

Charlton House

Mowbray

Cape Town

23 July 1877



My dear Ernst,

A very long time has elapsed since your kind note of 15 January reached my sister's hands, but I must beg you to forgive our long silence, and to accept now our hearty thanks for it, and also for the delightful photographs of your dear little ones which it contained. They carried capitally and are a real pleasure to look at: your eldest little maiden must be already somewhat of a companion ^{to you both,} to judge by her sensible looks.

We think you will like a copy of my little Doris' photograph, which Loui kindly had taken for a Xmas present to me. It has been long waiting to go to you, but at first I hoped that Loui would be able to write herself, in answer to your letter, & when, after some months had

passed and work of every kind multiplied on her hands so that I saw there was no chance of her being able to fulfill her wish in this matter, I undertook to do so in her stead, it seemed to become impossible for me too, there being every week some business letter which must be written.

Thank you very much, dear Ernst, for your efforts on behalf of the Bushman work among your friends at the British Association; even tho' they had no immediate result, I am sure ~~your~~ influence will not have been exerted in vain. Thank you too for so kindly sending us a second copy of Dr Köhler's paper.

In case you have not already heard it thro' dear Theodor, or otherwise, I know how glad the good news of my Civil List pension, of one hundred pounds £. per annum, will make you. It is granted in consideration of our Wilhelm's "Literary labours and services", & this additional honour to his dear name and works makes it of double value, as you will well understand. This ultimately favorable result, after the long and disheartening delay,

is doubtless in a great measure to be ascribed to the kind exertions of Ernst de Bunsen who interested one of the Premier's Secretaries in my cause, and so brought its claims again under consideration; and through his further kindness in the matter the necessary formalities were gone thro' as quickly as possible, so as to get it signed before the Queen's birthday, which would cause it to include the whole of the twelve months previous to that date.

I hope now to be able to remain on here, ^{at least} until the children are old enough to bear transplanting to a Northern climate with greater safety. I had feared that it might be necessary on the score of economy to break up our home life here, & take them to bring up in Germany. But the separation from my sisters, & the loss of opportunities of furthering different branches of Wilhelm's work here; & quitting the home which he established here for us, & the scene of so much of his life & labors, ^{all this} would have come very hard to us all, and no words can adequately describe my thankfulness for the help with which has come to render it no longer necessary.

Grez Library matters continue in a very unsatisfactory condition, and of late

weeks especially, we have, I may say, been devoured by anxiety regarding them.

But we know that our good Governor, Sir Bartle Frere, takes a hearty interest in the Grez Library, & in the carrying on of philological research in connection with it; so, since we managed to see him a few days ago, & learnt that he intends taking the matter in hand as soon as the closing of Parliament (now in session) sets him more at liberty, we are somewhat easier regarding it.

But I am very anxious for the time to come at which Lucy may rightly retire from her daily work there, for her health has suffered much of late, partly from being obliged to go to town daily in all weathers, but most of all from the constant worry of all the work at home which she ought, but is not able, to perform.

You will have some slight idea of what there is to contend with in the ignorance of people here, when I tell you that at the last meeting of the Committee of the Public Library (in whose hands unfortunately the management of things regarding the Grez Library practically rests), it was proposed to give my sister Lucy a month's notice, and put it into the charge of a mere ordinary ^{uneducated} clerk (not even a Greek-Latin scholar, to say nothing of a philologist.). They are obliged just now to

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to satisfy the outcry for a new catalogue of the Public Library (which contains at once the elements of a good library of reference and ^{also} those of a common circulating library) and we conclude that they find the money now paid to my sister (£125. per a.) would come in very usefully to pay for the services of an extra clerk to help them in this business; & they would probably think he could have nominal charge of the Grey Library at the same time. And, of course, as to whether it is really taken care of at all, they do not care a straw.

With a great many unpublished manuscripts of dear Wilhelm's there, (sketches of grammars, vocabularies, &c., &c., &c.), of which we have no copies, besides valuable M.S.s. of Livingstone's & many others, not as yet worked out (to say nothing of its other countless philological treasures) - with a wide-spread correspondence to be kept up with missionaries & other workers in native languages in different parts of the world - with valuable accessions coming

in at the rate of fifty per annum, as one of the consequences fruits of this correspondence - you can understand that the safety of the Grey Library & the appointment of another scholar as its Curator are things that we must fight for, ^{even} till the ^{very} last.

But you can also understand what a very difficult fight it is for women to carry on. And how one grudges the precious time and strength which are taken up by a struggle, for which, if the proper authorities would but do their obvious duty, there would be no cause whatever.

But, to turn to a pleasanter subject. I wish you could see our little Wilhelmine, and how like she is to her dear father. She is now twenty-one months old, has finished getting her early set of teeth, can trot about nicely, and is beginning to talk with a good deal of cleverness. I mean the way in which she puts ideas and words together. My dear eldest sister, who has devoted herself to this little one since the nurse left about fifteen

which we found it unless there had been something in it which he still wanted to say to you, and so I send it.

It was with much sorrow that we read in a late letter from Lippstadt of the terrible loss which has befallen your poor brother; and we grieve too at the thought of what it must also have been to your dear Mother, & to Fante Bertha who used to fill a mother's place to your younger nephews & nieces.

We are getting very anxious to hear from South America of dear Anna's safety. Somehow, when people seem so very happily married, one feels frightened, as if it was too good a state of things to last in this troublous life of ours.

But I must not make this letter still longer; already I feel half ashamed of taking up your greatly occupied time by so many pages. With our united kind regards, and my best greeting to your wife, & to dear Fante Lotte if she is with you,

Believe me to remain,
my dear Ernst, most sincerely yours,
Femina C. Bleek.

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months ago, thinks, naturally enough, that there never was baby so perfect; but, without going to this length, I think you would be struck by the peculiar kind of refined intelligence which the little creature possesses, and also by her acute perception of varieties of sound.

It is very pretty to see her delight when occasionally she is allowed to play (in her way) on our old but still pleasant-sounding piano.

Sometimes she will lay her little head down on the keys most carefully, and kiss them, & seem too full of shy delight at having ^{got within} reach of the desired good, to attempt to use her privilege. And, when she does play in her baby way it is something ^{very} different from the usual result of ~~such~~ such strumming.

Her three little, & one big, sisters seem to find her increasingly precious; indeed she makes ~~the~~ a large part of our home sunshine.

A bad kind of scarletina has been very prevalent in Cape Town & the adjacent villages (of which Mowbray is one) during the past summer. The number of little children whom it has destroyed ^{it} is sad to think of. You can understand with what diligence we have kept my little ones as far as possible out of the way

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of infection; indeed, we have kept up a kind of quarantine for a long time past. I so especially feared Baby's catching it while teething, and, besides this, none of the children seem to have strength to fight successfully with such a malady. Please God it is nearly over now; but it is with a trembling heart that I rejoice over my thus far spared treasures.

People are so dreadfully ignorant here about such things, & therefore act recklessly about the spread of these kind of diseases; so it has often been difficult work.

We think, dear Ernst, that you will care to have the enclosed unfinished letter of dear Wilhelm's, which was lying inside your last letter to him (or rather the last one which he received from you, I think, - your very last one only reached my hands after his death), in his box of unanswered letters. I do not know but what he may have written to you at a later date than that which this letter bears, - sometimes when mail day drew near he could perhaps not find a partly written letter wh he wished to finish, and so would write an entirely new one - but I think it would not have been in the place in which

which we found it unless there had been something in it which he still wanted to say to you, and so I send it.

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