

ELIZABETH VON ARNIM

FRÄULEIN SCHMIDT AND
MR. ANSTRUTHER

**Elizabeth von Arnim
Fräulein Schmidt
and Mr. Anstruther**

*http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=34282192
Fräulein Schmidt and Mr. Anstruther:*

Содержание

I	5
II	9
III	12
IV	18
V	24
VI	27
VII	34
VIII	36
IX	43
X	45
XI	47
XII	52
XIII	57
XIV	63
XV	66
XVI	68
XVII	70
XVIII	71
XIX	72
XX	74
XXI	76
XXII	79
XXIII	80

XXIV	81
XXV	82
XXVI	84
XXVII	87
XXVIII	90
XXIX	93
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	96

Elizabeth Von Arnim Fräulein Schmidt and Mr. Anstruther

I

Jena, Nov. 6th.

Dear Roger,—This is only to tell you that I love you, supposing you should have forgotten it by the time you get to London. The letter will follow you by the train after the one you left by, and you will have it with your breakfast the day after to-morrow. Then you will be eating the marmalade Jena could not produce, and you'll say, 'What a very indiscreet young woman to write first.' But look at the Dear Roger, and you'll see I'm not so indiscreet after all. What could be more sober? And you've no idea of all the nice things I could have put instead of that, only I wouldn't. It is a most extraordinary thing that this time yesterday we were on the polite-conversation footing, you, in your beautiful new German, carefully calling me *gnädiges Fräulein* at every second breath, and I making appropriate answers to the Mr. Anstruther who in one bewildering hour turned for me into Dear Roger. Did you always like me so much?—I mean, love me so

much? My spirit is rather unbendable as yet to the softnesses of these strange words, stiff for want of use, so forgive a tendency to go round them. Don't you think it is very wonderful that you should have been here a whole year, living with us, seeing me every day, practising your German on me—oh, wasn't I patient?—and never have shown the least sign, that I could see, of thinking of me or of caring for me at all except as a dim sort of young lady who assisted her step-mother in the work of properly mending and feeding you? And then an hour ago, just one hour by that absurd cuckoo-clock here in this room where we said good-by, you suddenly turned into something marvellous, splendid, soul-thrilling—well, into Dear Roger. It is so funny that I've been laughing, and so sweet that I've been crying. I'm so happy that I can't help writing, though I do think it rather gushing—loathsome word—to write first. But then you strictly charged me not to tell a soul yet, and how can I keep altogether quiet? You, then, my poor Roger, must be the one to listen. Do you know what Jena looks like to-night? It is the most dazzling place in the world, radiant with promise, shining and dancing with all sorts of little lovely lights that I know are only the lamps being lit in people's rooms down the street, but that look to me extraordinarily like stars of hope come out, in defiance of nature and fog, to give me a glorious welcome. You see, I'm new, and they know it. I'm not the Rose-Marie they've twinkled down on from the day I was born till to-night. She was a dull person: a mere ordinary, dull person, climbing doggedly up the rows of

hours each day set before her, doggedly doing certain things she was told were her daily duties, equally doggedly circumventing certain others, and actually supposing she was happy. Happy? She was not. She was most wretched. She was blind and deaf. She was asleep. She was only half a woman. What is the good or the beauty of anything, alive or dead, in the world, that has not fulfilled its destiny? And I never saw that before. I never saw a great many things before. I am amazed at the suddenness of my awaking. Love passed through this house today, this house that other people think is just the same dull place it was yesterday, and behold—well, I won't grow magnificent, and it is what you do if you begin a sentence with Behold. But really there's a splendor—oh well. And as for this room where you—where I—where we—well, I won't grow sentimental either, though now I know, I who always scoffed at it, how fatally easy a thing it is to be. That is, supposing one has had great provocation; and haven't I? Oh, haven't I?

I had got as far as that when your beloved Professor Martens came in, very much agitated because he had missed you at the station, where he had been to give you a send-off. And what do you think he said? He said, why did I sit in this dreary hole without a lamp, and why didn't I draw the curtains, and shut out the fog and drizzle. Fog and drizzle? It really seemed too funny. Why, the whole sky is shining. And as for the dreary hole—gracious heavens, is it possible that just being old made him not able to feel how the air of the room was still quivering with all

you said to me, with all the sweet, wonderful, precious things you said to me? The place was full of you. And there was your darling coffee-cup still where you had put it down, and the very rug we stood on still all ruffled up.

'I think it's a glorious hole,' I couldn't help saying.

'*De gustibus*' said he indulgently; and he stretched himself in the easy-chair—the one you used to sit in—and said he should miss young Anstruther.

'Shall you?' said I.

'Fräulein Rose-Marie,' said he solemnly, 'he was a most intelligent young man. Quite the most intelligent young man I have ever had here.'

'Really?' said I, smiling all over my silly face.

And so of course you were, or how would you ever have found out that I—well, that I'm not wholly unlovable?

Yours quite, quite truly,

R.-M.

II

Jena, Nov. 7th.

Dear Roger,—You left on Tuesday night—that's yesterday—and you'll get to London on Thursday morning—that's to-morrow—and first you'll want to wash yourself, and have breakfast—please notice my extreme reasonableness—and it will be about eleven before you are able to begin to write to me. I shan't get the letter till Saturday, and today is only Wednesday, so how can I stop myself from writing to you again, I should like to know? I simply can't. Besides, I want to tell you all the heaps of important things I would have told you yesterday, if there had been time when you asked me in that amazing sudden way if I'd marry you.

Do you know I'm poor? Of course you do. You couldn't have lived with us a year and not seen by the very sort of puddings we have that we are poor. Do you think that anybody who can help it would have *dicker Reis* three times a week? And then if we were not, my step-mother would never bother to take in English young men who want to study German; she would do quite different sorts of things, and we should have different sorts of puddings,—proud ones, with *Schlagsahne* on their tops—and two servants instead of one, and I would never have met you. Well, you know then that we are poor; but I don't believe

you know *how* poor. When girls here marry, their parents give them, as a matter-of-course, house-linen enough to last them all their lives, furniture enough to furnish all their house, clothes enough for several generations, and so much a year besides. Then, greatly impoverished, they spend the evenings of their days doing without things and congratulating themselves on having married off their daughter. The man need give only himself.

You've heard that my own mother, who died ten years ago, was English? Yes, I remember I told you that, when you were so much surprised at what you called, in politest German, my colossally good English. From her I know that people in England do not buy their son-in-law's carpets and saucepans, but confine their helpfulness to suggesting Maple. It is the husband, they think, who should, like the storks of the Fatherland, prepare and beautify the nest for the wife. If the girl has money, so much the better; but if she has not, said my mother, it doesn't put an absolute stop to her marrying.

Here, it does; and I belong here. My mother had some money, or my father would never have let himself fall in love with her—I believe you can nip these things in the bud if you see the bud in time—and you know my father is not a mercenary man; he only, like the rest of us, could not get away altogether from his bringing-up and the points of view he had been made to stare from ever since he stared at all. It was a hundred a year (pounds, thank heaven, not marks), and it is all we have except what he gets for his books, when he does get anything, which is never,

and what my step-mother has, which is an annuity of a hundred and fifty pounds. So the hundred a year will be the whole sum of my riches, for I have no aunts. What I want you to consider is the awfulness of marrying a woman absolutely without saucepans. Not a single towel will she be able to add to your linen-room, not a single pot to your kitchen. All Jena when it hears of it will say, 'Poor, infatuated young man,' and if I had sisters all England would refuse in future to send its sons to my step-mother. Why, if you were making a decently suitable marriage do you suppose your *Braut* would have to leave off writing to you at this point, in the very middle of luminous prophecy, and hurry into the kitchen and immerse herself in the preparation of potato soup? Yet that is exactly what your *Braut*, who has caught sight of the clock, is about to do. So good-by.

Your poor, but infinitely honest,

R.-M.

See how wise and practical I am today. I believe my letter last night was rather aflame. Now comes morning with its pails of cold water, and drenches me back into discretion. Thank God, say I, for mornings.

III

Jena, Nov. 8th.

Dear Roger,—I can't leave you alone, you see. I must write. But though I must write you need not read. Last night I was seized with misgivings —awful things for a hitherto placid Fräulein to be seized with—and I wrestled with them all night, and they won. So now, in the calm frostiness of the early morning atmosphere, I wish to inquire very seriously, very soberly, whether you have not made a mistake. In one sense, of course, you have. It is absurd, from a wordly point of view, for you to marry me. But I mean more than that: I mean, have you not mistaken your own feelings, been hurled into the engagement by impulsiveness, by, if you choose, some spell I may unconsciously have put upon you? If you have even quite a faint misgiving about what you really feel for me, tell me—oh tell me straight and plainly, and we will both rub out that one weak hour with a sponge well soaked in common sense. It would not hurt so much, I think, now as it might later on. Up to last night, since you left, I've been walking on air. It is a most pleasant form of exercise, as perhaps you know. You not only walk on air, but you walk in what seems to be an arrested sunset, a bath of liquid gold, breathing it, touching it, wrapped in it. It really is most pleasant. Well, I did that till last night; then came my step-mother, and catching at my flying feet pulled them

down till they got to the painted deal floors of Rauchgasse 5, Jena, and once having got there, stuck there. Observe, I speak in images. My step-mother, so respectable, so solidly Christian, would not dream of catching hold of anybody's feet and spoiling their little bit of happiness. Quite unconsciously she blew on that glow of sunset in which I was flying, and it went out with the promptness and completeness of a tallow candle, and down came Rose-Marie with a thud. Yes, I did come down with a thud. You will never be able to pretend, however much you try, that I'm one of your fairy little women that can be lifted about, and dandled, and sugared with dainty diminutives, will you? Facts are things that are best faced. I stand five feet ten without my heels, and when I fall I do it with a thud. Said my step-mother, then, after supper, when Johanna had cleared the last plate away, and we were sitting alone—my father is not back yet from Weimar—she on one side of the table, I on the other, the lamp in the middle, your chair gaping empty, she, poor herself, knitting wool into warmth for the yet poorer at Christmas, I mending the towels you helped to wear out, while my spirit soared and made a joyful noise somewhere far away, up among angels and arch-angels and other happy beings,—said my step-mother, 'Why do you look so pleased?'

Slightly startled, I explained that I looked pleased because I was pleased.

'But nothing has happened,' said my step-mother, examining me over her spectacles. 'You have been nowhere today, and not

seen any one, and the dinner was not at all good.'

'For all that I'm pleased. I don't need to go somewhere or see some one to be pleased. I can be it quite by myself.'

'Yes, you are blessed with a contented nature, that is true,' said my step-mother with a sigh, knitting faster. You remember her sighs, don't you? They are always to me very unaccountable. They come in such odd places. Why should she sigh because I have a contented nature? Ought she not rather to rejoice? But the extremely religious people I have known have all sighed an immense deal. Well, I won't probe into that now, though I rather long to.

'I suppose it's because it has been a fine day,' I said, foolishly going on explaining to a person already satisfied.

My step-mother looked up sharply. 'But it has not been fine at all, Rose-Marie,' she said. 'The sun has not appeared once all day.'

'What?' said I, for a moment genuinely surprised. I couldn't help being happy, and I don't believe really happy people are ever in the least aware that the sun is not shining. 'Oh well,' I hurried on, 'perhaps not an Italian blue sky, but still mild, and very sweet, and November always smells of violets, and that's another thing to be pleased about.'

