the quiet about it, how bad she found her.

Do you already know that the second Rump is also marrying? And whom? – Levin Spiessen! My goodness, how times are changing. Who would have thought that possible twenty years ago? Amiability? – he has none at all. Nobility? – born between the sheets. Fortune? – very little. Position? – also not much, I do not know which; "general or even corporal". I imagine that he will be a low grade civil servant or judicial commissioner. *O tempora, o mores!*

In the Ascheberg home it looks mucky, too. Joseph has long since married that peasant girl; Mathies, the Dirix who is shortly due to present the world with one more Ascheberg, and Carl to whom the farms fall, is still stretching out his hand to Sophie Amelunxen who, as I hear, does not want him. In the end he will take any old Trine sitting behind a distaff and the farms will then fall to Kaspar.

I saw old Ascheberg a while ago. He was reminded about an order that he had forgotten and said, "Oh dear! I often do not know what I am doing, my boys put my head in a whirl". I really feel sorry for the poor old chap. At Köbbing, things are also going backwards with Clara's household; the family is going right down and it is good that the dear departed Mama Ascheberg has not experienced all that. The court case between Schmising and

Wintgen over the inheritance left by Tante Cornelia is ended or quashed; nobody is any longer talking about it. Felitz is still suffering; let us hope for the best. Clövekorn whom she consults now is said not to regard her condition as cancer. God let it be so. The relatives are very sad and little consoled by Clövekorn's statement as they have no confidence in his science – but I have heard so much praise for him. I should much like to ask him myself, which Mama will not have, because she fears that he might say something serious that would make us very grieved to hear and also, towards Felitz, would remove any certainty of comforting, as we now spend almost the whole day with her as often as we are in Münster where we have lodgings immediately opposite. In Wehren, Jenny has been very ill with a chest inflammation, but is restored again. Tante Dorly is now quite satisfied with her young daughter-in-law, writing in every letter 'our sweet young little woman', or 'Clemens's tender little dove' and takes trouble to get on the best of footing with Hartmanns, which is, to be sure, sensible, but you know our Tante Dorothee who tears down with one hand what the other builds up. Thus she had a drinking glass engraved, and in fact in Paderborn, with the saying, *Rather pure blood of old nobility than all the money and property*. Of course, that went round like wildfire and you can imagine that Hartmanns are almost running up the wall with venom; at least, those in Münster where I also heard about it. As an excuse she said 'it is intended for their second son, so that he does not do the same as Clemens'. How do you like this twist? That reminds me of the Austrian who wanted to pick up his asparagus with his fingers. 'Sorry. I thought it was spinach'. That Kanne is engaged to Theodor Heiden's eldest daughter, you perhaps already know – also curious. Has no sons yet, is himself the last of the family line and is taking a woman of low birth and on top of that, with full intent, travelling there specially without knowing her. She has some wealth, but it cannot be much, since Heidens were never rich and the mother's 100 000 Dutch guilders are being shared among eleven. But I know someone who is pulling a long face, longer still than she already has by nature, namely Jenny Metternich who held out no small hopes of him and that with some reason, since he was really paying attention to her this summer and once spoke seriously with Werner Zuidtwick about whether she were a good wife for him. Tony is now quite pleased. She spent this long, boring winter in deepest seclusion in the country with Countess Schafgotsch, where both were thrown entirely upon each other's company and through that became such close friends as Tony could only wish for. I fear, though, that she will start to complain again when the old acquaintances of the Countess turn up in summer and then this great intimacy has to step into the background. However, at least they know each other well and like each other; that is already a lot. Frau von Galieris is getting, from now on, 400 guilders annually from some fund or society, which, together with the pension from the king and what she receives from the Widows Fund, ensures an abundant and carefree existence. Thus the family is now taken care of all round and the poor angel can breathe freely again. The latter is now very pleased, and also healthy (she is becoming leaner again with age, which is also good, for

I did not at all like this puffiness a few years back) in Münster in her old lodgings with Madam Schreiber. The tried and tested lady and her sister, Rittersmann, are living in the old style, one never hears that they are sick and never sees that they are vexed. They are not ageing in the least, still have old Marianne who is also not ageing, and every evening they see Tante Sophie Schmising who is as old as the hills, just as unchanging. I do not know how these people do it,

