

The Complete Letters of
SIGMUND FREUD

— to —

WILHELM FLIESS

1887 – 1904

Translated and Edited by
Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson



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to me by Anna Freud—namely, that Freud, with his theory of the neuroses, had believed himself privileged and happy as a bride. Those days were now over and he had to return to his earlier ordinary status; he had made no discovery. *Kalle* is a slang word that can also be used for a prostitute instead of a bride.

September 27, 1897
IX., Berggasse 19

Dear Wilhelm,

Back home after a perfect trip (twelve hours of sleep in an isolation cell), completely without work, refreshed, stimulated, and full of new ideas, I begin with something entirely superfluous—namely, once again expressing the pleasure evoked in me, as old participant and new uncle, by your work, your state of health, your wife, and your child. As for me, I praise the happy decision, to which I have held fast since midsummer, to visit you at your home in Berlin.

My children have not yet returned. I found Martha with a harmless migraine, the first since Bolzano (August 20/21—September 27; for the collector). A new review¹ of I. C. ["Infantile Cerebral Paralysis"] in Wernicke's *Zeitschrift* taught me what beautiful, valuable books I am in the habit of writing.

Most cordial greetings, thanks, and soon more from your

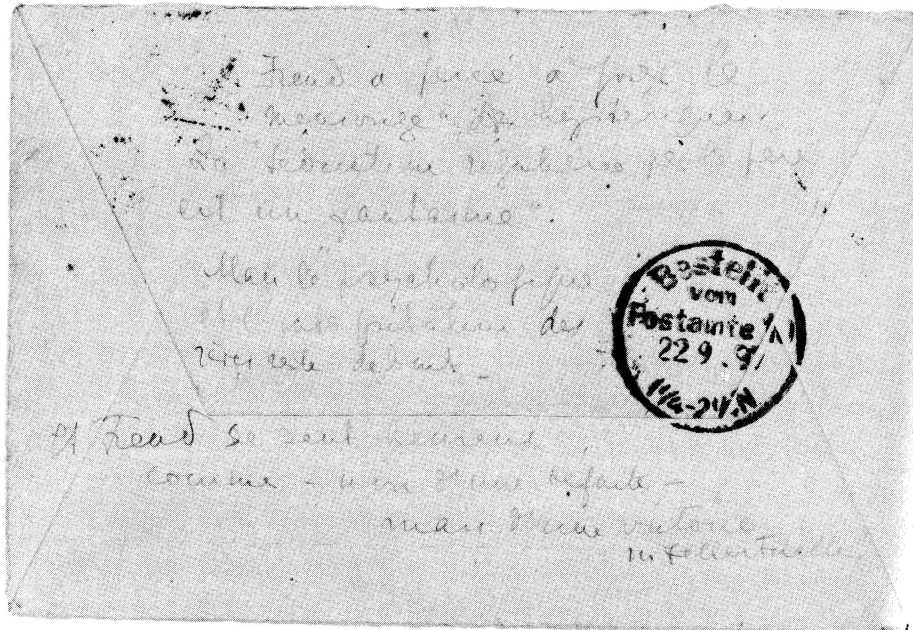
Sigm.

1. The reference is to a long review by a Herr Mann of Breslau, published in the *Monatsschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie* (not the *Zeitschrift*, as Freud wrote). It is an extremely positive review, containing among many other praises, "The focal point of this book and its main contribution that cannot be valued highly enough . . . consist in its unsurpassingly clear and comprehensive presentation and critical appreciation of the entire clinical and anatomical material."

October 3, 1897

My dear Wilhelm,

My visit has had the advantage of acquainting me with the framework of your current work in its entirety, so that you can relate further details to me. You must not expect a response to everything, and with regard to some of my responses you will not, I hope, fail to take into account that your work is strange to me and my judgment weak. Nevertheless, each time I am grateful to you for every little item that you unselfishly let come my way. For example, your com-



ments on the relationship between infection and conception in mother and daughter seemed to me highly significant because these can after all be explained only by a condition in the eternal life of the protoplasm and not by one in the life of the individual—that is, because they must be dependent on absolute time and not on lifetime. It then occurred to me that this is after all not necessary if the infection in the mother accords with a time period given by the formula $A \times 28$ plus $B \times 23$, and the conception of the daughter by a similar expression, so that the difference between the two must again yield a similar formula without there having to exist a special relationship between infection here and conception there. Whether this is nonsense I cannot tell. To do this I would need to know your “timely disposition.”