'Violets?' echoed my step-mother, who dislikes all talk about things one can neither eat nor warm oneself with nor read about in the Bible. 'Do you not miss Mr. Anstruther,' she asked, getting off such flabbinesses as quickly as she could, 'with whom you

were so constantly talking?'

Of course I jumped. But I said 'yes,' quite naturally, I think.

It was then that she pulled me down by the feet to earth.

'He has a great future before him,' she said. 'A young man so clever, so good-looking, and so well-connected may rise to anything. Martens tells me he has the most brilliant prospects. He will be a great ornament to the English diplomatic service. Martens says his father's hopes are all centred on this only son. And as he has very little money and much will be required, Roger,'—she said it indeed—'is to marry as soon as possible, some one who will help him in every way, some one as wealthy as she is well-born.'

I murmured something suitable; I think a commendation of the plan as prudent.

'No one could help liking Roger,' she went on—Roger, do you like being Rogered?—' and my only fear is, and Martens fears it too, that he will entangle himself with some undesirable girl. Then he is ruined. There would be no hope for him.'

'But why-' I began; then suffocated a moment behind a towel. 'But why,' I said again, gasping, 'should he?'

'Well, let us hope he will not. I fear, though, he is soft. Still, he has steered safely through a year often dangerous to young men. It is true his father could not have sent him to a safer place than my house. You so sensible-' oh Roger!

'Besides being arrived at an age when serious and practical thoughts replace the foolish sentimentalness of earlier years,'—

oh Roger, I'm twenty-five, and not a single one of my foolish sentimentalnesses has been replaced by anything at all. Do you think there is hope for me? Do you think it is very bad to feel exactly the same, just exactly as calf-like now as I did at fifteen? —'so that under my roof,' went on my step-mother, 'he has been perfectly safe. It would have been truly deplorable if his year in Germany had saddled him with a German wife from a circle beneath his own, a girl who had caught his passing fancy by youth and prettiness, and who would have spent the rest of her life dragging him down, an ever-present punishment with a faded face.'

She is eloquent, isn't she? Eloquent with the directness that instinctively finds out one's weak spots and aims straight at them. 'Luckily,' she concluded, 'there are no pretty faces in Jena just now.'

Then I held a towel up before my own, before my ignominious face, excluded by a most excellent critic from the category pretty, and felt as though I would hide it for ever in stacks of mending, in tubs of soup, in everything domestic and drudging and appropriate. But some of the words you rained down on me on Tuesday night between all those kisses came throbbing through my head, throbbing with great throbs through my whole body—Roger, did I hear wrong, or were they not 'Lovely—lovely—lovely'? And always kisses between, and always again that 'Lovely—lovely—lovely'? Where am I getting to? Perhaps I had better stop.

R.-M.

IV

Jena, Nov. 12th.

Dearest of Living Creatures, the joy your dear, dear letters gave me! You should have seen me seize the postman. His very fingers seemed rosy-tipped as he gave me the precious things. Two of them—two love-letters all at once. I could hardly bear to open them, and put an end to the wonderful moment. The first one, from Frankfurt, was so sweet—oh, so unutterably sweet—that I did sit gloating over the unbroken envelope of the other for at least five minutes, luxuriating, purring. I found out exactly where your hand must have been, by the simple process of getting a pen and pretending to write the address where you had written it, and then spent another five minutes most profitably kissing the place. Perhaps I ought not to tell you this, but there shall be no so-called maidenly simperings between you and me, no pretences, no affectations. If it was silly to kiss that blessed envelope, and silly to tell you that I did, why then I was silly, and there's an end of it.

Do you know that my mother's maiden name was Watson? Well, it was. I feel bound to tell you this, for it seems to add to my ineligibility, and my duty plainly is to take you all round that and expatiate on it from every point of view. What has the grandson of Lord Grasmere—you never told me of Lord G.

before, by the way—to do with the granddaughter of Watson? I don't even rightly know what Watson was. He was always for me an obscure and rather awful figure, shrouded in mystery. Of course Papa could tell me about him, but as he never has, and my mother rarely mentioned him, I fancy he was not anything I should be proud of. Do not, then, require of me that I shall tear the veil from Watson.

And of course your mother was handsome. How dare you doubt it? Look in the glass and be grateful to her. You know, though you may only have come within the spell of what you so sweetly call my darling brown eyes during the last few weeks, I fell a victim to your darling blue ones in the first five minutes. And how great was my joy when I discovered that your soul so exactly matched your outside. Your mother had blue eyes, too, and was very tall, and had an extraordinarily thoughtful face. Look, I tell you, in the glass, and you'll see she had; for I refuse to believe that your father, a man who talks port wine and tomatoes the whole of the first meal he has with his only son after a year's separation, is the parent you are like. Heavens, how I shake when I think of what will happen when you tell him about me. 'Sir,' he'll say, in a voice of thunder—or don't angry English parents call their sons 'sir' any more? Anyhow, they still do in books—'Sir, you are far too young to marry. Young men of twenty-five do not do such things. The lady, I conclude, will provide the income?

Roger, rushing to the point: She hasn't a pfenning.

Incensed Parent: Pfenning, sir? What, am I to understand she's

a German?

Roger, dreadfully frightened: Please.

I.P., forcing himself to be calm: Who is this young person?

Roger: Fräulein Schmidt, of Jena.

I.P., now of a horrible calmness: And who, pray, is Fräulein Schmidt, of Jena?

Roger, pale but brave: The daughter of old Schmidt, in whose house I boarded. Her mother was English. She was a Watson.

I.P.: Sir, oblige me by going to the—

Roger goes.

Seriously, I think something of the sort will happen. I don't see how it can help giving your father a dreadful shock; and suppose he gets ill, and his blood is on my head? I can't see how it is to be avoided. There is nothing to recommend me to him. He'll know I'm poor. He'll doubt if I'm respectable. He won't even think me pretty. You might tell him that I can cook, darn, manage as well as the thriftiest of *Hausfraus*, and I believe it would leave him cold. You might dwell on my riper age as an advantage, say I have lived down the first fevers of youth—I never had them—say, if he objects to it, that Eve was as old as Adam when they started life in their happy garden, and yet they got on very well, say that I'm beautiful as an angel, or so plain that I am of necessity sensible, and he'll only answer 'Fool.' Do you see anything to be done? I don't; but I'm too happy to bother.

Later.

I had to go and help get supper ready. Johanna had let the

fire out, and it took rather ages. Why do you say you feel like screaming when you think of me wrestling with Johanna? I tell you I'm so happy that nothing any Johanna can do or leave undone in the least affects me. I go about the house on tiptoe; I am superstitious, and have an idea that all sorts of little envious Furies are lying about in dusty corners asleep, put to sleep by you, and that if I don't move very delicately I shall wake them—

O Freude, habe Acht,

Sprich leise, dass nicht der Schmerz erwacht....

That's not Goethe. By the way, *poor* Goethe. What an unforeseen result of a year in the City of the Muses, half an hour's journey from the Ilm Athens itself, that you should pronounce his poetry coarse, obvious, and commonplace. What would Papa say if he knew? Probably that young Anstruther is not the intelligent young man he took him for. But then Papa is soaked in Goethe, and the longer he soaks the more he adores him. In this faith, in this Goethe-worship, I have been brought up, and cannot, I'm afraid, get rid of it all at once. It is even possible that I never shall, in spite of London and you. Will you love me less if I don't? Always I have thought Goethe uninspired. The Muse never seized and shook him till divinences dropped off his pen without his knowing how or whence, divinences like those you find sometimes in the pages of lesser men, lesser all-round men, stamped with the unmistakable stamp of heavenly birth. Goethe

knew very well, very exactly, where each of his sentences had come from. But I don't see that his poetry is either of the three things you say. I'm *afraid* it is not the last two, for the world would grow very interesting if thinking and writing as he did were so obvious that we all did it. As to its being coarse, I'm incurably incapable of seeing coarseness in things. To me

All is clean for ever and ever.

Everything is natural and everything is clean, except for the person who is afraid it isn't. Perhaps, dear Roger, you won't, as Papa says, quite apprehend my meaning; if you cannot, please console yourself with the reflection that probably I haven't got one.

What you say about the money you'll have dazzles me. Why, it's a fortune. We shall be richer than our *Bürgermeister*. You never told me you were so rich. Five hundred pounds a year is ten thousand marks; nearly double what we have always lived on, and we've really been quite comfortable, now haven't we? But think of our glory when my hundred pounds is added, and we have an income of twelve thousand marks. The *Bürgermeister* will be utterly eclipsed. And I'm such a good manager. You'll see how we'll live. You'll grow quite fat. I shall give you lovely food; and Papa says that lovely food is the one thing that ever really makes a man give himself the trouble to rise up and call his wife blessed.

It is so late. Good-night.

R.-M.

Don't take my Goethe-love from me. I know simply masses of him, and can't let him go. My mind is decked out with him as a garden is decked with flowers. Now isn't that pretty? Or is it only silly? Anyhow it's dreadfully late. Good-night.

V

Jena, Nov. 13th.

No letter from you today. I am afraid you are being worried, and because of me. Here am I, quiet and cheerful, nobody bothering me, and your dear image in my heart to warm every minute of life; there are you, being forced to think things out, to make plans for the future, decide on courses of action, besides having to pass exams, and circumvent a parent whom I gather you regard as refractory. How lucky I am in my dear father. If I could have chosen, I would have chosen him. Never has he been any trouble. Never does he bore me. Never am I forced to criticisms. He knows that I have no brains, and has forgiven me. I know he hasn't much common-sense, and have forgiven him. We spend our time spoiling and petting and loving each other—do you remember how you sometimes laughed?

But I wish you were not worried. It is all because I'm so ineligible. If I could come to you with a pot of money in each hand, turned by an appreciative ruler into Baroness von Schmidt, with a Papa in my train weighed down by Orders, and the road behind me black with carts containing clothes, your father would be merciful unto us and bless us. As things are, you are already being punished, you have already begun to pay the penalty for that one little hour's happiness; and it won't be quite paid ever,

not so long as we both shall live. Do you, who think so much, ever think of the almost indecent haste with which punishments hurry in the wake of joys? They really seem to tumble over one another in their eagerness each to get there first. You took me to your heart, told me you loved me, asked me to be your wife. Was it so wrong? So wrong to let oneself go to happiness for those few moments that one should immediately be punished? My father will not let me believe anything. He says—when my step-mother is not listening; when she is he doesn't—that belief is not faith, and you can't believe if you do not know. But he cannot stop my silently believing that the Power in whose clutches we are is an amazing disciplinarian, a relentless grudger of joys. And what pitiful small joys they are, after all. Pitiful little attempts of souls doomed to eternal solitude to put out feelers in the dark, to get close to each other, to touch each other, to try to make each other warm. Now I am growing lugubrious; I who thought never to be lugubrious again. And at ten o'clock on a fine November morning, of all times in the world.

Papa comes back from Weimar today. There has been a prolonged meeting there of local lights about the damage done by some Goth to the Shakespeare statue in the park; and though Papa is not a light, still he did burn with indignation over that, and has been making impassioned speeches, and suggesting punishments for the Goth when they shall have caught him. I think I shall go over by the two o'clock train and meet him and bring him home, and look in at Goethe's sponge on the way. You

know how the little black thing lies in his bedroom there, next to a basin not much bigger than a breakfast-cup. With this he washed and was satisfied. And whenever I feel depressed, out of countenance with myself and life, I go and look at it and come home cheered and strengthened. I wonder if you'll be able to make out why? Bless you my dearest.

R.-M.

VI

Jena, Nov. 14th.