I am becoming so old, fat and awkward like a barrel. If I knew that the house was the cause, I would leave everything here behind and throw myself into the arms of the good person as a tenant for life. The tea drinking alone will not close the door, for her evening circle is almost died out; they are sitting alone like a pair of granite statues and relate "a tale of times past". Oh, lovely, lovely sunny times! The times of Putkamers. Neigebours, Gaylings, Catts, Kranens. I have heard nothing of the Abbess von Hohenlohe, yet I know that she is alive and well, like the niece, Lotte. I have not seen Mathilde for a long time but often heard of her; she is said to look well and be very cheerful – more than before. I have just heard from Hermann who comes from Münster, that Frau von Schonebeck is marrying and next week, in fact. She met up with somebody in Coesfeld where she has lived, separated from her children, for some years now; what his name is and of what quality, I do not know. It is hard for the children and the only good thing is that they no longer have to expect step-siblings. But the mother will certainly leave her wealth, or rather her claims (for the fortune is long vanished) to her husband, since she hates her children from the bottom of her heart; she never calls them other than "the Schonebeck children". She says cold-bloodedly of them, that they can all, one after the other, pass away from tuberculosis. She is anyway so degenerate and strange that it can only be excused by her periodical madness; but mad she is, really. She herself once complained to me that she has to suffer so much from the poor souls whom she encountered everywhere and who wanted to be saved by her. The poor bridegroom also does not yet know what is in store for him, otherwise he would not have her. The present eldest Schonebeck, Louis, is not bad, but somewhat coarse; he reminds one more of the father than departed Mathies and I like him the less for that. He has lived for six months now in Nienberge with Auguste and they seem keen to be neighbourly, but we are here too seldom for that and they live too close for Mama – that could become a nuisance. Louis likes seeing Marie Stapel and she seems to like him, too, but he must have a rich wife, otherwise there will be nothing but begging; Frau von Schilling says that, who is quite against it for that reason. Louis Plönies is now also living in Nienberge, but in quite strained relations to Schonebeks who do not see him at all. He has hung his burgomastering on the peg, handed over his two daughters to relations of his deceased wife and is living on meagre pensions in his declining years, as a bachelor for the second time, surrounded by the beauties of Nature, in a countryman's cabin, who has a pure heart beneath his rough smock (i.e. with Eying, on the edge of the village). He was claiming all this until his soft heart was captivated by the attractions of Drücke Eying's

lovely natural daughter. The marriage will soon take place. His relations are outraged and never let the daughters near him, however, he recently caught one of them on the street in Münster, as he was just coming in arm-in-arm with his betrothed and said "Come here and look. This is the Miss whom I shall marry". I should like to know what Spiessen would say to that, if he heard it; whether he found it debasing or heavenly. How strange it must seem to Engelbert that he is now so closely related to our Spiessen, when he thinks about their time together at Hülshoff. I do see Caroline Spiessen from time to time. She is becoming terribly old, looks not much younger than her departed mother and pulls mighty grimaces; you would be surprised if you saw it.

She has kept much out of sight since the deaths of her father and Abbess Merveld, but now she is rising again, like a sun. Fräulein Ketler (who, *n.b.* is passably well, but bent with the gout) cannot talk enough of all the fine furniture that Karoline has procured for Levin's new abode. These relatives to whom she is now moving, are making a proper person of her; such as she never dreamed of. When I come to Münster I shall also go there to bask in the sun's rays. I am still busily visiting Schlüters and they are always kind to me. Jungmann is now little Theresa's declared lover and that is causing a tense relationship, as Schlüters do not want to reject, even less to accept him. The situation stands like this: Schlüters are very kind to Jungmann but have little confidence in his progress in the world because he has no wealth, is not practical and, above all, is so sickly that a tubercular candidate who dies in his early thirties would seem to have more of a future as a councillor or president. Theresa, by contrast, is no longer young (several years older than Jungmann) and if a match turns up for her, it would be questionable to exclude it, since Schlüters have no fortune at all. If everything were not so, no son-in-law could be more agreeable to them personally than Jungmann. Thus they want all the less, firmly to reject him completely, since it is probable that Theresa will find no further match and if in the end it went unexpectedly well with Jungmann (as he has so much talent and knowledge, so much diligence and so many friends) the matter could still be a lucky for Theresa. They said all this to him candidly, i.e. except that about his questionable health and he forgave them for the sake of sincerity, but is a hard nut in his poetic disposition and would be for anyone. Theresa herself is staying completely neutral. I believe that she likes him above all and would, if all other considerations were right, take him with open arms in the conviction of being able to be nothing other than satisfied with him – *et voila tout*. Jungmann's poems have been quite brilliantly reviewed by Menzel, although in only a few lines. He says, among other things, 'if there is one true poet who feels what he writes, it is this one'. Indeed, Jungmann also has a very bright imagination and a deep truth of feeling, if only he could throw off the Münster stiffness and old fashioned ways.

