

Breslau, May 2, 1918.

I have been reading *Candide*⁴⁷ and Countess Alfeld's *Memoirs*, and have enjoyed them both immensely. *Candide* is in such a beautiful edition that I had not the heart to cut the leaves, but read it just as it was. Since it was only uncut at the top, I managed all right. This spiteful collection of all the miseries of mankind would probably before the war have seemed to me nothing but caricature, to-day, however, it has produced quite a realistic impression. . . . And now at length, I know the source of a phrase I have myself used occasionally: *Mais il faut cultiver notre jardin*⁴⁹. Countess Alfeld's book is an interesting picture of a phase of civilization and supplements Grimmelhausen's⁵⁰ message. . . . What are you doing? Aren't you enjoying this glorious spring weather?

Always your
Rosa

Breslau, May 12, 1918.

Sonichka,

Your little note gave me so much pleasure that I must answer it at once. You see what enjoyment you got out of your visit to the Botanical Gardens, and how enthusiastic you are about it. Why don't you go there oftener? I assure you that it means a great deal to me when you promptly record your impressions with such warmth and color. Yes, I know those wonderful crimson flowers of the spruce-fir. They are so incredibly beautiful (as, indeed, are most other trees when in bloom) that one can hardly believe one's eyes. There are the female flowers, out of which the great cones grow, to hang point downwards when their weight increases, beside them are the far less conspicuous pale-yellow male flowers of the spruce, the ones that furnish the golden pollen.—I don't know the "pettoria." You write that it is a kind of acacia. Do you mean that it has pinnate leaves, and has blossoms like those of the sweet pea, thus resembling the pseudo-acacia? I suppose you know that the tree commonly spoken of as the acacia is really a "robinia." The true acacia is a mimosa; it has sulphur-yellow flowers with an intoxicating perfume; but I don't think it would grow

in Berlin in the open, for it is a sub-tropical plant. When I was in Corsica, at Ajaccio in December I saw splendid mimosas, huge trees, blooming in the great square. . . . Here, unfortunately, I can only watch the crests of the trees that show over the top of the wall a long way off. I see them turning green, and try to guess their species from the tint and general shape. The other day some one brought a fallen branch into the house. Its strange aspect attracted much attention, and everyone wanted to know what it could be. It was an elm! Do you remember how in my own street in the South End I showed you an elm laden with fragrant pinkish-green clusters? This was in May, too, and you were delighted with the wonderful sight. Here people live for years and decades in a street planted with elms without ever "noticing" what an elm tree looks like when it is in flower. They are just as unobservant as regards animals. Most townfolk are really barbarians.

For my part, however, my interest in organic nature is almost morbid in its intensity. A pair of crested larks here have one young bird—no doubt the other three have come to a bad end. This little one can already run. You may have noticed the quaint way in which crested larks run. They trip along with short, hasty steps, not like the sparrow which hops on both feet. This young lark can fly quite well by now, but is not yet able to find its own food (insects, grubs, etc.) at any rate while the weather is still so cold. Every evening in the court beneath my window, it utters its sharp, plaintive pipe. The old birds promptly put in an appearance, answering with a soft and anxious "hweet, hweet," and they bustle about to hunt up some food in the chill evening twilight. As soon as they find anything, it is stuffed down the throat of the clamorous youngster. This happens evening after evening at about half past eight, and when I hear the shrill note of the fledgling and watch the eager solicitude of the parent birds I have quite a pang. I can do nothing to help, for these crested larks are timid. If I throw out crumbs they only fly away, being very different from the pigeons and the sparrows, which follow me about like dogs. It is no use for me to tell myself not to be silly, seeing that I am not responsible for all the hungry little larks in the world, and that I cannot shed tears over all the thrashed