That sponge had no effect yesterday. I stared and stared at it, and it only remained a sponge, far too small for the really cleanly, instead of what it has up to now been, the starting-point for a train of thrilling, enthusiastic thoughts. I'm an unbalanced creature. Do you divide your time too, I wonder, between knocking your head against the stars and, in some freezing depth of blackness, listening to your heart, how it will hardly beat for fear? Of course you don't. You are much too clever. And then you have been educated, trained, taught to keep your thoughts within bounds, and not let them start off every minute on fresh and aimless wanderings. Yet the star-knocking is so wonderful that I believe I would rather freeze the whole year round for one hour of it than go back again to the changeless calm, the winter-afternoon sunshine, in which I used to sit before I knew you. All this only means that you have not written. See how variously one can state a fact.

I have run away from the sitting-room and the round table and the lamp, because Papa and my step-mother had begun to discuss you again, your prospects, your probable hideous fate if you were not prudent, your glorious career if you were. I felt guilty, wounded, triumphant, vain, all at once. Papa, of course,

was chiefly the listener. He agreed; or at most he temporized. I tell you, Roger, I am amazed at the power a woman has over her husband if she is in *every* way inferior to him. It is not only that, as we say, *der Klügere giebt nach*, it is the daily complete victory of the coarser over the finer, the rough over the gentle, the ignorant over the wise. My step-mother is an uneducated person, shrewd about all the things that do not matter, unaware of the very existence of the things that do, ready to be charitable, helpful, where the calamity is big enough, wholly unsympathetic, even antagonistic, toward all those many small calamities that make up one's years; the sort of woman parsons praise, and who get tombstones put over them at last peppered with frigid adjectives like virtuous and just. Did you ever chance to live with a just person? They are very chilling, and not so rare as one might suppose. And Papa, laxest, most tolerant of men, so lax that nothing seems to him altogether bad, so tolerant that nobody, however hard he tries, can pass, he thinks, beyond the reach of forgiveness and love, so humorous that he has to fight continually to suppress it, for humor lands one in odd morasses of dislike and misconception here, married her a year after my mother died, and did it wholly for my sake. Imagine it. She was to make me happy. Imagine that too. I was not any longer to be a solitary *Backfisch*, with holes in her stockings and riotous hair. There came a painful time when Papa began to suspect that the roughness of my hair might conceivably be a symbol of the dishevelment of my soul. Neighboring matrons pointed out the

possibility to him. He took to peering anxiously at unimportant parts of me such as my nails, and was startled to see them often black. He caught me once or twice red-eyed in corners, when it had happened that the dear ways and pretty looks of my darling mother had come back for a moment with extra vividness. He decided that I was both dirty and wretched, and argued, I am sure during sleepless nights, that I would probably go on being dirty and wretched for ever. And so he put on his best clothes one day, and set out doggedly in search of a wife.

He found her quite easily, in a house in the next street. She was making doughnuts, for it was the afternoon of New Year's Eve. She had just taken them out of the oven, and they were obviously successful. Papa loves doughnuts. His dinner had been uneatable. The weather was cold. She took off her apron, and piled them on a dish, and carried them, scattering fragrance as they went, into the sitting-room; and the smell of them was grateful; and they were very hot.

Papa came home engaged. 'I am not as a rule in favor of second marriages, Rose-Marie,' he began, breaking the news to me with elaborate art.

'Oh, horrid things,' I remarked, my arm round his neck, my face against his, for even then I was as tall as he. You know how he begins abruptly about anything that happens to cross his mind, so I was not surprised.

He rubbed his nose violently. 'I never knew anybody with such hair as yours for tickling a person,' he said, trying to push it back

behind my ears. Of course it would not go. 'Would it do that,' he added suspiciously, 'if it were properly brushed?'

'I don't know. Well, *Papachen*?'

'Well what?'

'About second marriages.'

He had forgotten, and he started. In an instant I knew. I took my arm away quickly, but put it back again just as quickly and pressed my face still closer: it was better we should not see each other's eyes while he told me.

'I am not, as a rule, in favor of them,' he repeated, when he had coughed and tried a second time to induce my hair to go behind my ears, 'but there are cases where they are—imperative.'

'Which ones?'

'Why, if a man is left with little children, for instance.'

'Then he engages a good nurse.'

'Or his children run wild.'

'Then he gets a severe aunt to live with him.'

'Or they grow up.'

'Then they take care of themselves.'

'Or he is an old man left with, say, one daughter.'

'Then she would take care of him.'

'And who would take care of her, Rose-Marie?'

'He would.'

'And if he is an incapable? An old person totally unable to notice lapses from convention, from social customs? If no one is there to tell her how to dress and how to behave? And she is

growing up, and yet remains a barbarian, and the day is not far distant when she must go out, and he knows that when she does go out Jena will be astounded.'

'Does the barbarian live in Jena?'

'My dear, she is universal. Wherever there is a widower with an only female child, there she is.'

'But if she had been happy?'

'But she had not been happy. She used to cry.'

'Oh, of course she used to cry sometimes, when she thought more than usual of her sweet—of her sweet—But for all that she had been happy, and so had he. Why, you know he had. Didn't she look after him, and keep house for him? Didn't she cook for him? Not very beautifully, perhaps, but still she did cook, and there was dinner every day. Didn't she go to market three times a week, and taste all the butter? Didn't she help to do the rooms? And in the evenings weren't they happy together, with nobody to worry them? And then, when he missed his darling wife, didn't the barbarian always know he was doing it, and come and sit on his knee, and kiss him, and make up for it? Didn't she? Now didn't she?'

Papa unwound himself, and walked up and down with a desperate face.

'Girls of sixteen must learn how to dress and to behave. A father cannot show them that,' he said.

'But they do dress and behave.'

'Rose-Marie, unmended stockings are not dressing. And to

talk to a learned stranger well advanced in years with the freedom of his equal in age and knowledge, as I saw one doing lately, is not behaving.'

'Oh, Papa, she wouldn't do that again, I'm certain.'

'She wouldn't have done it that once if she had had a mother.'

'But the poor wretch hadn't got a mother.'

'Exactly. A mother, therefore, must be provided.'

Here, I remember, there was a long pause. Papa walked, and I watched him in despair. Despair, too, was in his own face. He had had time to forget the doughnuts, and how cold he had been, and how hungry. So shaken was I that I actually suggested the engagement of a finishing governess to finish that which had never been begun, pointing out that she, at least, having finished would go; and he said he could not afford one; and he added the amazing statement that a wife was cheaper.

Well, I suppose she has been cheap: that is she has made one of Papa's marks go as far as two of other people's; but oh how expensive she has been in other ways! She has ruined us in such things as freedom, and sweetness, and light. You know the sort of talk here at meals. I wish you could have heard it before her time. She has such a strong personality that somehow we have always followed her lead; and Papa, who used to bubble out streams of gayety when he and I sat untidily on either side of a tureen of horrible bad soup, who talked of all things under heaven, and with undaunted audacity of many things in it, and who somehow put a snap and a sparkle into whatever he said, sits

like a schoolboy invited to a meal at his master's, eager to agree, anxious to give satisfaction. The wax cloth on the table is clean and shiny; the spoons are bright; a cruet with clear oil and nice-looking vinegar stands in the midst; the food, though simple, is hot and decent; we are quite comfortable; and any of the other Jena *Hausfraus* coming in during a meal would certainly cry out *Wie gemüthlich*. But of what use is it to be whitewashed and trim outside, to have pleasant creepers and tidy shutters, when inside one's soul wanders through empty rooms, mournfully shivers in damp and darkness, is hungry and no one brings it food, is cold and no one lights a fire, is miserable and tired and there's not a chair to sit on?

Why I write all this I can't think; except that I feel as if I were talking to you. You must tell me if I bore you. When I begin a letter to you the great difficulty is to leave off again. Oh how warm it makes one feel to know that there is one person in the world to whom one is everything. A lover is the most precious, the most marvellous possession. No wonder people like having them. And I used to think that so silly. Heavens, what an absurd person I have been. Why, love is the one thing worth having. Everything else, talents, work, arts, religion, learning, the whole *tremblement*, are so many drugs with which the starved, the loverless, try to dull their pangs, to put themselves to sleep. Good-night, and God bless you a thousand times. R.-M.

VII

Jena, Nov. 15th, 11 p.m.

Dearest,—Your letter came this afternoon. How glad I was to get it. And I do think it a good idea to go down into the country to those Americans before your exam. Who knows but they may, by giving you peace at the right moment, be the means of making you pass extra brilliantly? That you should not pass at all is absolutely out of the question. Why have the gods showered gifts on you if not for the proper passing of exams? For I suppose in this as in everything else there are different ways, ways of excellence and mediocrity. I know which way yours will be. If only the presence of my spirit by your side on Saturday could be of use. But that's the worst of spirits: they never seem to be the least good unless they take their bodies with them. Yet mine burns so hotly when I am thinking of you—and when am I not thinking of you?—that I feel as if you actually must feel the glow of it as it follows you about. How strange and dreadful love is. Till you know it, you are so sure the world is very good and pleasant up in those serene, frost-bitten regions where you stand alone, breathing the thin air of family affection, shone upon gently by the mild and misty sun of general esteem. Then comes love, and pulls you down. For isn't it a descent? Isn't it? Somehow, though it is so great a glory, it's a coming-down as well—down

from the pride of absolute independence of body and soul, down from the high-mightiness of indifference, to something fierce, and hot, and consuming. Oh, I daren't tell you how little of serenity I have left. At first, just at first, I didn't feel like this. I think I was stunned. My soul seemed to stand still. Surely it was extraordinary, that tempestuous crossing from the calm of careless friendship to the place where love dashes madly against the rocks? Don't laugh at my images. I'm in deadly earnest tonight. I do feel that love hurts. I do feel as if I'd been thrown on to rocks, left by myself on them to come slowly to my senses and find I am lying alone in a new and burning sun. It's an exquisite sort of pain, but it's very nearly unbearable. You see, you are so far away. And I, I'm learning for the first time in my life what it means, that saying about eating out one's heart.

R.-M.

VIII

Jena, Nov. 16th, 9 a.m.

Really, my dear Roger, nicest of all *Bräutigams*, pleasantest, best, and certainly most charming, I don't think I'll write to you again in the evenings. One of those hard clear hours that lie round breakfast-time will be the most seemly for consecration to you. Moods are such queer things, each one so distinct and real, so seemingly eternal, and I am influenced by them to an extraordinary degree. The weather, the time of day, the light in the room—yes, actually the light in the room, sunlight, cloudlight, lamplight—the scent of certain flowers, the sound of certain voices—the instant my senses become aware of either of these things I find myself flung into the middle of a fresh mood. And the worst part of it is the blind enthusiasm with which I am sure that as I think and feel at that moment so will I think and feel for ever. Nothing cures me. No taking of myself aside, no weight of private admonishment, no bringing of my spirit within the white glare of pure reason. Oh, women are fools; and of all fools the most complete is myself. But that's not what I want to talk about. I want to say that I had to go to a *Kaffee-Klatsch* yesterday at four, which is why I put off answering your letter of the 13th till the evening. My dear Roger, you must take no notice of that letter. Pray think of me as a young person of

sobriety; collected, discreet, cold to frostiness. Think of me like that, my dear, and in return I'll undertake to write to you only in my after-breakfast mood, quite the most respectable I possess. It is nine now. Papa, in the slippers you can't have forgotten, is in his corner by the stove, loudly disagreeing with the morning paper; he keeps on shouting *Schafskopf*. Johanna is carrying coals about and dropping them with a great noise. My step-mother is busy telling her how wrong it is to drop dirty coals in clean places. I am writing on a bit of the breakfast-table, surrounded by crumbs and coffee-cups. I will not clear them away till I've finished my letter, because then I am sure you'll get nothing either morbid or lovesick. Who, I'd like to know, could flame into love-talk or sink into the mud of morbidness from a starting-point of anything so sprightly as crumbs and coffee-cups?