There is still very little happening to me externally, but internally something very interesting. For the last four days my self-analysis, which I consider indispensable for the clarification of the whole problem, has continued in dreams and has presented me with the most valuable elucidations and clues. At certain points I have the feeling of being at the end, and so far I have always known where the next dream-night would continue. To put it in writing is more difficult than anything else for me; it also would take me too far afield. I can only indicate that the old man plays no active part in my case, but that no doubt I drew an inference by analogy from myself onto him; that in my case the “prime originator” was an ugly, elderly, but clever woman,¹ who told me a great deal about God Almighty and hell and who instilled in me a high opinion of my own capacities; that later (between two and two and a half years) my libido toward *matrem* was awakened, namely, on the occasion of a journey with her from Leipzig to Vienna, during which we must have spent the night together and there must have been an opportunity of seeing her *nudam* (you inferred the consequences of this for your son long ago, as a remark revealed to me); that I greeted my one-year-younger brother (who died after a few months) with adverse wishes and genuine childhood jealousy; and that his death left the germ of [self-]reproaches in me. I have also long known the companion of my misdeeds between the ages of one and two years; it is my nephew, a year older than myself, who is now living in Manchester and who visited us in Vienna when I was fourteen years old. The two of us seem occasionally to have behaved cruelly to my niece, who was a year younger. This nephew and this younger brother have determined, then, what is neurotic, but also what is intense, in all my friendships. You yourself have seen my travel anxiety at its height.

I have not yet grasped anything at all of the scenes themselves which lie at the bottom of the story. If they come [to light] and I succeed in resolving my own hysteria, then I shall be grateful to the memory of the old woman who provided me at such an early age with the means for living and going on living. As you see, the old liking is breaking through again today. I cannot convey to you any idea of the intellectual beauty of this work.

The children will return tomorrow morning. Business is still very poor. I fear that if it gets better, it might present an obstacle to my self-analysis. My insight that the difficulties in treatment are due to the fact that in the end one is laying bare the patient's evil inclinations, his will to remain ill, is becoming stronger and clearer. We shall see what happens.

I cordially greet you and your little family, and hope to receive soon again some crumbs from your table.

Your
Sigm.

October 4. The children arrived. The fine weather is gone. Today's dream has, under the strangest disguises, produced the following: she was my teacher in sexual matters and complained because I was clumsy and unable to do anything.

(Neurotic impotence always comes about in this way. The fear of not being able to do anything at all in school thus obtains its sexual substratum.) At the same time I saw the skull of a small animal and in the dream I thought “pig,” but in the analysis I associated it with your wish two years ago that I might find, as Goethe once did, a skull on the Lido to enlighten me. But I did not find it. So [I was] a “little blockhead” [literally, a sheep's head]. The whole dream was full of the most mortifying allusions to my present impotence as a therapist. Perhaps this is where the inclination to believe in the incurability of hysteria begins. Moreover, she washed me in reddish water in which she had previously washed herself. (The interpretation is not difficult; I find nothing like this in the chain of my memories; so I regard it as a genuine ancient discovery.) And she made me steal zehners (ten-kreuzer coins)² to give them to her. There is a long chain from these first silver zehners to the heap of paper ten-florin notes which I saw in the dream as Martha's weekly housekeeping money. The dream could be summed up as “bad treatment.” Just as the old woman got money from me for her bad treatment, so today I get money for the bad treatment of my patients. A special part was played by Mrs. Q., whose remark you

reported to me: that I should not take anything from her, as she was the wife of a colleague (he of course made it a condition that I should).

