

Letter written by Alfred Rix Habershon to his mother Mary Gidley Habershon, Parkfield Rd, Rotherham, Yorks

Betchen

Wednesday 20 July 1898

Dear Mother,

I'm not going to write in ink, it goes right through the paper. It is wretched stuff this foreign paper. I forgot to tell you that at Titisee it rained in the morning so we decided not to go up the Feldberg but went on to Schuchsee instead, the weather however cleared up and we were sorry we had not risked it. You wish to know how I am "as to health"; well I may state that to the best of my knowledge I am all right "as to health". You also want to know "how I stand walking", do you? Well, on "me feet". Again one does not walk sitting down, one e'en walks standing or stands walking (Axiom 13.) You again ask whether I am enjoying the tripe as much as I expected – I mean trip. I cannot say since I never "expect", it is a bad plan to "expect". I may say however that I am enjoying it immensely, a énormément. Is that right? I know the second accent is. I learnt that when I was "quite a boy". I believe you said I must not refer to – oh I forgot I mustn't say anything about it. Where "it" = $\frac{2n+1}{1r}$ or rather wEb, or again the number of permutations

$\frac{1r}{1r}$

of 40 things (I think you said) taken all at a time. You say "they" would see "it" mentioned? Might I ask who "they" or "are" is? Mrs Timothy "thinks my photos are very good" does she? The utter cheek of the animal! Uncle Joe once sent in twelve photos for a competition and they called them "very fair prints". Quel horreur! (or is it "quelle horreur", I'm afraid my French is rapidly disappearing). I have been making these remarks to prove that I do "read your letters after all". Or as Euclid says in those books, which Mrs Euclid did not burn, or did Mrs Euclid rescue them from burning? I forget. Or if she did she made a great mistake – therefore it has been proved that the present scribe peruses the letters of his severed maternal parent. Q.E.D. I will now relapse into my ordinary style, i.e. plain narration of fact, which you say you find so interesting though I do not believe it; I beg your pardon – which it taxes all my credulity to believe.

By Tuesday morning we left Vorden Todtmoos pour promener a Schonau – comprong – tu? Le sentier a premier était a travers un foret. Après ça nous avons descendu dans le Wiesentahl a Marnbach "then" nous avons "ascendu" – never heard that word before – le Wiesenthal a Schonau. Es war sehr heiss et nous avons perspire très librement. En arrivant à Schonau un tonnerre ovrage began – quel français superbe! We went to the Sonne Hotel. This jargon is too great a mental strain. I must put the stopper on. It rained a great part of the evening, and this morning the clouds were quite low down in the valley; after breakfast however the clouds cleared slightly and we thought we would risk the Belchen mountain, worse luck. We're on the top now. In an inn. Fog all round. Like pea soup. What(?) with spoon. I say again we risked the Belchen. Half way up the mist closed

round us. 51/100 way up it began to rain. We were going through pines at the time so at first we did not get very wet. Nearing the summit however we left the forest and had to proceed over open ground. Raining fast. Thick fog. High wind. In time we reached the summit and after changing our stockings – at the inn, you know, the Belchenhaus – we had lunch – soup, bread and butter and coffee. Real coffee, ye ken. Not English stuff. Real coffee, I repeat. This bed is all right. After lunch I am writing to you. At the other end of the table are three disgusting Germans, drinking brandy, playing cards, half drunk and making a fearful row. Thanks very much for your letter and also for the newspaper. Will you write to: Konigswinter, Germany? Not later than the 24th, please send a newspaper. We have been very lucky as regards weather so far, I hope it's not going to change. It looks very bad at present. This last week we have been simply scorched. You need not be anxious about our doing too much for we are taking it very easily. I find it impossible to write in ink on this paper, I hope you will be able to read this scrawl. If you can't you will not have lost much. Goodbye. Much love to everyone. You did not tell me what the breakage was at the works.

Your loving son,

Alfred