It was too sweet of you to compare me to Nausicaa in your letter yesterday. Nobody ever did that before. Various aunts, among whom a few years ago there was a great mortality, so that they are all now aunts in heaven, told me in divers tones that I was much too long for my width, that I was like the handle of a broom, like the steeple of the *Stadtkirche*, like a tree walking; but none of them ever said anything about Nausicaa. I doubt if they had ever heard of her. I'm afraid if they had they wouldn't have seen that I am like her. You know the blindness of aunts. Jena is full of them (not mine, *Gott sei Dank*, but other people's) and they are all stone-blind. I don't mean, of course, that the Jena streets are thick with aunts being led by dogs on strings, but that

they have that tragic blindness of the spirit that misses seeing things that are hopeful and generous and lovely; things alight with young enthusiasms, or beautiful with a patience that has had time to grow gray. They also have that odd, unfurnished sort of mind that can never forget and never forgive. Yesterday at the *Kaffee-Klatsch* I met them all again, the Jena aunts I know so well and who are yet for ever strange, for ever of a ghastly freshness. It was the first this season, and now I suppose I shall waste many a good afternoon *klatsching*. How I wish I had not to go. My step-mother says that if I do not show myself I shall be put down as eccentric. 'You are not very popular,' says she, 'as it is. Do not, therefore, make matters worse.' Then she appeals, should a more than usual stubbornness cloud my open countenance, to Papa. 'Ferdinand,' she says, 'shall she not, then, do as others of her age?' And of course Papa says, bless him, that girls must see life occasionally, and is quite unhappy if I won't. Life? God bless him for a dear, innocent Papa. And how they talked yesterday. Papa would have writhed. He never will talk or listen to talk about women unless they've been dead some time, so uninteresting, so unworthy of discussion does he consider all live females except Johanna to be. And if I hadn't had my love-letter (I took it with me tucked inside my dress, where my heart could beat against it), I don't think I would have survived that *Klatsch*. You've no idea how proudly I set out. Hadn't I just been reading the sweetest things about myself in your letter? Of course I was proud. And I felt so important, and so impressive, and simply gloriously good-

tempered. The pavement of Jena, I decided as I walked over it, was quite unworthy to be touched by my feet; and if the passers-by only knew it, an extremely valuable person was in their midst. In fact, my dear Roger, I fancied myself yesterday. Didn't Odysseus think Nausicaa was Artemis when first he met her among the washing, so god-like did she appear? Well, I felt god-like yesterday, made god-like by your love. I actually fancied people would *see* something wonderful had happened to me, that I was transfigured, *verklärt*. Positively, I had a momentary feeling that my coming in, the coming in of anything so happy, must blind the *Kaffee-Klatsch*, that anything so burning with love must scorch it. Well, it didn't. Never did torch plunged into wetness go out with a drearier fizzle than did my little shining. Nobody noticed anything different. Nobody seemed even to look at me. A few careless hands were stretched out, and the hostess told me to ask the servant to bring more milk.

They were talking about sin. We don't sin much in Jena, so generally they talk about sick people, or their neighbor's income and what he does with it. But yesterday they talked sin. You know because we are poor and Papa has no official position and I have come to be twenty-five without having found a husband, I am a *quantité négligeable* in our set, a being in whose presence everything can be said, and who is expected to sit in a draught if there is one. Too old to join the young girls in the corner set apart for them, where they whisper and giggle and eat amazing quantities of whipped cream, I hover uneasily on the outskirts

of the group of the married, and try to ingratiate myself by keeping on handing them cakes. It generally ends in my being sent out every few minutes by the hostess to the kitchen to fetch more food and things. 'Rose-Marie is so useful,' she will explain to the others when I have been extra quick and cheerful; but I don't suppose Nausicaa's female acquaintances said more. The man Ulysses might take her for a goddess, but the most the women would do would be to commend the way she did the washing. Sometimes I have great trouble not to laugh when I see their heads, often quite venerable, gathered together in an eager bunch, and hear them expressing horror, sympathy, pity, in every sort of appropriate tone, while their eyes, their tell-tale eyes, betrayers of the soul, look pleased. Why they should be pleased when somebody has had an operation or doesn't pay his debts I can't make out. But they do. And after a course of *Klatsches* throughout the winter, you are left toward April with one firm conviction in a world where everything else is shaky, that there's not a single person who isn't either extraordinarily ill, or, if he's not, who does not misuse his health and strength by not paying his servants' wages.

Yesterday the *Klatsch* was in a fearful flutter. It had got hold of a tale of sin, real or suspected. It was a tale of two people who, after leading exemplary lives for years, had suddenly been clutched by the throat by Nature; and Nature, we know, cares nothing at all for the claims of husbands and wives or any other lawfulnesses, and is a most unmoral and one-idea'd person. They

have, says Jena, begun to love each other in defiance of the law. Nature has been too many for them, I suppose. All Jena is a-twitter. Nothing can be proved, but everything is being feared, said the hostess; from her eyes I'm afraid she wanted to say hoped. Isn't it ugly?—*pfui*, as we say. And so stale, if it's true. Why can't people defy Nature and be good? The only thing that is always fresh and beautiful is goodness. It is also the only thing that can make you go on being happy indefinitely.

I know her well. My heart failed me when I heard her being talked about so hideously. She is the nicest woman in Jena. She has been kind to me often. She is very clever. Perhaps if she had been more dull she would have found no temptation to do anything but jog along respectably—sometimes I think that to be without imagination is to be so very safe. He has only come to these parts lately. He used to be in Berlin, and has been appointed to a very good position in Weimar. I have not met him, but Papa says he is brilliant. He has a wife, and she has a husband, and they each have a lot of children; so you see if it's true it really is very *pfui*.

Just as the *Kaffee-Klatsch* was on the wane, and crumbs were being brushed off laps, and bonnet-strings tied, in she walked. There was a moment's dead silence. Then you should have heard the effusion of welcoming speeches. The hostess ran up and hugged her. The others were covered with pleasant smiles. Perhaps they were grateful to her for having provided such thrilling talk. When I had to go and kiss her hand I never

in my life felt baser. You should have seen her looking round cheerfully at all the Judases, and saying she was sorry to be late, and asking if they hadn't missed her; and you should have heard the eager chorus of assurances.

Oh, *pfui, pfui*.

R.-M.

How much I love goodness, straightness, singleness of heart —*you*.

Later.

I walked part of the way home with the calumniated one. How charming she is. Dear little lady, it would be difficult not to love her. She talked delightfully about German and English poetry. Do you think one can talk delightfully about German and English poetry and yet be a sinner? Tell me, do you think a woman who is very intellectual, but very *very* intellectual, could yet be a sinner? Would not her wits save her? Would not her bright wits save her from anything so dull as sin?

IX

Jena, Nov. 18th.

Dearest,—I don't think I like that girl at all. Your letter from Clinches has just come, and I don't think I like her at all. What is more, I don't think I ever shall like her. And what is still more, I don't think I even want to. So your idea of her being a good friend to me later on in London must retire to that draughty corner of space where abortive ideas are left to eternal shivering. I'm sorry if I am offensively independent. But then I know so well that I won't be lonely if I'm with you, and I think rooting up, which you speak of as a difficult and probably painful process, must be very nice if you are the one to do it, and I am sure I could never by any possibility reach such depths of strangeness and doubt about what to do next as would induce me to stretch out appealing hands to a young woman with eyes that, as you put it, tilt at the corners. I wish you hadn't told her about us, about me. It has profaned things so, dragged them out into the streets, cheapened them. I don't in the least want to tell my father, or any one else. Does this sound as though I were angry? Well, I don't think I am. On the contrary, I rather want to laugh. You dear silly! So clever and so simple, so wise and crammed with learning, and such a dear, ineffable goose. How old am I, I wonder? Only as old as you? Really only as old? Nonsense: I'm fifteen, twenty

years your senior, my dear sir. I've lived in Jena, you in London I frequent *Kaffee-Klatsches*, and you the great world. I talk much with Johanna in the kitchen, and you with heaven knows what in the way of geniuses. Yet no male Nancy Cheriton, were his eyelids never so tilted, would wring a word out of me about a thing so near, so precious, so much soul of my soul as my lover.

How would you explain this? I've tried and can't.

Your rebellious

ROSE-MARIE.

Darling, darling, don't ask me to like Nancy. The thing's unthinkable.

Later.

Now I know why I am wiser than you: life in kitchens and *Klatsches* turns the soul gray very early. Didn't one of your poets sing of somebody who had a sad lucidity of soul? I'm afraid that is what's the matter with me.

X

Jena, Nov. 19th.

Oh, what nonsense everything seems,—everything of the nature of differences, of arguments, on a clear morning up among the hills. I am ashamed of what I wrote about Nancy; ashamed of my eagerness and heat about a thing that does not matter. On the hills this morning, as I was walking in the sunshine, it seemed to me that I met God. And He took me by the hand, and let me walk with Him. And He showed me how beautiful the world is, how beautiful the background He has given us, the spacious, splendid background on which to paint our large charities and loves. And I looked across the hilltops, golden, utterly peaceful, and amazement filled me in the presence of that great calm at the way I flutter through my days and at the noise I make. Why should I cry out before I am hurt? flare up into heat and clamor? The pure light up there made it easy to see clearly, and I saw that I have been silly and ungrateful. Forgive me. You know best about Nancy, you who have seen her; and I, just come down from that holy hour on the hills, am very willing to love her. I will not turn my back upon a ready friend. She can have no motive but a good one. Roger, I am a blunderer, a clumsy creature with not one of my elemental passions bound down yet into the decent listlessness of chains. But I shall grow better, grow

more worthy of you. Not a day shall pass without my having been a little wiser than the day before, a little kinder, a little more patient. I wish you had been with me this morning. It was so still and the sky so clear that I sat on the old last year's grass as warmly as in summer. I felt irradiated with life and love; light shining on to every tiresome incident of life and turning it into beauty, love for the whole wonderful world, and all the people in it, and all the beasts and flowers, and all the happy living things. Indeed blessings have been given me in full measure, pressed down and running over. In the whole of that little town at my feet, so quiet, so bathed in lovely light, there was not, there could not be, another being so happy as myself. Surely I am far too happy to grudge accepting a kindness? I tell you I marvel at the energy of my protest yesterday. Perhaps it was—oh Roger, after those hours on the hills I will be honest, I will pull off the veil from feelings that the female mind generally refuses to uncover—perhaps the real reason, the real, pitiful, mean reason was that I felt sure somehow from your description of her that Nancy's *blouses* must be very perfect things, things beyond words *very* perfect. And I was jealous of her blouses. There now. Good-by.

XI

Jena, Nov. 20th.

I am glad you did not laugh at that silly letter of mine about scorching in the sun on rocks. Indeed I gather, my dear Roger, that you liked it. Make the most of it then, for there will be no more of the sort. A decent woman never gets on to rocks, and if she scorches she doesn't say so. And I believe that it is held to be generally desirable that she should not, even under really trying circumstances, part with her dignity. I rather think the principle was originally laid down by the husband of an attractive wife, but it is a good one, and so long as I am busy clinging to my dignity obviously I shall have no leisure for clinging to you, and then you will not be suffocated with the superabundance of my follies.