A small club of budding authors has formed in Münster at the home of the wife of Councillor Rüdiger (a very nice, undemanding woman and daughter of the well-known Elise von Hohenhausen). They gather there every Sunday evening, in order to deliberate and criticise one another. It comprises an aunt of Frau Rüdiger, Henriette von

Hohenhausen (who has written a little volume of very pretty stories) Frau Bornstedt, Levin Schücking, Jungmann and little me when I happen to be in Münster. Frau Bornstedt's scribbling does not amount to much, yet she does not completely spoil the material, is an all-rounder and is producing, at publishers' requests, here a story, there an opera libretto, poems, legends of saints, but always anonymously and has already earned money at it. You have probably already read something by her without knowing it, for she features in almost all pocket books and journals. She is a Berliner, a convert and reminds me so very often of Tante Dorly, although she has ten times more sense and a hundred times more intellect. She has chosen me as her bosom friend; but I do not like her particularly. In contrast, I very much like the Tante Hohenhausen (not to be confused with Elise v. Hohenhausen). She is already old, stooping and extremely weak, but is kindness, friendliness and, above all, modesty itself. Frau Bornstedt disdains her for her somewhat old-Franconian and very simple style and because she has written only a little volume of stories in which not one sensation occurs. But I know too well that I would be very pleased if I could tell stories as well as that and that Frau Bornstedt will never in her whole life write as well. Thus I resolutely take her part against Frau Bornstedt who occasionally cannot at all disguise her presumptiveness towards this lovable, gentle person; but I do so the less, if she is silent – and I know a few answers. You must know Levin Schücking, as he had already been at Rüschaus earlier, with the cathedral vicar Specht. He is the son of Katharina Busch. Since his mother's death, his father was relieved of his post and after various tribulations and shabby tricks, went to America. Levin stayed in Münster and keeps himself by giving lessons in English and authorship. It started badly with the latter, as his poems are in no way distinguished and his dramatic products even less so (I suppose that the poem in one of the latest entertainment magazines, '*To a gift from a hand unknown*', is by him. At least, it is thoroughly in his style. One can see from that) but for a year now he has been throwing himself into the field of criticism where he is meeting with much praise and earning much money, as all the magazines of that sort want to have him as an employee and pay him well. He has, without doubt, the finest judgement in our club and it is strange how someone who can judge so sharply and correctly, yet himself write so mediocresly. He often reminds me of Schlegel, is very imaginative and extremely obliging, but so vain, puffed up and paltry that it is difficult for me to be fair about him. He is said to be morally good and more scholarly than many at his age, for he is only in his twenties now. There you have our little writers' club (*Hecken-Schriftsteller-Gesellschaft*) and I would be sorry if I have bored you with it.

It went very badly with my book at first. We were on our own at Bökendorf with Sophie and Fritz and when it came out, heard nothing about it and I intentionally wanted not to enquire. Suddenly, a whole batch of copies was sent out by Frau von Fürstenberg to everybody living in Hinnenburg; to Frenchen, Asseburg, Diderich, Mimy, Anna and Ferdinand, Thereschen, Sophie. Ferdinand (Galen) voiced the first opinion, declared everything to be rubbish, unintelligible, confusing and does not understand how an

apparently sensible person could have written such stuff; now they are all opening their traps and all with one accord cannot believe how I can have made such a fool of myself. Sophie who, as you know, places only too much value on people's judgement and likes, once in a while, to humiliate one was unfriendly enough to retell me every little detail and was quite strange towards me for a time, as though she was ashamed for me. I was in a bad mood, for, although I cared little about the Hinnenburg opinion, and even less about Ferdinand's (who, only a few days before, said of Goethe "He is a dunderhead and one line of Schiller's *Freud! schöner Götterfunken!* holds more than all that Goethe wrote. Above all, one song about the fisherman is the peak of pitifulness; then what is its content? A common barefoot fellow who looks into the water in the most boring way until he plops into it...etc."). Although, as I said, the opinion of a critic of that sort can touch me very little, I have to live among these people who, now delicately, now crudely, derided me and wanted to tease me. Sophie looked downcast and placed no value upon the fact that, by and by, other news came from Münster, but said every time, "It is fortunate for you that you think these people capable of a better judgement than all the Hinnenburgers and Ferdinand Galen"! Uncle Fritz was the only one not affected by this and to whom the book in his hand appealed. Yet I still wished myself a thousand times away from there. Arrived back here, I found the page turned. The poems were, indeed, little read, as most people shy away from attempting such an endless number of verses, but those who had read it raised – I must say, in my conviction, far above its value. Three reviews had already come out by the time I arrived. One was from a friend, Lutterbeck, the others from Gutzkow in the *Telegraph* and from an unknown person who signed himself E., in the *Sonntagsblatt* and all three trumpeted so tremendously that I became frightened by it, for it is of no use being raised beyond one's merits, it only excites others to contradiction and is usually followed by a bucket of cold water. Now Adele Schopenhauer to whom I sent a copy, is writing to me that it received great acclaim in Jena, that "she has again and again to lend her copy and the bookseller, Friedrich Fromann, who has had a great demand as a result, has ordered it from Hüffer. So far, O.B.L. Wolf and Kühne have both written reviews with which I could be satisfied, as she knew that they were both very taken with it, although I ought not to expect such general flattery as in the *Telegraph*, but praise, rebuke and full recognition, which would surely be what I should like best".