A harsh critic might say of all this that it was retrogressively fantasied instead of progressively determined.³ The *experimenta crucis* must decide against him. The reddish water would indeed seem to be of that kind. Where do all patients get the horrible perverse details which often are as remote from their experience⁴ as from their knowledge?

1. According to Sajner (1968), the woman's name is Monika Zajic. Cf. Krüll (1979, p. 144). Sajner informs me, in a personal communication, that he has not been able to ascertain any particulars about this woman. When Freud says she was "elderly," it is not clear if he is speaking as a child or as an adult. Anna Freud told me she thought Zajic may have been in her forties.

2. A zehner is a coin of little value.

3. *Nach vorne* means that the early experiences play a crucial role in determining the present. By *experimenta crucis* Freud no doubt refers to the recovery of memories not available to consciousness.

4. *Erleben* must refer to conscious experience. Freud seems to be saying that the dream revealed a lost memory by providing him with a detail that was not part of his knowledge, nor was it a fantasy. In this rhetorical question he implies that such details speak for the authenticity of the memory; they are recovered, not invented.

October 15, 1897
IX., Berggasse 19

Dear Wilhelm,

My self-analysis is in fact the most essential thing I have at present and promises to become of the greatest value to me if it reaches its end. In the middle of it, it suddenly ceased for three days, during which I had the feeling of being tied up inside (which patients complain of so much), and I was really disconsolate until I found that these same three days (twenty-eight days ago) were the bearers of identical somatic phenomena. Actually only two bad days with a remission in between. From this one should draw the conclusion that the female period is not conducive to work. Punctually on the fourth day, it started again. Naturally, the pause also had another determinant—the resistance to something surprisingly new. Since then I have been once again intensely preoccupied [with it], mentally fresh, though afflicted with all sorts of minor disturbances that come from the content of the analysis.

My practice, uncannily, still leaves me a great deal of free time. The whole thing is all the more valuable for my purposes, since I

have succeeded in finding a few real points of reference for the story. I asked my mother whether she still remembered the nurse. "Of course," she said, "an elderly person, very clever, she was always carrying you off to some church; when you returned home you preached and told us all about God Almighty. During my confinement with Anna (two and a half years younger), it was discovered that she was a thief, and all the shiny new kreuzers and zehners and all the toys that had been given to you were found in her possession. Your brother Philipp himself fetched the policeman; she then was given ten months in prison." Now look at how this confirms the conclusions of my dream interpretation. It was easy for me to explain the only possible mistake. I wrote to you that she induced me to steal zehners and give them to her. In truth, the dream meant that she stole them herself. For the dream picture was a memory of my taking money from the mother of a doctor—that is, wrongfully. The correct interpretation is: I = she, and the mother of the doctor equals my mother. So far was I from knowing she was a thief that I made a wrong interpretation.

I also inquired about the doctor we had had in Freiberg because one dream concentrated a good deal of resentment on him. In the analysis of the dream figure behind which he was concealed, I also thought of a Professor von Kraus, my history teacher in high school. He did not seem to fit in at all, because my relationship with him was indifferent or even comfortable. My mother then told me that the doctor in my childhood had only one eye, and of all my teachers Professor Kraus was the only one with the same defect! The conclusive force of these coincidences might be weakened by the objection that on some occasion in my later childhood, I had heard that the nurse was a thief and then apparently had forgotten it until it finally emerged in the dream. I myself believe that that is so. But I have another, entirely irrefutable and amusing proof. I said to myself that if the old woman disappeared from my life so suddenly, it must be possible to demonstrate the impression this made on me. Where is it then? Thereupon a scene occurred to me which in the course of twenty-five years has occasionally emerged in my conscious memory without my understanding it. My mother was nowhere to be found; I was crying in despair. My brother Philipp (twenty years older than I) unlocked a wardrobe [*Kasten*]¹ for me, and when I did not find my mother inside it either, I cried even more until, slender and beautiful, she came in through the door. What can this mean? Why did my brother unlock the wardrobe for me, knowing that my mother was not in it and that thereby he could not calm me down? Now I suddenly understand it. I had asked him to do it. When I