About those two sinners who are appalling us: how can I agree with you? To do so would cut away the ground from under my own feet. The woman plays such a losing game. She gives so much, and gets so little. So long as the man loves her I do see that he is worth the good opinion of neighbors and relations, which is one of the chilliest things in the world; but he never seems able to go on loving her once she has begun to wither. That is very odd. She does not mind his withering. And has she not a soul? And does not that grow always lovelier? But what, then, becomes of her? For wither she certainly will, and years rush past at such

a terrific pace that almost before she has begun to be happy it is over. He goes back to his wife, a person who has been either patient or bitter according to the quantity of her vitality and the quality of her personal interests, and concludes, while he watches her sewing on his buttons in the corner she has probably been sitting in through all his vagrant years, that marriage has its uses, and that it is good to know there will be some one bound to take care of you up to the last, and who will shed decent tears when you are buried. She goes back—but where, and to what? They have gone long ago, her husband, her children, her friends. And she is old, and alone. You too, like everybody else, seem unable to remember how transient things are. Time goes, emotions wear out. You say these people are in the hands of Fate, and can no more get out of them and do differently than a fly in a web can walk away when it sees the hungry spider coming nearer. I don't believe in webs and spiders; at least, I don't today. Today I believe only in my unconquerable soul—

I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

And you say that a person in the grip of a great feeling should not care a straw for circumstance, should defy it, trample it under foot. Heaven knows that I too am for love and laughter, for the snatching of flying opportunities, for all that makes the light and the glory of life; but what afterwards? The Afterwards haunts

me like a weeping ghost. It is true there is still the wide world, the warm sun, seed-time and harvest, Shakespeare, the Book of Job, singing birds, flowers; but the soul that has transgressed the laws of man seems for ever afterwards unable to use the gifts of God. If supreme joy could be rounded off by death, death at the exact right moment, how easy things would be. Only death has a strange way of shunning those persons who want him most. To long to die seems to make you as nearly immortal as it is possible to become. Now just think what would have happened if Tristan had not been killed, had lived on quite healthily. King Mark, than whom I know no man in literature more polite, would have handed Isolde over to him as he declared himself ready to have done had he been aware of the unfortunately complicated state of things, and he would have done it with every expression of decent regret at the inconvenience he had caused. Isolde would have married Tristan. There would have been no philosophy, no divine hours in the garden, no acute, exquisite anguish of love and sorrow. But there would presently have been the Middle Ages equivalent for a perambulator, a contented Tristan coming to meet it, a faded Isolde who did not care for poetry, admonishing, perhaps with sharpness, a mediæval nursemaid, and quite quickly afterwards a Tristan grown too comfortable to move, and an Isolde with wrinkles. Would we not have lost a great deal if they had lived? It is certain that they themselves would have lost a great deal; for I don't see that contentment beaten out thin enough to cover a long life—and beat as thin as you will it never

does cover quite across the years—is to be compared with one supreme contentment heaped in one heap on the highest, keenest point of living we reach. Now I am apparently arguing on your side, but I'm not really, because you, you know, think of love as a perpetual *crescendo*, and I, though I do hear the *crescendo* and follow it with a joyful clapping of hands up to the very top of its splendor, can never forget the drop on the other side, the inevitable *diminuendo* to the dead level—and then? Why, the rest is not even silence, but a querulous murmur, a querulous, confused whining, confused complaining, not very loud, not very definite, but always there till the last chord is reached a long time afterwards—that satisfactory common chord of death. My point is, that if you want to let yourself go to great emotions you ought to have the luck to die at an interesting moment. The alternative makes such a dreary picture; and it is the picture I always see when I hear of love at defiance with the law. The law wins; always, inevitably. Husbands are best; always, inevitably. Really, the most unsatisfactory husband is a person who should be clung to steadily from beginning to end, for did not one marry him of one's own free will? How ugly then, because one had been hasty, foolish, unacquainted with one's usually quite worthless mind, to punish him. The brilliant professor, the fascinating little lady, what are they but grossly selfish people, cruelly punishing the husband and wife who had the misfortune to marry them? Oh, it's a mercy most of us are homely, slow of wit, heavy of foot; for so at least we stay at home and find our peace in fearful

innocence and household laws. (Please note my familiarity with the British poets.) But isn't that a picture of frugal happiness, of the happiness that comes from a daily simple obedience to the Stern Daughter of the Voice of God, beside which stormy, tremendous, brief things come off very badly? I don't believe you do in your heart side with the two sinners. Bother them. They have made me feel like a Lutheran pastor on a Sunday afternoon. But you know I love you.

R.-M.

XII

Jena, Nov. 22d.

When do you go back to Jermyn Street? Surely today, for is not the examination to-morrow? Your description of the Cheriton *ménage* at Clinches is like fairyland. No wonder you feel so happy there. My mother used to tell me about life in England, but apparently the Watson family did not dwell in houses like Clinches. Anyhow I had an impression of little houses with little staircases, and oil-cloth, and a servant in a cap with streamers, and round white balls of suet with currants in them very often for dinner. But Clinches, beautiful and dignified in the mists and subtleties of a November afternoon, its massed grayness melting into that other grayness, its setting of mysterious blurred wood and pale light of water, its spaciousness, its pleasant people, its daughter with the dusky hair and odd gray eyes—is a vision of fairyland. I cannot conceive what life is like in such places; nor I am sure could any other inhabitant of Jena. What, for instance, can it be like to live in a thing so big that you do not hear the sounds nor smell the smells of the kitchen? Ought not people who live in such places to have unusually beautiful ways of looking at life? of thinking? of speaking? One imagines it all very noble, very gracious, altogether worthy. That complete separation from the kitchen is what wrings the biggest sigh of

envy out of me. Is it my English blood that makes me rebel against kitchens? Or is it only my unfortunate sensitiveness to smell? I wish I had no nose. It has always been a nuisance. It is as extravagantly delighted by exquisite scents as it is extravagantly horrified by nasty ones. Why, a beautiful smell, if it is delicate, subtle, intermittent, can ruin a morning for me. It fills me with a quite unworthy rapture. Things that ought to be hard in me melt. Things that ought to be fixed are scattered heaven knows where. I go soft, ecstatic, basely idle. I forget that my business is to get dinner, and not to stand still and just sniff. In March I dare not pass the house Schiller used to live in on my way to market, because the people who live there now have planted violets along the railings. It is the shortest way, and it takes ten more minutes out of a busy morning to go round by the Post Office; but really for a grown woman to stand lost in what is mere voluptuous pleasure, leaning against somebody else's railing while the family dinner lies still unbought in the market-place, is conduct that I cannot justify. As for a beanfield—my dear Roger, did you ever come across a beanfield in flower? It is the divinest experience the nose can give us. Two years ago an Englishman came and spent a spring and summer in the little house in the apple orchard up on the road over the Galgenberg—the little house with the blue shutters—and he was a great gardener. And he dug a big patch, and planted a beanfield, and it was the first beanfield Jena had ever seen; for those beans called broad that you eat in England and are properly thankful

for are only grown in Germany for the use of pigs, and there are no pigs in Jena. Sow-beans they are called here, mindful of their destiny. The Englishman, who possessed no visible sow, was a source of astonishment to us. The things came up, and were undoubtedly sow-beans. A great square patch of them grew up just over the fence on which Jena leaned and pondered. The man himself was seen in his shirt-sleeves weeding them on rainy afternoons. Jena could only suspect a pig concealed in the parlor, and was indulgent; and it was indulgent because no one, in its opinion, can be both English and sane. 'God made us all,' was its invariable helpless conclusion as it went, shaking its head, home down the hill. When in June the beanfield flowered I blessed that Englishman. No one hung over his fence more persistently than I. It was the first time I had smelt the like. It became an obsession. I wanted to be there at every sort of time and under every sort of weather-condition. At noon, when the sun shone straight down on it drawing up its perfume in hot breaths, I was there; in the morning, so early that it was still in the blue shadow of the Galgenberg and every gray leaf and white petal was drenched with dew, I was there; on wet afternoons, when the scent was crushed out of it by the beating of heavy rain, and the road for half a mile, the slippery clay road with its puddles and amazing mud, was turned into a bath of fragrance fit for the tenderest, most fastidious goddess to bare her darling little limbs in, I was there; and once after lying awake in my hot room so near the roof for hours thinking of it, out there on the hillside in the freshness

under the stars, I got up and dressed, and crept with infinite caution past my step-mother's door, and stole the latchkey, and slunk, my heart in my mouth, through the stale streets, along all the railings and dusty front gardens, out into the open country, up on to the hill, to where it stood in straight and motionless rows sending out waves of fragrance into that wonderful clean air you find in all the places where men leave off and God begins. Did you ever know a woman before who risked her reputation for a beanfield? Well, it is what I did. And I'll tell you, I am so incurably honest that I can never for long pretend, why I write all this about it. It is that I am sick with anxiety—oh, sick, cold, shivering with it—about your exam. I didn't want you to know. I've tried to write of beanfields instead. I didn't want you to be bothered. The clamorings for news of the person not on the spot are always a worry, and I did not want to worry. But the letter I got from you this morning never mentions the exam, the thing on which, as you told me, everything depends for us. You talk about Clinches, about the people there, about the shooting, the long days in woods, the keen-wittedness of Nancy who goes with you, who understands before you have spoken, who sympathizes so kindly about me, who fits, you say, so strangely into the misty winter landscape in her paleness, her thinness, her spiritualness. There was one whole page—oh, I grudged it—about her loosely done dark hair, how softly dusky it is, how it makes you think of twilight, and her eyes beneath it of the first faint shining of stars. I wonder if these things really fill your thoughts, or whether you

are only using them to drive away useless worry about Saturday. I know you are a poet, and a poet's pleasure in eyes and hair is not a very personal thing, so I do not mind that. But to-morrow is Saturday. Shall you send me a telegram, I wonder? A week ago I would not have wondered; I should have been so sure you would let me have one little word at once about how you felt it had gone off—one little word for the person so far away, so helpless, so dependent on your kindness for the very power to go on living. Oh, what stuff this is. Worse even than the beanfield. But I must be sentimental sometimes, now mustn't I? or I would not be a woman. But really, my darling, I am very anxious.

R.-M.

XIII

Jena, Nov. 23 d.

I have waited all day, and there has been no telegram. Well, on Monday I shall get a letter about it, and how much more satisfactory that is. Today after all is nearly over, and there is only Sunday to be got through first, and I shall be helped to endure that by the looking forward. Isn't it a mercy that we never get cured of being expectant? It makes life so bearable. However regularly we are disappointed and nothing whatever happens, after the first blow has fallen, after the first catch of the breath, the first gulp of misery, we turn our eyes with all their old eagerness to a point a little further along the road. I suppose in time the regular repetition of shocks does wear out hope, and then I imagine one's youth collapses like a house of cards. Real old age begins then, inward as well as outward; and one's soul, that kept so bravely young for years after one's face got its first wrinkles, suddenly shrivels up. Its light goes out. It is suddenly and irrecoverably old, blank, dark, indifferent.

Sunday Night.

I didn't finish my letter last night because, observing the strain I had got into, I thought it better for your comfort that I should go to bed. So I did. And while I went there I asked myself why I should burden you with the dull weight of my elementary

reflections. You who are so clever and who think so much and so clearly, must laugh at their elementariness. They are green and immature, the acid juice of an imperfect fruit that has always hung in the shadow. And yet I don't think you must laugh, Roger. It would, after all, be as cruel as the laughter of a child watching a blind man ridiculously stumbling among the difficulties of the way.

