

Berlin Febr. 1<sup>st</sup> 04.

AL 3820

My dear Nelly

Thank you very cordially,  
indeed for your letter and the parcel, which  
arrived about a week ago! I am on the  
whole charmed with the <sup>Sargent's</sup> portrait, though  
I can quite understand that there may be  
something strange in it to people who are  
accustomed to see you in your every-day  
appearance and manner. The attitude does  
not seem quite natural, especially the way  
in which the hands are placed, and then your  
hair and dress are so different to what I  
remember them — but the features are quite  
your own, especially the brow, eyes and nose  
and it is decidedly a very fine picture, that  
puts us at once in mind of Miss Wastinears

Sargent's picture of Nelly

saying, that you really ought to be a beauty.  
The painter has realized that truth and brought  
it out without altering anything essential  
to your individuality, except that there is a  
little "pose" certainly not amiss in a state-  
picture. I am decidedly very glad to  
have such a handsome and ornamental  
portrait of you in my reception-room!

Thank you also very kindly for remembering  
my predilection for English pens and pins,  
and the pretty little miniature-editions of  
poetry, for which my sisters too beg to receive  
their thanks.

Apart from the real pleasure your letters  
and parcels gave me, I was much relieved  
to hear none but good news, for your long  
silence, and at the time of Xmas and New-

year, when you used always to send at least  
a card, made me feel uneasy about you.  
This last year has been so full of losses in  
the circle of our relations and friends, that  
one begins to feel nervous about the remaining  
ones. Fortunately you belong to the number  
of the young set<sup>ly</sup> relatively to me, and to  
the prosperous workers of this generation!

About a fortnight ago I received the news  
of the death of Dr. Debrauler, who died  
quite suddenly and gently of a "Keg-Schlag".  
He had been seriously ill of bronchitis  
some time before Xmas, but had written  
to me since then, telling me of his recovery.  
I lose a very dear and faithful friend in  
him, one of those one never forgets and  
misses all the rest of one's life. This is a  
comfort to think, that of late I never missed

a chance to go and see him. During the last  
four years I have paid him a visit every  
summer in the charming little villa he built  
himself at Cranbury. There are two daughters,  
unmarried, who will feel very lonely now.  
I think I shall go to see them in the course  
of this summer, if my plans are not all  
turned topsy-turvy. There will be a change  
in the arrangement of our holidays at the gym,  
owing to the inconvenience of our former  
plan differing from the university-vacations.  
According to the new plan I shall have to  
stay on here till the end of July and then be  
at liberty till about the middle of September.  
You see this fits in better with your own  
holiday-time, so it's doubly a pity that  
we cannot make it answer for a meeting in

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Switzerland this year. If I can at all manage it, I mean to go to the Alps in Savoy with my sister Ellen, but it depends entirely on the possibility of her leaving Brunhensen in the charge of responsible persons for about a month. She prefers generally to go some-where by herself, to see relations or friends. I do not know whether I told you that she has of late taken up jewellery and is very successful at it. She made several sets of very pretty brooches and clasps for the Artists' Fair at Xmas and has now sent a series of them over to St. Louis exhibiting. This kind of work pleases her better than anything she did before.

My sister Ellen has been staying with us since Xmas, as usual, and alas, her visit is coming to an end at the beginning of March.

She will join her at Bayreuth in the beginning of May and I hope to spend a couple of weeks here at Whitsun-tide.

I know the great International Women's Congress will be held at Berlin and I am already chartered for a guest, English or American. On the whole I am not exactly an enthusiast for the Women's Rights Movement, especially not for the indiscreet manner in which the leading party is flourishing it about over here, but of course I must ex officio take a modest part in it.

I really think we get the counter-shock of some of your movements over here about 10 or 20 years later - so it has

been recently with the little operette, *Patience*, which I remember as one of the London events in the eighties of the last century. One of our leading society-women, Frau Ellen von Siemens, the daughter of Helmholz, has taken it up and had it performed by a very select set (she herself taking one of the principal parts) at Trull's. The translation had been very skilfully adapted to the present aesthetic situation in Germany, the costumes were exquisite, and the performance altogether first-rate, dancing as well as singing. Of course the receipt was for a charitable purpose and the prices exorbitant, but we saw the general rehearsal and a repetition for which she had sent us tickets. Their Majesties disappointed her in not coming to the performance, but they sent the

crown-prince, who is beginning to play his part in society by this time.

I think I have told you all my news now, dear Nelly. There is nothing novel either at the Lyceum or in my general way of life. Most of my Berlin friends being either dead or in mourning for members of their family, or away in Italy, I hardly go into society, but we have been to the theatre and concerts several times.

My sisters beg to be kindly remembered to you and I request the same of you with regard to yours. Good-bye then, till we meet again sometime and somewhere.

Yours affably

Alex von Coburg

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