

*Annette von Droste-Hülshoff to Therese von Droste-Hülshoff in Bökendorf*

*Meersburg, 9th November 1847, Tuesday*

My dearest Mama,

I must write just a little to you too, to tell you myself that I am feeling better in almost every respect. If I sit quite still and do not otherwise strain myself I could, from time to time, regard myself as quite well, except for little exercise. I am sleeping well, eat with an appetite, have no pains and when I am sitting still do not see myself as feeble. It is only the walking that is no better yet; that will get better when spring comes I hope. It is already a lot that the autumnal equinox has done me no harm this time and that I am feeling better as winter advances than in the summer. Do not, therefore, be afraid for me, my dear Mummy, I shall surely come through the winter well; you know how excellently my room warms up. I also notice nothing at all of changes in the weather.

Jenny and the children are with me for much of the day and at night I have the maid in the adjoining room. In short, I am very well taken care of and since you know how apprehensive I am, you may be convinced that I am much better because I am admitting it myself.

I am also very glad that you are at dear Bökendorf and even more glad that you intend to stay there for so long. Knowing that you are being so well taken care of and in surroundings which delight you and cheer you up, is a weight off my mind. Give my sincerest regards to all the dear relatives. No doubt my old Sophie often speaks to you about us. It is just the same here. When Jenny and I are alone of an evening then we are either at Hülshoff or at yours all the time. I wish that it were nothing but superstition that a ringing in the ears means that one knows when one is the subject of the other's conversation; it would be half way to being correspondence.

Yesterday I had a letter from Werner, as precursor to the case that he had handed over to the forwarding agent the same day. There was otherwise nothing new in the letter, but much that was pleasing about Max, how he is so diligent and altogether making out so well. God be praised. Everything here is very tense because of the Swiss affairs, even I have the newspapers brought to me daily and read the (marked with a red line by Laßberg) relevant articles. Those poor Separatists! 30 000 against 100 000. God's help must do the best and then their enthusiasm and complete contempt for death. The poor little Canton of Zug, just surrendered, a frontier country and absolutely flat terrain at that, counts a population of only 15 000; recently these were, men, women and children, all in Einsiedel on one day to take communion and be given the last rites. A thing like that goes right through one! One also hears so much else here about the founding cantons, their weaponry and tactics, that it is like being in a dream, and about the Urn signal horn (the Uri bull) that is said to be able to drown the noise of a whole battle and to sound so dreadful that military commanders in earlier wars always feared the effect that it would have upon their troops. Also about the maces (called Fidelis cudgels here, after St. Fidelis who was killed with a battle club) with which some of the

Swiss are armed and that they know how to use with such great force in hand-to-hand combat that one strike knocks a man down every time. Then the long muskets of the snipers of Unterwald and Wallis, which are aimed through gaps in the rocks and are said to have a range of a thousand paces. In short, everything as in a nightmare from which one, unfortunately, cannot wake up. The Jesuits go with them everywhere as field chaplains. On the whole, few refugees are coming in. It seems to be a principle of the Separatists for their children and sick not to flee abroad but into the mountains, in order to have more reason for resistance. The women nearly all go with their brothers, husbands, fathers, to care for the wounded and in main battles, line up behind the army to urge on their own men to their defence in the extreme. Today we have the ninth. Hostilities are supposed to begin tomorrow and that at the frontier with Freiburg. God protect justice! There is only one voice here in Baden – in favour of the Separatists, both from the unreligious and religious, since the poor little cantons are fighting both for their freedom and for their faith and the Jesuit question was obviously provoked by the big group, only in order to take the opportunity to swallow up the small group. Enough of that, otherwise Switzerland will take up my whole page and you can read it all better in the newspaper.

Dear Mama, can it be really true that one of the aunts or uncles may come here next summer? There are so many who have given us the hope, it would be far too dull if we were to be left out in the cold again. Dear Uncle Carl, leave your dahlias for once, you must bring me the lovely, wonderful shell lying in Abbenburg for me, otherwise God knows when I shall get it, as I must surely stay here for eighteen months more, for I am to have ant-baths next summer and may not move back into our climate in winter.

Dear August, you are so often awheel, you and aunt Dine, slide to here once more, too. Ah, I wish that you would all come. We are yearning for you all, Jenny and I.

Dear Mama, can you not persuade any one of them to accompany you here? *Adieu*, dearest Mama, give them all my sincerest, my dear old Sophie, the Hinnenburgs, Wehrens, Herstellers. I cannot write to all individually, but I think of each one, also in Erpenburg, Wewer, Tienhausen, Vörden, everywhere my best wishes. Anna and my old Male are indeed still with you. I wish that I could sit among you for just a quarter of an hour. *Adieu*.

I kiss your dear hand.

Your dutiful daughter Nette