

DorleLettersM L0001 (English)

Chacra San José de la Florida July 20, 1950. Estacion Bellavista Ramal de Pirque CHILE. S.A.

Dear Miss Hofmann,

At the beginning of this month, I received your letter of May 1st, and a few days later a letter from my niece Erdmute Noack, in which she informed me that your letter was on its way.

From both letters, I gather that it is your intention to perfect yourself in your fine profession abroad, or rather, since you are also prepared to take on housework, primarily to see a bit of the world; an idea which, for the record, I can understand.

But, if I am to give you advice, then I would like to tell you: Put the thought of Chile—and probably all of South America—right out of your little head. To be sure, there are businesses here with intensive fruit cultivation, but probably not in the sense that you are used to from Germany, and besides, there is no field of work here for a young lady. It was not so long ago that young girls from good families here began to be professionally active at all, and I know young women here who have successfully completed their agronomy studies and now effectively do not know what to do with their acquired knowledge, unless they are farmers' daughters who can work on their father's little operation, where the workers are used to obeying them. That was a difficult point even in Germany, as I experienced myself on the estate where I learned agriculture at the time, and here it would most likely be much more difficult, especially for a foreigner who naturally will not have a perfect command of the language. And small fruit farms, which are worked by the owner or lessee themselves, would hardly be in a position to pay you a salary that could even begin to satisfy the most basic needs of a European woman, to say nothing of housing and other opportunities. You kindly give me a vote of confidence by saying you would be willing to come to us; but our years here in old Florida are already numbered, because the capital city of Santiago, near which we live, has grown so much in recent years that we, in our closely neighboring rural communities, will be swallowed up by the city in a few years. Consequently, we are already having considerable difficulties due to excessively high property taxes, the incitement of workers by people who, due to the proximity to the city, already work in Santiago's industries, etc. Sooner or later, we will be forced to sell here and perhaps buy land further south in the country, where it is still cheaper, but where intensive fruit cultivation is not feasible due to the greater distance from the relevant, relatively few, sales centers for high-quality fruit.

And you can't get anywhere with housework here just like that anymore either. Of course, Santiago has over a million inhabitants, but positions for a foreign woman that one could recommend with a clear conscience are more than scarce, and are likely to be amply filled by the oversupply resulting from the Jewish immigration before the war and the refugee immigration after the war, especially since many families have no interest in hiring foreign staff because, as experience has shown, the demands of the newly arrived immigrants, due to their considerably higher standard of living from back home, cannot be reconciled with the local views on the social standing of a domestic employee. For God's sake, one should

have no illusions about that.

To come back to fruit cultivation: we here always get all our wisdom in this field from California, whose climate and conditions for the cultivation of individual fruit varieties roughly correspond to ours, but who are far, far ahead of us in technical terms, because the possibilities and the demands on the quality of the products are naturally different in a country of 120 million inhabitants than in a country of 5 million, as old Chile has.

If I am to give you a piece of advice, and if you absolutely want to stick your 19-year-old nose into foreign lands, then try California. You can learn a tremendous amount there, many young women work in such agricultural businesses there, as we can see in the pictures in the American trade journals, and usually very pretty girls at that (or perhaps only those ones make it into the paper). When you have learned a good deal in California, then take your time for the journey home, and travel back via South America. That will absolutely be worth it, because you can then see many interesting things and, above all, scenic beauties that you will never forget for the rest of your life. I can promise you that with a clear conscience. But to come here to work in your profession, and even to earn good money, for God's sake do not come here.

Unfortunately, I cannot tell you from here how a German can get to the U.S.A. from Germany right now. It probably won't be easy, but it wouldn't be easy to get into Chile either. And now Argentina, they make things quite nasty, especially for young women traveling alone. I don't know which zone you belong to in Hofheim, probably the American one. In that case, you will have no trouble inquiring about everything you need to know right there. For heaven's sake, little lady, don't let yourself be seduced by romantic ideas of orchids, hummingbirds, palm trees, and other romantic greenery; here, too, they just put their pants on one leg at a time, and in many areas, with what questionable water at that. The faithful Indios and the self-sacrificing Negro slaves are to be relegated entirely to the realm of fine literature for older youths; in reality, your handbag with your passport, travel money, etc. will most likely be stolen in the very first port, and it would not be the first time that the dream of the romance of overseas countries comes to a swift and painful end in poverty. I can unfortunately serve you with numerous examples.

So, Miss Hofmann, that is what I have to say to you. I have been deliberately a bit more detailed than was perhaps necessary, but I did not want to be accused of indifference, as it is sometimes interpreted when "the other person only hears the 'no' in everything."

Please, think over your plans very, very thoroughly, and perhaps it is wisest after all if you let your parents and old, distant Germany have your beautiful youth for a long time to come, before you cross the famous big pond.

I am sending this letter to you via my niece Erdmute. There are unfortunately no real secrets in it, (there's that darned romanticism again) - and I assume that the content of the letter, even if it is not exactly encouraging, might not be uninteresting for my niece Erdmute either. Besides, that way I don't have to write another long letter to that girl.

With best regards, [Signature]