The one Sunday post brought nothing from you. The day has been very long. I cannot tell you how glad I am night has come, and only sleep separates me now from Monday morning's letter. These Sundays now that you are gone are intolerable. Before you came they rather amused me,—the furious raging of Saturday, with its extra cleaning and feverish preparations till far into the night; Johanna more than usually slipshod all day, red of elbow, wispy of hair, shuffling about in her felt slippers, her skirt girded up very high, a moist mop and an overflowing pail dribbling soapy tracks behind her in her progress; my step-mother baking and not lightly to be approached; Papa fled from early morning till supper-time; and then the dead calm of Sunday, day of food and sleep. Cake for breakfast—such a bad beginning. Church in the University chapel, with my step-mother in her best hat with the black feathers and the pink rose—it sounds frivolous, but you must have noticed the awe-inspiring effect of it coming so unexpectedly on the top of her long respectable face and oiled-down hair. A fluffy person in that hat would have all the students offering to take her for a walk or share their umbrella with her.

My step-mother stalks along panoplied in her excellences, and the feather waves and nods gayly at the passing student as he slinks away down by-streets. Once last spring a silly bee thought the rose must be something alive and honeyful, and went and smelt it. I think it must have been a very young bee; anyhow nobody else up to now has misjudged my step-mother like that. She sits near the door in church, and has never yet heard the last half of the sermon because she has to go out in time to put the goose or other Sunday succulence safely into the oven. I wish she would let me do that, for I don't care for sermons. When you were here and condescended to come with us at least we could criticize them comfortably on our way home; but alone with my step-mother I may do nothing but praise. It is the most tiring, tiresome of all attitudes, the one of indiscriminating admiration. To hear you pull the person who had preached to pieces, and laugh at the things he had said that would not bear examination, used to be like having a window thrown open in a stuffy room on a clear winter's morning. Shall you ever forget the elaborateness of the Sunday dinner? For that, chiefly, is Saturday sacrificed, a whole day that might be filled with lovely leisure. I do hope you never thought that I too looked upon it as a nice way of celebrating Sunday. How amazing it is, the way women waste life. Men waste enough of it, heaven knows, but never anything like so much as women. Papa and I both hate that Sunday dinner, both dread the upheavals of Saturday made necessary by it, and you, I know, disliked them just as much, and so has every other young man

we have had here; yet my step-mother inflicts these things on us with an iron determination that nothing will ever alter. And why? Only because she was brought up in the belief that it was proper, and because, if she omitted to do the proper, female Jena would be aghast. Well, I think it's a bad thing to be what is known as brought up, don't you? Why should we poor helpless little children, all soft and resistless, be squeezed and jammed into the rusty iron bands of parental points of view? Why should we have to have points of view at all? Why not, for those few divine years when we are still so near God, leave us just to guess and wonder? We are not given a chance. On our pulpy little minds our parents carve their opinions, and the mass slowly hardens, and all those deep, narrow, up and down strokes harden with it, and the first thing the best of us have to do on growing up is to waste precious time rubbing and beating at the things to try to get them out. Surely the child of the most admirable, wise parent is richer with his own faulty but original point of view than he would be fitted out with the choicest selection of maxims and conclusions that he did not have to think out for himself? I could never be a schoolmistress. I should be afraid to teach the children. They know more than I do. They know how to be happy, how to live from day to day in god-like indifference to what may come next. And is not how to be happy the secret we spend our lives trying to guess? Why then should I, by forcing them to look through my stale eyes, show them as through a dreadful magnifying glass the terrific possibilities, the cruel explosiveness of what they had

been lightly tossing to each other across the daisies and thinking were only toys?

Today at dinner, when Papa had got to the stage immediately following the first course at which, his hunger satisfied, he begins to fidget and grow more and more unhappy, and my step-mother was conversing blandly but firmly with the tried and ancient friend she invites to bear witness that we too have a goose on Sundays, and I had begun to droop, I hope poetically, like a thirsty flower let us say, or a broken lily, over my plate, I thought—oh, how longingly I thought—of the happy past meals, made happy because you were here sitting opposite me and I could watch you. How short they seemed in those days. You didn't know I was watching you, did you? But I was. And I learned to do it so artfully, so cautiously. When you turned your head and talked to Papa I could do it openly; when you talked to me I could look straight in your dear eyes while I answered; but when I wasn't answering I still looked at you, by devious routes carefully concealed, routes that grew so familiar by practice that at last I never missed a single expression, while you, I suppose, imagined you had nothing before you but a young woman with a vacant face. What talks and laughs we will have about that odd, foolish year we spent here together in our blindness when next we meet! We've had no time to say anything at all yet. There are thousands of things I want to ask you about, thousands of little things we said and did that seem so strange now in the light of our acknowledged love. My heart stands still at the thought of

when next we meet. These letters have been so intimate, and we were not intimate. I shall be deadly shy when in your presence I remember what I have written and what you have written. We are still such strangers, bodily, personally; strangers with the overwhelming memory of that last hour together to make us turn hot and tremble.

Now I am going to bed,—to dream of you, I suppose, considering that all day long I am thinking of you; and perhaps I shall have a little luck, and dream that I hear you speaking. You know, Roger, I love you for all sorts of queer and apparently inadequate reasons—I won't tell you what they are, for they are quite absurd; things that have to do with eyebrows, and the shape of hands, so you see quite foolish things—but most of all I love you for your voice. A beautiful speaking voice is one of the best of the gifts of the gods. It is so rare; and it is so irresistible. Papa says heaps of nice poetic things, but then the darling pipes. The most eloquent lecturer we have here does all his eloquence, which is really very great read afterward in print, in a voice of beer, loose, throaty, reminiscent of barrels. Not one of the preachers who come to the University chapel has a voice that does not spoil the merit there may be in what he says. Sometimes I think that if a man with the right voice were to get up in that pulpit and just say, 'Children, Christ died for you,'—oh, then I think that all I have and am, body, mind, soul, would be struck into one great passion of gratefulness and love, and that I would fall conquered on my face before the Cross on the altar, and cry and cry....

XIV

Jena, Nov. 25th. Monday Night.

The last post has been. No letter. If you had posted it in London on Saturday after the examination I ought to have had it by now. I am tortured by the fear that something has happened to you. Such dreadful things do happen. Those great, blundering, blind fists of Fate, laying about in mechanical cruelty, crushing the most precious lives as indifferently as we crush an ant in an afternoon walk, how they terrify me. All day I have been seeing foolish, horrible pictures—your train to London smashing up, your cab coming to grief—the thousand things that might so easily happen really doing it at last. I sent my two letters to Jermyn Street, supposing you would have left Clinches, but now somehow I don't think you did leave it, but went up from there for the exam. Do you know it is three days since I heard from you? That wouldn't matter so much—for I am determined never to bother you to write, I am determined I will never be an exacting woman—if it were not for the all-important examination. You said that if you passed it well and got a good place in the Foreign Office you would feel justified in telling your father about us. That means that we would be openly engaged. Not that I care for that, or want it except as the next step to our meeting again. It is clear that we cannot meet again till our engagement is known.

Even if you could get away and come over for a few days I would not see you. I will not be kissed behind doors. These things are too wonderful to be handled after the manner of kitchen-maids. I am willing to be as silent as the grave for as long as you choose, but so long as I am silent we shall not meet. I tell you I am incurably honest. I cannot bear to lie. And even these letters, this perpetual writing when no one is likely to look, this perpetual watching for the postman so that no one will be likely to see, does not make me love myself any better. It is true I need not have watched quite so carefully lately, need I? Oh Roger, why don't you write? What has happened? Think of my wretched plight if you are ill. Just left to wonder at the silence, to gnaw away at my miserable heart. Or, if some one took pity on me and sent me word,—your servant, or the doctor, or the kind Nancy—what could I do even then but still sit here and wait? How could I, a person of whom nobody has heard, go to you? It seems to me that the whole world has a right to be with you, to know about you, except myself. I cannot wait for the next post. The waiting for these posts makes me feel physically sick. If the man is a little late, what torments I suffer lest he should not be coming at all. Then I hear him trudging up the stairs. I fly to the door, absolutely vainly trying to choke down hope. 'There will be no letter, no letter, no letter,' I keep on crying to my thumping heart so that the disappointment shall not be quite so bitter; and it takes no notice, but thumps back wildly, 'Oh, there will, there will.' And what the man gives me is a circular for Papa.

It is quite absurd, madly absurd, the anguish I feel when that happens. My one wish, my only wish, as I creep back again down the passage to my work, is that I could go to sleep, and sleep and sleep and forget that I have ever hoped for anything; sleep for years, and wake up quiet and old, with all these passionate, tearing feelings gone from me for ever.

XV

Jena, Nov. 28th.

Last night I got your letter written on Sunday at Clinches, a place from which letters do not seem to depart easily. My knowledge of England's geography is limited, so how could I guess that it was so easy to go up to London from there for the exam, and back again the same day? As you had no time, you say, to go to Jermyn Street, I suppose the two letters I sent there will be forwarded to you. If they are not it does not matter. They were only a string of little trivial things that would look really quite too little and trivial to be worth reading in the magnificence of Clinches. I am glad you are well; glad you are happy; glad you feel you did not do badly on Saturday. It is a good thing to be well and happy and satisfied, and a pleasant thing to have found a friend who takes so much interest in you, and to whom you can tell your most sacred thoughts: doubly pleasant, of course, when the friend chances to be a woman, and she is pretty, and young, and rich, and everything else that is suitable and desirable. The world is an amusing place. My step-mother talked of you this morning at breakfast. She was, it seems, in a prophetic mood. She shook her head after the manner of the more gloomy of the prophets, and hoped you would steer clear of entanglements.

'And why should he not, *meine Liebste*?' inquired Papa.

'Not for nothing has he got that mouth, Ferdinand,' answered she.

ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

XVI

Jena, Nov. 29th.

My darling, forgive me. If I could only get it back! I who hate unreasonableness, who hate bitterness, who hate exacting women, petty women, jealous women, to write a thing so angry. How horrible this letter-writing is. If I had said all that to you in a sudden flare of wrath I would have been sorry so immediately, and at once have made everything fair and sweet again with a kiss. And I never would have got beyond the first words, never have reached my step-mother's silly and rude remarks, never have dreamed of repeating the unkind, unjust things. Now, Roger, listen to me: my faith in you is perfect, my love for you is perfect, but I am so undisciplined, so new to love, that you must be patient, you must be ready to forgive easily for a little while, till I have had time to grow wise. Just think, when you feel irritated, of the circumstances of my life. Everything has come so easily, so naturally to you. But I have been always poor, always second-rate—oh, it's true—shut out from the best things and people, lonely because the society I could have had was too little worth having, and the society I would have liked didn't want me. How could it? It never came our way, never even knew we were there. I have had a shabby, restricted, incomplete life; I mean the last ten years of it, since my father married again. Before that, if the shabbiness

was there I did not see it; there seemed to be sunshine every day, and room to breathe, and laughter enough; but then I was a child, and saw sunshine everywhere. Is there not much excuse for some one who has found a treasure, some one till then very needy, if his anxiety lest he should be robbed makes him—irritable? You see, I put it mildly. I know very well that irritable isn't the right word. I know very well what are the right words, and how horrid they are, and how much ashamed I am of their bitter truth. Pity me. A person so unbalanced, so stripped of all self-control that she writes things she knows must hurt to the being she loves so utterly, does deserve pity from better, serener natures. I do not understand you yet. I do not understand the ways yet of people who live as you do. I am socially inferior, and therefore sensitive and suspicious. I am groping about, and am so blind that only sometimes can I dimly feel how dark it really is. I have built up a set of ideals about love and lovers, absurd crude things, clumsy fabrics suited to the conditions of Rauchgasse, and the first time you do not exactly fit them I am desperately certain that the world is coming to an end. But how hopeless it is, this trying to explain, this trying to undo. How shall I live till you write that you do still love me?

