

Translation from Norwegian of letter written by Edvard Grieg,
March 15, 1894

Hotel Beau - Rivage
Geneva

D. 15/3/94

Dear Steenberg:

Just got up from an elaborate table d'hôte dinner and here I am in the smoking room where I found paper, pen and ink and am just in the mood to sit down and twaddle. So here you have me with many thanks for your dear, youthful and sentimental letter from which I gather that you have not become a Philistine. No, dear old friend, you might sooner lose your ears, nose and mouth before that would happen.

I thoroughly agree with you that we are living in rather sparse times as far as art is concerned, but we who are getting old must remember to give support to all of the best the youth has to offer. We must not live only by the ideals of our own youth. As a matter of fact, I think this idea of being forever true to the ideals of our youth is stuff and nonsense. That way there would hardly be any progress.

When I was most happy in my life was when I felt that I had gone - even when just a little - beyond these ideals. Dear Lord! is it not all a struggle forward to come into the knowledge of the truth! How then can we be true to our confirmation vows.

I love Schumann (have you read my article in NYT NORSK TIDSSKRIFT? if not, look it up) but not like I did at the age of 17.

I love Wagner, but not as when 27. The love of art like the love of a woman may change character, but does not therefore become less beautiful, perhaps just the opposite, like wine that has aged. Do not feel discouraged at not feeling like a seventeen year old, just be true and honest to yourself. There are few people I am so fond of as I am of you and this is due in part to your spontaneous and sensitive nature. Be thankful for this gift - remember that.

What about the talk of losing your position. In case it should happen will you be able to manage? If not, something must be done in time and I trust you know that you can count on me. How wonderful that your wife is so talented and so adaptable.

You shall see, new opportunities may suddenly appear, perhaps not like the old ones that we might have planned or hoped for. That would be just like the way with everything new not to come to us like we had expected and prepared for but capriciously different. It appears illogical but it is nevertheless the fulfillment of logic.

You asked me about the Doctors Degree. Well, it is my intention to accept it in Cambridge on May 10th. But - Damn it! I would appreciate one from Denmark much more. This thing about Cambridge is just an old common musician-cultus. Every Englishman that can count to four, musically, is a doctor. But I would consider one from Copenhagen a real honor. Why does a degree from one exclude one from another? Or is this really the case? The Devil with customs anyway. If Copenhagen should give me this proof of recognition I would accept it with respectful thanks. Anyway I am not so sure that my health will permit the trip to Cambridge, it has not been any too good here of late. My work has been pretty hard on my nerves, but one must carry on and make use of one's endowments to the end. I absolutely refuse to stay in the wake.

I had a lot of pleasure in Leipzig with my music to Sigurd Jorsalfar, but I achieved an even greater triumph in Munich recently, the like of which I only once before experienced in London. I conducted a whole concert from my own works and I received quite an ovation especially from the youth, who remained and, called me back 5-6 times with loud exclamation of which I remember "Wiederkommen! Wiederkommen!" I came very close to making a fool of myself - I tell you - for I was taken with a great desire to speak to the crowd.

Every time a bit of Norway wins a victory out in the world I always want to invite people home to see all the beauty of our country. My art, such as it is - is really only a reflection of our stately Norway with its melancholy and grandeur mixed together. This wish keeps on repeating itself; to load all my best friends on a boat and bring them home and show them the mountains. Day after tomorrow I am to conduct here and then I go to Mentone (Menton?). On April 24 I am to conduct a concert at Colonne in Paris and the following month one in London. If I survive this, then I think that - if I reach Norway - I shall do like Kilian even if the soil is ever so questionable.

A phone call - so here are my best wishes to you old friend. Remember me to all at home. A thousand greetings from both Nina and from your

Faithfully devoted

Edvard Grieg

My address in Mentone is: - no, better make it C. F. Peters, Leipzig, Thalstrasse 10, from where everything is forwarded to me.