

Personal letter

February 12, 1925

Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Germany
Parisstr. 4
bei Nonnella

My dear Margaret:

I have not written for weeks for a number of very disturbing reasons; first, I have left my husband and am living alone, and am under an agreement with him to live so for six months and then to give my answer as to whether or not I wish to continue our marriage. We have already lived apart for two months. So I have four more months. Secondly, I have had to find a room and this, together with the moving, took much time. Thirdly, I have had very much work to do. Fourthly, I have been so deeply disturbed, spiritually, from things arising in my treatment that I have not wanted to write. Fifthly, I have been carrying on correspondence with the chief factory here about the pessaries you want and have been waiting for a reply. I am enclosing in this letter a ~~regular~~ letter concerning the pessaries.

Furthermore, I have tried to get an American passport and have once more failed magnificently. They tell me that it will require for from two to three months before I even receive a reply, and then they are not certain.

Your letter of January 6th was very dear. I thank you for your friendship, for your understanding, and for your help to me. You ask me to return. I would do this immediately were it not for my health. I have but two to four months more in my analysis until I have finished it completely, and just now I am in a most critical period of it and I fear that it would harm me if I stopped. There are many external things which prevent me from returning as you request, but all of them I would kick in the eye were it not for my treatment. I can not get a passport; I am under contract with Berlin University to finish a teaching course in English which I have carried for three months already. And my husband, who is a nervous wreck, has agreed to my living apart, but he stands before me periodically, black with pain, and tells me that if I leave here he will kill himself. His attitude has nearly broken my life. I have given him my pledge that I shall remain for six months, upon the condition that he enter the psycho-analysis and through it get over his dependence upon me. It is not a joke for me to have to carry my own spiritual burdens and then to have to carry his also. He has now entered psycho-analysis and I expect him to get over his attitude. But he feels most deeply my desertion because, as he says, he is an older man and he can not start his life over again. He says he prefers death. When your letter came asking me to return to America for a few months, we had a right discussion which lasted for many, many hours. He told me that if I returned he would kill himself because he could not stand alone. I have told him what a sick attitude he has. But I can not take the chance in case that what he

threatens to do he would carry out. Were he an ordinary man, I would go anyway and let him do as he wishes. But I feel some national responsibility in this matter, in so far as India is concerned. For, were he to carry out his threat, my life in the Indian movement would be forever ruined. You may think this foolishness on my part. But I am sorry that I feel bound hand and foot. Even so, sometimes my own suffering has been so great that I have known that were I only through with my own treatment, I would desert everything here high and dry and return to America. Sometimes in the middle of the night I fear to be alone for fear that I shall kill myself. There have been long periods when I have been so afraid of myself, so insecure, so deeply convinced that life is not worth living that I have written the necessary letters arranging my affairs in case I should go insane in the night and kill myself. Then the periods pass and I destroy the letters. Then they come again. I can not tell you what suffering these days entail.

I have received another one hundred dollars from you for December and January. I wonder how much money you have sent me now. In connection with this I have a request to make now.

I have borrowed altogether ~~ninety~~ nine hundred dollars from the Personal Fund in New York in order to pay my debts here, including my doctor. On your money I have lived personally. My ~~total~~ nine hundred dollars are at an end and I am under pledge to start repaying my debt at the rate of fifty dollars a month beginning from March 1st--that is, in fifteen days. If I do not start then, I am under pledge to return to America and repay it from there. Now it is impossible for me to return to America without a passport and under my present conditions. It will be at least two months before I get a pass. In the meantime I am not making fifty dollars over and above my living. I believe, from what I remember--although I have not kept account--that you are to send me another fifty or one hundred dollars. I do not know. I request you to send this to the Personal service fund instead of to me and give me another month or two to increase my income sufficiently to enable me to repay the debt. Can you send fifty dollars ~~taxing~~ on March 1st, to the following address:

part of the money for the fund

Mrs. Anna E. Davis,
22 260 West 11th Street,
New York City.

Please look up your accounts and see how much money you have agreed to send me and how much you have already sent me. In moving and in my disorder I have misplaced everything and can not find my accounts. If you are to send me one hundred dollars instead of fifty more, will you send that fifty to Mrs. Davis on March 1st and the other fifty on April 1st. This will give me until June to start my regular payments, or be in a position to return to America.

In making this arrangements I have spoken with my physician. She has agreed, if I can make this arrangement with you, that she will finish my treatment for nothing--taking no payment whatever, because she says she believes that before long my life will be on an entirely new basis, I will be healthy. And she is thoroughly convinced that I have the capacity for making a lot of my life. She says that if you will take care of my debt, there the coming and perhaps the next month, she will cancel her charges here and I shall not have to pay her the money I would otherwise.