Your wretched
ROSE-MARIE.

XVII

Jena, Nov. 30th.

I counted up my money this morning to see if there would be enough to take me to England, supposing some day I should wake up and find myself no longer able to bear the silence. I know I should be mad if I went, but sometimes one is mad. There was not nearly enough. The cheapest route would cost more than comes in my way during a year. I have a ring of my mother's with a diamond in it, my only treasure, that I might sell. I never wear it; my red hands are not pretty enough for rings, so it is only sentiment that makes it precious. And if it would take me to you and give me just one half-hour's talk with you and sweep away the icy fog that seems to be settling down on my soul and shutting out everything that is wholesome and sweet, I am sure my darling mother, whose one thought was always to make me happy, would say, 'Child, go and sell it, and buy peace.'

XVIII

Jena, Dec. 1st.

Last night I dreamed I did go to England, and I found you in a room with a crowd of people, and you nodded not unkindly, and went on talking to the others, and I waited in my corner till they should have gone, waited for the moment when we would run into each other's arms; and with the last group you too went out talking and laughing, and did not come back again. It was not that you wanted to avoid me; you had simply forgotten that I was there. And I crept out into the street, and it was raining, and through the rain I made my way back across Europe to my home, to the one place where they would not shut me out, and when I opened the door all the empty future years were waiting for me there, gray, vacant, listless.

XIX

Jena, Dec. 2d.

These scraps of letters are not worth the postman's trouble, are not worth the stamps; but if I did not talk to you a little every day I do not think I could live. Yesterday you got my angry letter. If you were not at Clinches I could have had an answer to-morrow; as it is, I must wait till Wednesday. Roger, I am really a cheerful person. You mustn't suppose that it is my habit to be so dreary. I don't know what has come over me. Every day I send you another shred of gloom, and deepen the wrong impression you must be getting of me. I know very well that nobody likes to listen to sighs, and that no man can possibly go on for long loving a dreary woman. Yet I cannot stop. A dreary man is bad enough, but he would be endured because we endure every variety of man with so amazing a patience; but a dreary woman is unforgivable, hideous. Now am I not luminously reasonable? But only in theory. My practice lies right down on the ground, wet through by that icy fog that is freezing me into something I do not recognize. You do remember I was cheerful once? During the whole of your year with us I defy you to recollect a single day, a single hour of gloom. Well, that is really how I always am, and I can only suppose that I am going to be ill. There is no other way of accounting for the cold terror of life that sits crouching

on my heart.

XX

Dec. 3d.

Dearest,—You will be pleased to hear that I feel gayer to-night, so that I cannot, after all, be sickening for anything horrid. It is an ungrateful practice, letting oneself go to vague fears of the future when there is nothing wrong with the present. All these days during which I have been steeped in gloom and have been taking pains to put some of it into envelopes and send it to you were good days in themselves. Life went on here quite placidly. The weather was sweet with that touching, forlorn sweetness of beautiful worn-out things, of late autumn when winter is waiting round the corner, of leaves dropping slowly down through clear light, of the smell of oozy earth sending up faint whiffs of corruption. From my window I saw the hills every day at sunset, how wonderfully they dressed themselves in pink; and in the afternoons, in the free hour when dinner was done and coffee not yet thought of, I went down into the Paradies valley and sat on the coarse gray grass by the river, and watched the water slipping by beneath the osiers, the one hurried thing in an infinite tranquillity. I ought to have had a volume of Goethe under my arm and been happy. I ought to have read nice bits out of *Faust*, or about those extraordinary people in the *Elective Affinities*, and rejoiced in Goethe, and in the fine days, and in my good

fortune in being alive, and in having you to love. Well, it is over now, I hope,—I mean the gloom. These things must take their course, I suppose, and while they are doing it one must grope about as best one can by the flickering lantern-light of one's own affrighted spirit. My step-mother looked at me at least once on each of these miserable days, and said: 'Rose-Marie, you look very odd. I hope you are not going to have anything expensive. Measles are in Jena, and also the whooping-cough.'

'Which of them is the cheapest?' I inquired.

'Both are beyond our means,' said my step-mother severely.

And today at dinner she was quite relieved because I ate some *dicker Reis* after having turned from it with abhorrence for at least a week. Good-by, dearest.

Your almost cured

ROSE-MARIE.

XXI

Jena, Dec. 4th.

Your letter has come. You must do what you know is best. I agree to everything. You must do what your father has set his heart on, since quite clearly your heart is set on the same thing. All the careful words in the world cannot hide that from me. And they shall not. Do you think I dare not look death in the face? I am just a girl you kissed once behind a door, giving way before a passing gust of temptation. You cannot, shall not marry me as the price of that slight episode. You say you will if I insist. Insist? My dear Roger, with both hands I give you back any part of your freedom I may have had in my keeping. Reason, expediency, all the prudences are on your side. You depend entirely on your father; you cannot marry against his wishes; he has told you to marry Miss Cheriton; she is the daughter of his oldest friend; she is extremely rich; every good gift is hers; and I cannot compete. Compete? Do you suppose I would put out a finger to compete? I give it up. I bow myself out.

But let us be honest. Apart from anything to do with your father's commands, you have fallen into her toils as completely as you did into mine. My step-mother was right about your softness. Any woman who chose and had enough opportunity could make you think you loved her, make you kiss her. Luckily this one is

absolutely suitable. You say, in the course of the longest letter you have written me—it must have been a tiresome letter to have to write—that father or no father you will not be hurried, you will not marry for a long time, that the wound is too fresh, &c., &c. What is this talk of wounds? Nobody knows about me. I shall not be in your way. You need observe no period of mourning for a corpse people don't know is there. True, Miss Cheriton herself knows. Well, she will not tell; and if she does not mind, why should you? I am so sorry I have written you so many letters full of so many follies. Will you burn them? I would rather not have them back. But I enclose yours, as you may prefer to burn them yourself. I am so very sorry about everything. At least it has been short, and not dragged on growing thinner and thinner till it died of starvation. Once I wrote and begged you to tell me if you thought you had made a mistake about me, because I felt I could bear to know better then than later. And you wrote back and swore all sorts of things by heaven and earth, all sorts of convictions and unshakable things. Well, now you have another set of convictions, that's all. I am not going to beat the big drum of sentiment and make a wailful noise. Nothing is so dead as a dead infatuation. The more a person was infatuated the more he resents an attempt to galvanize the dull dead thing into life. I am wise, you see, to the end. And reasonable too, I hope. And brave. And brave, I tell you. Do you think I will be a coward, and cry out? I make you a present of everything; of the love and happy thoughts, of the pleasant dreams and plans, of the little prayers

sent up, and the blessings called down—there were a great many every day—of the kisses, and all the dear sweetness. Take it all. I want nothing from you in return. Remember it as a pleasant interlude, or fling it into a corner of your mind where used-up things grow dim with cobwebs. But do you suppose that having given you all this I am going to give you my soul as well? To moan my life away, my beautiful life? You are not worth it. You are not worth anything, hardly. You are quite invertebrate. My life shall be splendid in spite of you. You shall not cheat me of one single chance of heaven. Now good-by. Please burn this last one, too. I suppose no one who heard it would quite believe this story, would quite believe it possible for a man to go such lengths of—shall we call it unkindness? to a girl in a single month; but you and I know it is true.

ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

XXII

Jena, March 5th.

Dear Mr. Anstruther,—It was extremely kind of you to remember my birthday and to find time in the middle of all your work to send me your good wishes. I hope you are getting on well, and that you like what you are doing. Professor Martens seems to tell you all the Jena news. Yes, I was ill; but we had such a long winter that it was rather lucky to be out of it, tucked away comfortably in bed. There is still snow in the ditches and on the shady side of things. I escaped the bad weather as thoroughly as those persons do who go with infinite trouble during these months to Egypt.

Yours sincerely,

ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

My father and step-mother beg to be remembered to you.

XXIII

Jena, March 18th.

Dear Mr. Anstruther,—It is very kind indeed of you to want to know how I am and what was the matter with me. It wasn't anything very pleasant, but quite inoffensive æsthetically. I don't care to think about it much. I caught cold, and it got on to my lungs and stayed on them. Now it is over, and I may walk up and down the sunny side of the street for half an hour on fine days.

We all hope you are well, and that you like your work.

Yours sincerely,

ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

XXIV

Jena, March 25th.

Dear Mr. Anstruther,—You ask me to tell you more about my illness, but I am afraid I must refuse. I see no use in thinking of painful past things. They ought always to be forgotten as quickly as possible; if they are not, they have a trick of turning the present sour, and I cling to the present, to the one thing one really has, and like to make it as cheerful as possible—like to get, by industrious squeezing, every drop of honey out of it. Just now I cannot tell you how thankful I am simply to be alive with nothing in my body hurting. To be alive with a great many things in one's body hurting is a poor sort of amusement. It is not at all a game worth playing. People talk of sick persons clinging to life however sick they are, say they invariably do it, that they prefer it on any terms to dying; well, I was a sick person who did not cling at all. I did not want it. I was most willing to be done with it. But Death, though he used often to come up and look at me, and once at least sat beside me for quite a long while, went away again, and after a time left off bothering about me altogether; and here I am walking out in the sun every day, and listening with immense pleasure to the chaffinches.

Yours sincerely,

ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

XXV

Jena, March 31st.

Dear Mr. Anstruther,—Yes, of course I will be friends. And if I can be of any use in the way of admonishment, which seems to be my strong point, pray, as people say in books, command me. Naturally we are all much interested in you, and shall watch your career, I hope, with pleasure. I am sorry the Foreign Office bores you so much. Do you really have to spend your days gumming up envelopes? Not for that did you win all those scholarships and things at Eton and Oxford, and study Goethe and the minor German prophets so diligently here. You say it will go on for a year. Well, if that is your fate and you cannot escape it, gum away gayly, since gum you must. Later on when you are an ambassador and everybody is talking to you at once, you will look back on the envelope time as a blessed period when at least you were left alone. But I hope you have a nice wet sponge to do it with, and are not so lost to what is expedient as to be like a little girl I sat next to yesterday at a coffee party, who had smudged most of the cream that ought to have gone inside her outside her, and when I suggested a handkerchief said she didn't hold with handkerchiefs and never had one. 'But what does one do, then,' I asked, looking at her disgraceful little mouth, 'in a case like this? You can't borrow somebody else's—it wouldn't be being select.' 'Oh,' she

said airily, 'don't you know? You take your tongue.' And in a twinkling the thing was done. But please do not do that with the envelopes. My father and step-mother send you many kind messages. Yours sincerely,

ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

XXVI

Jena, April 9th.

