

Kaaden, 15. December 1864

My dear brother Jacob:

Peter Prinzl's arrival in Kaaden, accompanied by his wife, created considerable sensation at our house, as you may imagine. By "our house" I include our beloved mother, who incidentally, moved in with me several weeks ago in Kaaden, where I am living as [military] captain on a pension; also all the siblings, wives, and in-laws. We were highly pleased and re-assured by the news which Prinzl brought about you and Ferdinand. If you, dear Jakob, had any idea how much pain and worry your silence over the years has caused our good mother and us all, you surely would have spared us that anxiety. Now, with Prinzl's arrival, we are, thank God, relieved of our worst concerns. At least we know that you are both alive, that our hearts need not be torn apart without hope for two such dearly beloved relatives, lost in foreign lands, among alien people. Now we all hope, and I plead with you, to favor us with news at an early date about your and Ferdinand's condition, and to satisfy the doubly reawakened longing for a direct report about your existence.

I want to give as true as possible a picture of our family circle as well as conditions in general. Our good mother, as already mentioned, has been with us in Kaaden for the last several weeks. Despite her advanced age, she is physically as well as mentally in the best of health. Brother Carl was promoted a few years ago to . . . .? administrator along with a transfer from Joachimstal [in Bohemia] to Kitzbühl in Tyrol. I believe, even though he always talks in his letters about the increasing cost of living, and being aware of his worries about his numerous family, he is doing on the whole fairly well. His wife Marie is living and, according to her last received portrait, is a fat and happy mother of 2 sons and 6 daughters. The oldest son Otto is studying currently at the Montan (?) Academy in Pribram (?). Sister Julie has been a widow for 4 years, the two eldest already grown up. Marie, the eldest, is doing quite well as chambermaid for two elderly ladies of high nobility in Gratz in Steyermark. Julie herself, with her other three daughters, lives on her property in Oberleidensdorf. The inn she owns is rented out and she is quite well except for the worry about her growing-up daughters.

Kajetan has a . . . .? position at the military headquarters in Prague and, incidentally, advanced to *Rittmeister* (= captain in the cavalry) 1 1/2 years ago. His wife Cuzi (?) is fine, enjoys life, as is the family which consists of three healthy and handsome boys as well as a daughter.

Now to myself and my well-nourished better half Emilie. For the past year I have been retired as captain, living childless, but not dissatisfied with my situation, here in Kaaden. My mother-in-law Müller lives here as well, with her unmarried youngest daughter Resi also my brother-in-law Norbert with his good wife Sophie and two well-behaved children.

Kaaden itself, along with its population, is, as it has been, the old backwater town. Were it not for the pleasant and attractive natural environment, I would have quite seriously considered making a change on several occasions. The fact remains that this is a place in the monarchy, where the pulse of life beats uncommonly sluggish.

The decay of the old Europe over-all is something you will be able to observe from over there as well as we do here; though perhaps not specifically regarding conditions in our poor, dear Austria, or in Germany. The former struggling with . . . ? strength, but perhaps unsuccessfully, for the preservation of its existence after an unfortunate war (*with Prussia, defeated in the battle of Königgrätz*)\*, torn apart internally and powerless externally. The other reaching the point (*I am guessing at this*) of possibly `tearing itself apart through the ambition of its most powerful component [Prussia]. It is strange, how on your continent as well, the mania for dismemberment is pursued with such tenacity, and with such lowly motives. Well, eventually, it will turn into something better, even though we may not live to see the betterment. Prinzl's information about your conditions are not very comforting; in fact, he describes them as rather chaotic. One gains only a dim picture of circumstances there in general, and of your personal existence as well.

He attends the . . . ? architectural institute which was established here two years ago; he does not socialize much - one might call him shy. If the mother had not contacted him after his arrival and I had not invited him to a hunt in Bachel (?), we might still be waiting for his reports. Also, his father with whom I have not been on friendly terms for some time, might have held him back from visiting me. His conduct in general has impressed everyone with whom he came in contact, as strange; he lost his former openness. On the other hand, his wife is well liked by everyone who met her, according to my authentic source sister-in-law Rest.

Of the Schwarzenfelds, only Ludwig lives here in Kaaden, with his wife and 5 children. (*the next part seems garbled; I am guessing at it*) Joseph and Peter, who are quite finished with their assets, live, the former near, the other in Brünn. Ludwig is a fine fellow (braver Kerl?), he manages Würgnitz on a lease basis, lives very economically and is getting along fairly well. He sends you his best greetings and asks you to send him the portrait of his father which is in your possession. I hope you will not deny him that request, especially inasmuch as, so he tells me, that picture is the only one of the deceased which turned out well.

And now it remains only, in addition to my sincere regards, to ask whether and under what eventualities you may after all have possible intentions the bring the thought of seeing each other again which is in all our minds, into reality. Press the good Ferdinand, in place of us all, to your faithful brother-heart. Tell him that we all, with greatest affection, think of him every hour. Be sure to gladden us soon with news of you. With that plea I remain forever your faithful brother Ludwig

\*My error. Königgrätz (or Sadowa) was 1866. The 1864 war referred, presumably, to a joint venture with Prussia against Denmark.