What more do I want? It is almost too much for the start and I fear that the bad end will follow. In Cassel, Hassenpflug, Malchen Hassenpflug and Jakob Grimm read it. It appealed not at all to the first, only partly to Malchen and very much to Grimm. Malchen wrote me his few words, "the language in the poems is very skilfully used, full of fine features and thoroughly original from start to finish". Do not think that it is vanity on my part to write all that again to you. Whom shall it interest and please, then, if it does not please you? I still have, indeed, annoyance and embarrassment enough, for now where the thing is making good progress they are interested in it, the Bökendorfers, too, (i.e. Werner, Auguste, Ludowine and Malchen Hassenpflug) and every fool is claiming a voice

on what I ought to write next and that with such vehemence that I think that they will give me a beating, or take at least as a personal insult, if I do it differently – all the same, one says ‘black’ the other says ‘white’ – the Münster friends caution me “for God’s sake keep to the path that I once trod with good fortune and where my ease in verse and rhyme gives me an advantage, the path that I dare not give up at any price”. Malchen Hassenpflug and the Bökendorfers, on the contrary, want me to write a sort of book like *Bracebridge Hall* and take as material, Westphalia with its monasteries, religious foundations and old morals as I once knew them and are now almost vanished. That sounds alright, but I fear that my dear countrymen will stone me if I did not make angels out of them all. I am thinking of Braun’s necrologue on Clemens Droste which was pure flattery and upset Joseph Droste so much because of the passage in it which said “mainly the mother (Tante Dine) had dedicated herself to his upbringing with unremitting care”, from which Joseph believed to mean the father was a stupid ass. Where people judge like that, what kind of reason and approval is to be expected? It seems more expedient to me to write a series of stories and to enclose in it all that is demanded, which all take place in Westphalia, without one’s needing to say directly ‘this is a picture of Westphalia and Westphalians are like this and that’. Then, I believe, no-one (like the people here who are slow to grasp things) will see it as referring to himself, but only to the persons in the story. I can then also depart from the usual run of affairs, can tell supernatural tales and the like, with a tone of truth, whereas, in the other form, I dare not mention them as popular beliefs. Yet the form of *Bracebridge* (actually the same that Jouy uses in his many *Hermits de Londres, de Guyane, de la Chaussée d’Antin, de Paris, etc.*) is by far the most pleasant, both to read and to write, because it is so diverse and also allows of personal observations and meditations, silly little events, etc. which amuses greatly, one can read again and also assumes more thinking on the reader’s part than stories which, however good and characteristic they may be, are seldom read twice by anyone, because the contrast to the first time is too great, if anticipation of the outcome is lacking.

On the other hand, people find all manner of things among such short goods, that they had already thought and observed themselves and can, therefore, read twenty times over because it gives them the pleasant impression of having written it themselves. Thus every view has its favourable side and each of my uncalled-for tutors is right. But I like to do what I want, so I satisfy a few and offend the rest. It were best that I did something quite different, had a try at a drama, for example. Nobody has spoken against it so far, for none has thought of it and I sometimes think that I have most inclination for it and it would best succeed. It would not have to be a historical or romantic subject, but a representation of characters and morals. Something historical could, of course, form the basis. I do not know what to do and I will, above all, no longer ask anybody for advice, for too many cooks spoil the broth and upset so many more people in future.