Dear Mr. Anstruther,—No, I do not in the least mind your writing to me. Do, whenever you feel you want to talk to a friend. It is pleasant to be told that my letters remind you of so many nice things. I expect your year in Jena seems much more agreeable, now that you have had time to forget the uncomfortable parts of it, than it really was. But I don't think you would have been able to endure it if you had not been working so hard. I am sorry you do not like your father. You say so straight out, so I see no reason for round-aboutness. I expect he will be calmer when you are married. Why do you not gratify him, and have a short engagement? Yes, I do understand what you feel about the mercifulness of being often left alone, though I have never been worried in quite the same way as you seem to be; when I am driven it is to places like the kitchen, and your complaint is that you are driven to what most people would call enjoying yourself. Really I think my sort of driving is best. There is so much satisfaction about work, about any work. But just to amuse oneself, and to be, besides, in a perpetual hurry over it because there is so much of it and the day can't be made to stretch, must be a sorry business. I wonder why you do it. You say your father insists on your going everywhere with the Cheritons, and the

Cheritons will not miss a thing; but, after all isn't it rather weak to let yourself be led round by the nose if your nose doesn't like it? It is as though instead of a dog wagging its tail the tail should wag the dog. And all Nature surely would stand aghast before such an improper spectacle.

The wind is icy, and the snow patches are actually still here, but in the nearest garden I can get to I saw violets yesterday in flower, and crocuses and scillas, and one yellow pansy staring up at the sun astonished and reproachful because it had bits of frozen snow stuck to its little cheeks. Dear me, it is a wonderful feeling, this resurrection every year. Does one ever grow too old, I wonder, to thrill over it? I know the blackbirds are whistling in the orchards if I could only get to them, and my father says the larks have been out in the bare places for these last four weeks. On days like this, when one's immortality is racing along one's blood, how impossible it is to think of death as the end of everything. And as for being grudging and disagreeable, the thing's not to be done. Peevishness and an April morning? Why, even my step-mother opened her window today and stood for a long time in the sun watching how

proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything.

The first part of the month with us is generally bustling and busy, a great clatter and hustling while the shrieking winter is

got away out of sight over the hills, a sweeping of the world clear for the marsh-marigolds and daffodils, a diligent making of room for the divine calms of May. I always loved this first wild frolic of cold winds and catkins and hurriedly crimsoning pollards, of bleakness and promise, of roughness and sweetness—a blow on one cheek and a kiss on the other—before the spring has learned good manners, before it has left off being anything but a boisterous, naughty, charming *Backfisch*; but this year after having been ill so long it is more than love, it is passion. Only people who have been buried in beds for weeks getting used to listening for Death's step on the stairs, know what it is to go out into the stinging freshness of the young year and meet the first scilla, and hear a chaffinch calling out, and feel the sun burn red patches of life on their silly, sick white faces.

My parents send you kind remembrances. They were extremely interested to hear, through Professor Martens, of your engagement to Miss Cheriton. They both think it a most excellent thing.

Yours sincerely,
ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

XXVII

Jena, April 20th.

Dear Mr. Anstruther,—You tell me I do not answer your letters, but really I think I do quite often enough. I want to make the most of these weeks of idle getting strong again, and it is a sad waste of time writing. My step-mother has had such a dose of me sick and incapable, of doctor's bills and physic and beef-tea and night-lights, that she is prolonging the convalescent period quite beyond its just limits and will have me do nothing lest I should do too much. So I spend strange, glorious days, days strange and glorious to me, with nothing to do for anybody but myself and a clear conscience to do it with. The single sanction of my step-mother's approval has been enough to clear my conscience, from which you will see how illogically consciences can be cleared; for have I not always been sure she has no idea whatever of what is really good? Yet just her approval, a thing I know to be faulty and for ever in the wrong place, is sufficient to prop up my conscience and make it feel secure. How then, while I am busy reading Jane Austen and Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth—books foreordained from all time for the delight of persons getting well—shall I find time to write to you? And you must forgive me for a certain surprise that you should have time to write so much to me. What have I done to deserve these long letters? How many

Foreign Office envelopes do you leave ungummed to write them? *Es ist zu viel Ehre*. It is very good of you. No, I will not make phrases like that, for I know you do not do it for any reason whatever but because you happen to want to.

You are going through one of those tiresome soul-sicknesses that periodically overtake the too comfortable, and you must, apparently, tell somebody about it. Well, it is a form of *Weltschmerz*, and only afflicts the well-fed. Pray do not suppose that I am insinuating that food is of undue interest to you; but it is true that if you did not have several meals a day and all of them too nice, if there were doubts about their regular recurrence, if, briefly, you were a washerwoman or a plough-boy, you would not have things the matter with your soul. Washerwomen and ploughboys do not have sick souls. Probably you will say they have no souls to be sick; but they have, you know. I imagine their souls thin and threadbare, stunted by cold and hunger, poor and pitiful, but certainly there. And I don't know that it is not a nicer sort of soul to have inside one's plodding body than an unwieldy, overgrown thing, chiefly water and air and lightly changeable stuff, so unsubstantial that it flops—forgive the word, but it does flop—on to other souls in search of sympathy and support and comfort and all the rest of the things washer-women waste no time looking for, because they know they wouldn't find them.

You are a poet, and I do not take a youthful poet seriously; but if you were not I would laugh derisively at your comparing the entrance of my letters into your room at the Foreign Office to the

bringing in of a bunch of cottage flowers still fresh with dew. I don't know that my pride does not rather demand a comparison to a bunch of hot-house flowers—a bouquet it would become then, wouldn't it?—or my romantic sense to a bunch of field flowers, wild, graceful, easily wearied things, that would not care at all for Foreign Offices. But I expect cottage is really the word. My letters conjure up homely visions, and I am sure the bunch you see is a tight posy of

Sweet-Williams, with their homely cottage smell.

It was charming of Matthew Arnold to let Sweet-Williams have such a nice line, but I don't think they quite deserve it. They have a dear little name and a dear little smell, but the things themselves might have been manufactured in a Berlin furniture shop where upholstery in plush prevails, instead of made in that sweetest corner of heaven from whence all good flowers come.

Yours sincerely,

ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

XXVIII

Jena, April 26th.

Dear Mr. Anstruther,—You seem to be incurably doleful. You talk about how nice it must be to have a sister, a mother, some woman very closely related to whom you could talk. You astonish me; for have you not Miss Cheriton? Still, on reflection I think I do see that what you feel you want is more a solid bread-and-butter sort of relationship; no sentiment, genial good advice, a helping hand if not a guiding one—really a good thick slice of bread-and-butter as a set-off to a diet of constant cake. I can read between your lines with sufficient clearness; and as I always had a certain talent for stodginess I will waste no words but offer myself as the bread-and-butter. Somehow I think it might work out my soul's release from self-reproach and doubts if I can help you, as far as one creature can help another, over some of the more tiresome places of life. Exhortation, admonishment, encouragement, you shall have them all, if you like, by letter. In these my days of dignified leisure I have had room to think, and so have learned to look at things differently from the way I used to. Life is so short that there is hardly time for anything except to be, as St. Paul says—wasn't it St. Paul?—kind to one another. You are, I think, a most weak person. Anything more easily delighted in the first place or more quickly tired in the second

I never in my life saw. Does nothing satisfy you for more than a day or two? And the enthusiasm of you at the beginnings of things. And the depression, the despair of you once you have got used to them. I know you are clever, full of brains, intellectually all that can be desired, but what's the good of that when the rest of you is so weak? You are of a diseased fastidiousness. There's not a person you have praised to me whom you have not later on disliked. When you were here I used to wonder as I listened, but I did believe you. Now I know that the world cannot possibly contain so many offensive people, and that it is always so with you—violent heat, freezing cold. I cannot see you drown without holding out a hand. For you are young; you are, in the parts outside your strange, ill-disciplined emotions, most full of promise; and circumstances have knitted me into an unalterable friend. Perhaps I can help you to a greater steadfastness, a greater compactness of soul. But do not tell me too much. Do not put me in an inextricably difficult position. It would not of course be really inextricable, for I would extricate myself by the simple process of relapsing into silence. I say this because your letters have a growing tendency to pour out everything you happen to be feeling. That in itself is not a bad thing, but you must rightly choose your listener. Not every one should be allowed to listen. Certain things cannot be shouted out from the housetops. You forget that we hardly know each other, and that the well-mannered do not thrust their deeper feelings on a person who shrinks from them. I hope you understand that I am

willing to hear you talk about most things, and that you will need no further warning to keep off the few swampy places. And just think of all the things you can write to me about, all the masses of breathlessly interesting things in this breathlessly interesting world, without talking about people at all. Look round you this fine spring weather and tell me, for instance, what April is doing up your way, and whether as you go to your work through the park you have not seen heavy Saturn laughing and leaping—how that sonnet has got into my head—and do not every day thank God for having bothered to make you at all.

Yours sincerely,

ROSE-MARIE SCHMIDT.

XXIX

Jena, April 30th.

Dear Mr. Anstruther,—You know the little strip of balcony outside our sitting-room window, with its view over the trees of the Paradies valley to the beautiful hills across the river? Well, this morning is so fine, the sun is shining so warmly, that I had my coffee and roll there, and, now, wrapped up in rugs, am still there writing to you. I can't tell you how wonderful it is. The birds are drunk with joy. There are blackbirds, and thrushes, and chaffinches, and yellow-hammers, all shouting at once; and every now and then when the clamor has a gap in it I hear the whistle of the great tit, the dear small bird who is the very first to sing, bringing its pipe of hope to those early days in February when the world is at its blackest. Have you noticed how different one's morning coffee tastes out of doors from what it does in a room? And the roll and butter—oh, the roll and butter! So must rolls and butter have tasted in the youth of the world, when gods and mortals were gloriously mixed up together, and you went for walks on exquisite things like parsley and violets. If Thoreau—I know you don't like him, but that's only because you have read and believed Stevenson about him—could have seen the eager interest with which I ate my roll just now, he would, I am afraid, have been disgusted; for he severely says that it is not what you

eat but the spirit in which you eat it,—you are not, that is, to like it too much—that turns you into a glutton. It is, he says, neither the quality nor the quantity, but the devotion to sensual savors that makes your eating horrid. A puritan, he says, may go to his brown bread crust with as gross an appetite as ever an alderman to his turtle. Thus did I go, as grossly as the grossest alderman, this morning to my crust, and rejoiced in the sensual savor of it and was very glad. How nice it is, how pleasant, not to be with people you admire. Admiration, veneration, the best form of love—they are all more comfortably indulged in from a distance. There is too much whalebone about them at close quarters with their object, too much whalebone and not nearly enough slippers. I am glad Thoreau is dead. I love him far too much ever to want to see him; and how thankful I am he cannot see me.

It is my step-mother's birthday, and trusted friends have been streaming up our three flights of stairs since quite early to bring her hyacinths in pots and unhappy roses spiked on wires and make her congratulatory speeches. I hear them talking through the open window, and what they say, wafted out to me here in the sun, sounds like the pleasant droning of bees when one is only half awake. First there is the distant electric bell and the tempestuous whirl of Johanna down the passage. Then my step-mother emerges from the kitchen and meets the arriving friend with vociferous welcoming. Then the friend is led into the room here, talking in gasps as we all do on getting to the top of this house, and flinging cascades of good wishes for her *liebe Emilie*

on to the *liebe Emilie's* head. Then the hyacinths or the roses are presented:—'I have brought thee a small thing,' says the friend, presenting; and my step-mother, who has been aware of their presence the whole time, but, with careful decency, has avoided looking at them, starts, protests, and launches forth on to heaving billows of enthusiasm. She does not care for flowers, either in pots or on wires or in any other condition, so her gratitude is really most creditably done. Then they settle down in the corners of the sofa and talk about the things they really want to talk about—neighbors, food, servants, pastors, illnesses, Providence; beginning, since I was ill, with a perfunctory inquiry from the visitor as to the health of *die gute*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.