I must ask you to cable me if you can not do this. I

do not know how my account stands with you. If I do not receive a cablegram from you within eleven days from today, I shall know that you are going to pay the money there on March 1st. If you cannot do it, cable me and I shall try to borrow money in England for two months. To save money, use the cable address of my husband's bureau

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You do not have to put my name on the cablegram, for I shall know what it is. Yet tell me that you can not pay the money if you can not.

You can undoubtedly understand how I am tied into a knot here with all this.

I should like to attend the International Conference. I wonder if anyone from India is coming. Have you heard from Mrs. Naidu? She has not told us if she is going or not. I have done considerable work here among the Indian physicians who are being trained and some of whom have returned to India. The Birth Control movement has become fairly strong in India during the past year. But you know that, undoubtedly. In all your dealings with India I hope that you keep as much in touch with physicians as possible, for India is very reactionary on these lines and if such men as the so-called "Prof" Gopalji take come to represent the movement, it will not help much.

I am working here and making my living. I receive absolutely no help from my husband, nor will I. Now that I live alone I am writing all day long and within a month or two know that I shall have a fairly large income. I see that I can write. This month--on the 19th and on the 20th, I am lecturing before two different associations: on the 19th I am lecturing before Berlin University on "India in World Politics". On the 20th I am lecturing before the Association of German Women Physicians on Indian women, and in which I am discussing health, the population question, *customs & habits*, the birth control movement, etc., etc. It is a lecture only for physicians and so I am able to speak very frankly on these subjects. I am lecturing in German, if you please, and have had to learn my lecture almost by heart. I am in close contact with German women physicians, and the President of the Association of German Women Physicians is a friend of mine. This woman has a regular little birth control clinic of her own. She is a well known woman's physician. She is Dr. Edenhuizen whose name I gave you. I am sorry she can not come to the International Conference, for she is an important woman in her profession.

By next year I hope to have repaid all my debts--for I am convinced that I am going to make money--and then I hope to go to India for good and all and work there. I am going to do everything to get there.

It will interest you to hear something of my University classes: I teach a class of young men and women University students

for two hours every Monday. We have to study conditions in England and America, and we have to study these conditions in the form of debate. This has given me great scope. We have branched out also to the British Empire. Some of our debates have included the following:

- Co-education.
- Should the individual be subject to authority?
- The American woman--her social tendencies
- The population question, with reference to colonisation.
- The Colour and Racial Conflict and their solution.
- Social Movements in England and America

etc. etc.

I tell you these because I want you to know what books we have used for reference in some of the courses. In the debate on the American Woman--her social tendencies; in the last four debates, in fact, we have, among others, used your two volumes, "The New Motherhood" and "The Pivot of Civilisation". Dr. Drysdale's book "The Small Family System", and your magazine, "The Birth Control Review". I have in my class a number of women teachers from the high schools of Berlin who are in this way learning English. They are, therefore, older women, and very responsible. I have to give references to each student and he must read and prepare for a week in advance and then come and defend his viewpoint. So I have given these older women--especially the liberal minded ones--your books and your magazine for reference. We have had some of the liveliest debates you can ever see, and because of them I have come into conflict with the Director of the English Seminar of the University (where I teach); the Director is a Catholic. First of all when I started teaching he told me I had full scope in choosing my subjects for study. I took advantage of this fact. Then in a conference with me he asked me what my class has been studying, and I gave him the outline and the books we have been using. He said: "Why, there is no debate possible on these subjects". Now of course I asked why. He then informed me because on such subjects there can only be one solution. On the color question, for example, he says that there is only one solution: the white world must breed more rapidly and be overrun by the colored world. But I told him we had managed to scrape up fairly interesting debates on these subjects despite the fact that he thinks there is only one viewpoint. I am now putting my own throat in the University, because I have not been to him again for a conference--which I am supposed to do--but I have headed straight ahead and taken all the subjects possible. I know I shall last only until the end of my course anyway, and so I may as well do as much damage as possible while I am at it. But I have never known such interesting debates. There are other classes in session also, of the same nature, but my students bring visitors from these classes to attend our lessons, because we have such vital fights. I have one woman teacher from a girls' high school who is a regular Kitty Marion. She has been in England and speaks the best English of all. And she can't be shut up. She has read all your books, and with banners flying, she stands, short and heavy before the class, and fires away. At first when we first touched the question of birth control there was much embarrassment and they laughed at her. But she stopped and looked at the class and asked:

"Now, what are you laughing at?" And everybody shut up.

Well, I'll shut up for I have more to write re. Pleasures, etc. Agnes