

Hosterwitz nr. Dresden Febr. 24. 1901.

My dear Mr. Deane,

Many sincere thanks for your dear letter and your kind, beautiful Christmas-greeting. I was delighted you remembered so kindly of us and I am very glad to learn from your dear letter that you and Mrs. Deane feel very well. I am slow in responding but you will pardon me, it is owing to the unusual torments by sickness ^{that} we, and specially my mother are exposed to, this winter. My mother could not get rid of her old troubles and now she is confined in bed since 4 weeks. I hope spring will all make good again. Time passes away rapidly enough with all sorrows and working, and this is a real benefit with such a hard winter we have this year. With half a yard snow and cold to 20 degrees Celsius ^{under zero} and more has nature favored us this February. But this will be very good for the summer. Snowless winters are usually followed by dryness in summer. Otherwise I am not fond of winter-sports, skating etc. and I would not care for partaking in an expedition to the arctic pole. Dr. Goodale and family reside in Dresden since over 2 months. We had much pleasure at seeing them several times with us; but since weeks our connexion with the city is too hard by the lacking of boats and electric cars. Everybody looks forward with pleasure at the time when our electric line will

be finished, but it cannot be before autumn.

I am delighted with all you write me of your very interesting observations in natural history. You know it is also my habit to study and enjoy nature in its attributes, a study that never gets obsolete but always offers new tasks. My creed is genuine Pantheism, so I do not know a greater pleasure than to dive into the secrets of nature. Is it not delightful to pursue the various degrees of development of instinct and intellect in their rudiments in lower forms upwards to the really anthropoid faculty of mind with birds and mammals? Charles Darwin has made so many delightful observations in this point, but the scope of this study is endless. I should like to know why the shrikes impale their prey. Certainly it is the beginning habit, a substitute for the accommodation of grasping by means of feet and claws with the Raptores and Scansores. We can pursue the first rudiment with some of our Lusciniæ, *L. svecica* and *rubicola* that always eat on the soil. The thorn-linnet, *Sylvia pinerea* impales insects like the shrike, so at least it got described, but I never saw the habit with captive birds. I think it is a mistake. Here in Germany we have 4 species of shrikes, *Lanius excubitor*, *minor*, *rufus* and *collurio*, the 'nine-killer', which chiefly has the habit of impaling its prey. They have a shrill calling-voice (yak-yak-yak) that disturbs the sublime song of the other birds. Two years

ago a *L. collurio* came into our garden, seemingly disposed to nestle there. The other birds, black-birds, titmice and the courageous little *Polioptila communis* drove him away, at which I was very glad. Some weeks later I found the fellow again sitting on the wall of the cemetery where he nested on a lonely shrub in case. He was so saucy that we could walk quite near. Last summer I was much interested in observing the sagacity of senses with insects. On *Aparagus*-beds we often find in summer nice little beetles, two species of *Grioceris*, *G. aparagi* and *duodecim-punctata*. We do not grow *Aparagus* neither do they here in the next neighbourhood. Last summer a seedling of *Aparagus* came forth among weed in our garden and got a stout plant. How surprised I was, when finding at once the lovely *Grioceris* on it! They discovered the single plant among so many others. The examples of this instinctive sagacity are however infinite. How the flea-beetles, *Haltica*, discern the *Cruciferae*, the rasp-berry-beetles *Dasytes*, ^{and *Pythorus*} the flowers of *Rubus Idæus* from others, *Anthrenus Pimpinellæ* the *Umbelliferae*, and so on. It must be a wonderful sight to see so many gulls together that you only can have so near the sea. Larus-species come sometimes down the Elbe to near Dresden but always seldom. Hard winters in the far north use to drive lots of feathered guests down to us, but this year we had it colder here than in Scandinavia. So we must be contented with the sight of hammers, larks and titmice, which roam

on the roads often in flights of 100 and more,

Spring will probably be late here this year.

Last night and today it snows without interruption but I do not care for it. I ^{just} prepare plants from the California deserts and Jamaica and fancy the balmy air there.

With my warmest regards and best wishes to
Mrs. Deane and yourself, in which my mother
joins me, I am very sincerely yours

Rudolph Blaschka



Blaschka, Rudolf. 1901. "Blaschka, Rudolf Feb. 24, 1901." *Rudolf Blaschka letters to Walter Deane*

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