What the outlook is for our trip to you next Spring, dear Jenny, is still very doubtful and there all sorts of obstacles in the way. Werner will not be able to come anyway, he lacks money and time and the new economy (which, by the way, is going quite well) is at fault for both. I also have no money, since I have had heavy and unforeseen expenses this year, topping it all my portrait about which Mama has written to you and painted at an inexpensive price. It is supposed to be a good likeness but is a three-quarter length portrait so that it tapped off eight Louis d'or from my already slim purse. I am so without money that all my bills must wait until the first of May, including the money for my keep and that of the old lady. Whatever I receive then will scarcely stretch to cover this and I have nothing more to demand until August, so I cannot foresee when I can make the trip possible. If Sophie (von Haxthausen) and I were still alone we could arrange everything as cheaply as possible, but now two ladies have offered to travel with us, whom we cannot justifiably refuse and that will almost double our expenses; namely Sophie Wintgen who wants to visit a few French acquaintances in and around Constance, and Engel Wrede who wants to come to you, where I do not even know whether it suits you. Engel is a very comfort-loving and broad person whom I have often heard to say "When travelling one should not forego anything. If one has not enough money, or will not use it in order to travel in complete comfort, one ought to stay at home". She no longer has anybody to care for and consumes almost nothing, since she is so often at others' places, which is why she will want to arrange everything in sumptuous manner. Admittedly, De la Serre is said to be more frugal but both are making the journey for the first and probably only time and have promised themselves to see everything along the way that is to be seen. They want to stop at Strasbourg and in Schaffhausen, probably also in Mainz or Frankfurt. But it is impossible for me to take part in that; and for Sophie Haxthausen, too. We have already seen everything and in any case, have no money for it. Perhaps there will be a way out for us, but as matters stand at the moment, I see little prospect of a trip. I am just as sorry as you; I was so looking forward to seeing the children. Instead of this letter, I ought actually to have written one to Laßberg, whom I have owed an answer for such a long time that I do not like to think about it, but as Mama will write to him this time, I thought it wiser to wait until next time, so that you get something now, too. Can you think what mainly keeps me from writing to him? The dread that he would not be able to read my handwriting and would be annoyed. He writes much too clearly, as far as both script and style are concerned, for me not to be somewhat shy of having my scribble put before his eyes, yet I shall take heart shortly. Give him my best regards and tell him that I am, at heart, a faithful sister, although a lazy writer. Dear Luise Streng, towards whom I do not have these reservations, also ought to have an answer from me from a long time back. It is always good Caroline's condition which keeps me from it and the fear of dropping into a house of mourning with jolly, inappropriate phrases, and to enquire about someone who is perhaps no longer alive or is on her deathbed. If Caroline lives until March, a dangerous time starts again for her. Write to me about the poor dear things and,

should Caroline be fairly well now so that one could reckon upon a little more time, then I shall really want to write to Luise. Burgemeisters (*the Kettler* family) at Roxel are well, as is Luise Lösch; Phine, by contrast, is anaemic. As Schwaters had only the usufruct from his wife's fortune until the children's majority, but no money of his own and has long depended on a very meagre pension, they are so poor that hunger and worry dwell with them and the local relations have taken in four of the children. Mama, Wilhelm, Jenny, Bürgermeisters one each. We had the prospect of having Wilhelm here as a pastor but it came to nothing. He is staying in his vicarage with the Mama who recently had a stroke, has been quite simple minded since then and is not likely to live much longer. It is better for Jenny now, with her horrible Schrey. He is approaching the years of reason, and has run off his crazy and rough horns and (what always contributes much to peace) can manage quite well on his own, as he has all sorts of little jobs and earns much money by giving lessons. He also gives lessons at Hülshoff, to Heinrich and Anna. They are getting on fairly well although what they tinkle there does not sound like much because he (instead of the previously usual little pieces and easy waltzes) is making them go through the piano school which is boring for children and ghastly for the listener, but is otherwise a sound method. Heinrich has little ear for music but diligence, plays in time. Anne, a better ear and less diligence, plays worse, although the same pieces. The others have not yet started; none has any voice. The little ones from Ferdinand downwards, tootle all day long, but with no recognisable melody. The two eldest are as close as clams and if one asks them to try a note, open their mouths wide and say "Hah"! That is all that they can do; it is grieving that musical talent is leaving the family altogether. Little that is new has happened between your acquaintances among the farming people. Settchen Högemann is married; in Bäumers' house, known as "Gedrut ant Heck" (*Gertrud by the hedge*). She is very contented. Old Högemann is losing much weight and is no longer thinking of America; he can no longer walk to Nienberge, but comes to church here on Sundays. Frau Maßlingsche is dead these two months. She had been sick on and off without our noticing it. It is enormous, what a change another parish makes, as though one were at once ten hours further away – the people in Roxel die and have been buried for six months before we here have any idea. A young woman has long been at Schlakötters, which I did not hear until ten days ago. She is the sister of the young Nachtigall woman whom I also know little and also do not know whence she comes. Everything at Brintrups is the same as before (i.e. a young woman has long been there; I do not know her). At Wittowers, a whole houseful of children, also a pair of twin girls who are called Anna and Bertha, although they were baptised Marianne and Lisebeth. They had a good class nurse from Münster, who almost daily carried them for an outing to just before our house; she, one and a maid the other. Both children so well dressed as your dear little mites never were. The young Wittow woman is said to be an efficient housewife and worker, but otherwise a complete snob. It annoys her brother so much that he almost never visits the house and when the mother is no longer alive he will stay away

