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5 G.R. S.W.1.

Wednesday

17/1/18

My Dear Mr Becker,

You call our correspondence "Sprechende Pausen" and to me it seems somewhat like a joint composition resembling in construction the 2nd B me: Nocturne of Chopin, which I have been told is meant for a lovers' interview with constant interruptions. We must only hope that its end will not be of a like tragic and dramatic nature, say an air-raid with the total disappearance of no 5 Grosvenor Road. We have been spared these for so long that one begins to get callous,

but I feel sure that, now that at last the Prussian plans show signs of going wrong, considerable outbreaks of final spite will be vented on this wretched city.

I went to a gathering at Miss Crompton's some weeks ago and was pleased to see her in such blooming health in spite of London and food-ministries. She gave me a short history of your vicissitudes and I felt it was really bad luck having to be turned out of your happy home at Urbisla owing to the fire. But I hope you are well over your illness by now and none the worse for the change. We go calmly on at the war office and have not even been summoned to medical examination.

Miss often goes out to after-lunch coffee with me and I am still wondering how it is that men of great brain-capacity so often prefer the company of their inferiors - intellectually - to that of their equals. Is it the attraction of opposites or a wish for the ever pleasant sense of superiority or an avoidance of the fatigue of holding one's own? Whatever the reason, the fact remains and is certainly a pleasant one for the inferiors. A nice girl in Vienna once told me that she and her friends could not make out whether I was very clever or thoroughly mediocre and stupid and I think, smiling as I do so, that foreigners are often puzzled by Englishmen

in this way. Do we as a nation
present an appearance of far greater
stupidity than is really the case,
or do we manage to cover up
helpless ignorance and lamentable in-
-capacity by an outward manner of
treating with great contempt anything
but - shall we say athletics
and horse-racing? I hope the
former, but anyhow I am convinced
that, however stupid we may be,
the Prussians are a hundred times
more so. As you know the one
thing that lands one in trouble in
Germany is to call a "Beamer"
"Dumm", the reason being that
they secretly fear they are so.
I still look back with satisfaction
to a scene in the custom-house
at Bentheim, when I was going
straight through to Austria and

had an altercation over 2 halfpound
baskets of tea. I had to pay but
got my own back in conversation
with myself and left the superior
officials with cheeks flushed with
anger.

But I'm afraid, if these
things happen often, that it's no
wonder they're like us.

I have latterly been playing easy
scores and ^{have} found very great
pleasure in it, especially over the
wind-section in E♭ of Beethoven.

How really charming these apparently
quite simple pieces are! I wish
somebody would invent a method
of teaching harmony only ~~from~~ ^{with}
such pieces and without the use
of any manual, but I dare say
it has been tried and has failed.
The aforesaid score reading has left

me more convinced than ever that
the finale of the Pastoral Symphony
is a triumph of expressing what you
want to and the first movement
comes very near it, but I find
few musicians who agree with me.
Eddy has been in France for some
months, but says there is so little
to do that it is boring. His
wife has become an R.C., which
I think means a real break-up
of the home.

I am sending this to your niece,
as she said you might be moving
about for some months. I have
bought Grove, which she long
meant to possess.

Yours very affectly,
Herbert Swainson

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