altogether. You know his preference for the old morals of the fatherland – he cannot look upon these innovations without bitterness. Werner is still satisfied with him, for although he can occasionally be insufferably awkward and uncouth, he is very keen in his duties, attached to the family, not at all the person to take offence easily and is free of any inclination towards all too close friendships with the bailiff, the chaplain, the mayor, etc. or even with any of the domestic staff, as so many do. For example, Borchmeyer, for whom no-one was so low that he would not have had a friendship or an enmity with him. Borchmeyer comes to Hülshoff from time to time, looks miserable, or rather, depressed and sighs in the matrimonial bonds like a poor chained dog. He already had one child, and lost it again, wherein *[gap in MS]*

the old woman is better than usual. She is sitting opposite me, wearing her spectacles *[gap in MS]* in her old missal and says (*"I wrote myself nearly blunt . . . to Fräulein Jenny"* *[gap in MS]* she complained to me this morning *"that he thought of something rare that I could . . . Fräulein Jenny [gap in MS] now it was all gone out of my dozy head"*, but I should tell you *" to put in . . . little cushion from Klotheide so that the children can lay their dolls in (it) would be for her [gap in MS] if she were there she will put it right, so that it would be thought (proper)"*. She speaks daily of you all *[gap in MS]* her greatest wish is to see the children before her end; your present pleased her enormously and she shows *[gap in MS]* *"the beautiful luxurious shawl from Frau von Laßberg"*. She is just telling me, how you once got out of bed and guided her when she was in your room *"confused in the dark"* and maintains, you *"were a genuinely good person"*. At Christmas she had from me a pair of black stockings, overshoes and also my old, old Bagdad dress out of which she made herself a new skirt, also a leaden cross with a bronze-plated Saviour that she calls *"the silver cross"* and *"the golden dear Lord"*. She is just saying to me that she has remembered *"the rare (thing)"* again, namely *"she wishes you two a happy new year and as Candlemas is so near and you are called Maria and Laßberg is called Joseph, she will pray to God that you lead as pious a marriage as those two and also take them as an example when bringing up the children"*.

Wilmsen is still keeping quite well and still has all his hair, but snowy white, also all his teeth, just like dear departed Papa. He asks me each time when he is here, whether I am shortly going to write to you and requests *"his obedient respect"*. It is, though, gradually becoming difficult for him to make the miserable trip from Hülshoff to here every week in winter but he does it faithfully, as withered and wretched as he arrives. Now *adieu*, dear Jenny. If I write so seldom, then I write that much more at one time and can say, as do all Dutchmen who instead of six candles for lighting, have only one, but a six-pound wax candle: *Be not afraid, you gentlemen, it is but one, but a thick one*. A thousand greetings to all acquaintances; a kiss for the children.

Your Nette.

(in the upper margin of the first page)

Give my regards to Imhof if you see him. His miniature gave me the greatest of pleasure.

(in the upper margin and on the left of the second page)

Please, dear Jenny, should you pass on this letter to Laßberg, ask him never in any letter to Hülshoff, Bökendorf or to Mama, to allude to anything that I have written. I do like to let myself go, perhaps too much so, but it is for you, or, if you think it is alright, for Laßberg as well; but for you two alone.

(in the upper margin and to the side of the fourth page)

I have not yet seen Gaugrebens. They have been considering a trip to Hülshoff for six months – will it come about? It would please me greatly, personally. Regards to Emilie Thurn and the Strengs. If Laßberg goes to Eppishausen he must give my regards to the chaplain and the housekeeper at Sulgen, also all other acquaintances there.