

C H A P T E R   2  
MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Coming back to the Bukowina: This is the place where my grand-parents lived for a long time. But before going into details about that, I have to tell something interesting about my great-grandmother. Her name was Jettie Koenig. She was born in Safed in Palestine, which belonged then to Turkey. She was therefore, as born in Palestine, a Sabra. Her first husband's name was Nadler. My grandmother was born in Jerusalem and she was therefore also a Sabra. Her maiden name was Susie Nadler. When her husband died, my great-grandmother later remarried, a man whose name was König and he also died in Palestine. Both my great-grandmother and

1900

my grandmother came then to Czernowitz, where my grandmother married my grandfather. My grandfather's name was Isiel Leib Bayer.

My grandparents had a relatively big house and my great-grandmother lived also there on the same floor, in a very small apartment. I remember my great-grandmother very well. I always had warm feelings for her. We used to have a picture of her, with a kerchief on her head, tied below the chin, and I looked at it very often and that is perhaps the reason why I remember her so well. I remember that she used to send me downstairs to the yard when we had the woodcutter there, who came each year to cut the wood for heating in winter, to fetch a potfull of sawdust and bring it up to her. I must have been 2 or 2½ years old then.

My great-grandmother was born, as I said before, in Safed in Israel and when she was very old she had decided to return to Israel since she was very religious and wanted to die in the Holy Land. I remember the day she left and that was in 1900 and I was exactly 3 years old. My sister, my brother and I were standing there and she gave my sister 3 Kreuzer, my brother 2 Kreuzer and I got 1 Kreuzer. That was the money unit at that time and was later changed to Heller. The Kreuzer was a big heavy coin of copper.

My great-grandmother had a 1½ room apartment, one big room and a very small room like a big closet -- we called it Kammerl -- and she left all her things behind when she left, beautiful old furniture, well kept, also one antique clock with two marble columns, which would be very valuable today. But I remember that we children went into her room after she left and soon all her things were taken out and ruined, and



especially the clock taken apart. We also found in the closet nice bags made from glass pearls, beautiful things.

She wrote often to my grandparents afterwards and I still have one letter from her dated June 5, 1905, written in German and I will translate it as well as I can. Here is what she wrote:

"My very beloved children: My beloved and dear Gusterl. I have received your kind little letter, which brought me much joy and strength. You are writing that mother is in good health and that you are planning a journey to Berlin. I am very glad about it, and I hope that you may perhaps find there somebody for dear Bertha (my mother) to marry her. You are writing that you intend to take Egon along to put him into a business. That I don't like because Egon is very weak and suffers from palpitations. He would then be far away from the parents and I don't like that and God should help that it will turn out alright, and since you will be there you will surely know better than I what will be the best to do. Hopefully you have returned home already, with Gods help and have enjoyed the trip. How many days have you stayed there? How are Rosa and Ignaz and the dear children and how is the business? Do they have it nice there in their apartment? Does she expect another child? She has forgotten her grandmother completely. I hope you had reminded her that when we were with her for 2 months, that I had big expenses and that I had paid the expenses for food myself and how had I suffered with her after she gave birth, with her and her child. Oh dear God, this is an enormous sin, to forget such an old grandmother completely and not to write a few lines to her.

How are your dear children, how is your health? Is dear Isidor already well known as district physician? Is he still railway physician in Storozynetz? Does he have to take care of a long part of the railway



line? Does he have to live in the railway station building? How is Marzell in school? In which grade is he? Are Egon and Marzell staying in your parents home? And how do they get along with Bertha's children? Dear Isa probably goes to school in Storozynetz. How is your father-in-law. How is his health? I hope he is feeling better. I beg you, dear, dear Gurta, to answer all my questions because all that lies on my heart. You should not find it hard, to give enjoyment to your old, weak grandmother by letting her know all that. I have the feeling, when I read the letter that I am with you. I had it read to me many times, so that I have the feeling that I am with you and this is my only consolation.

How is your dear mother's health? I hope to God she is well. Will she go to a spa or has she gone already? Please write me the whole truth about her. How is dear father, does he look well and does he drink mineral water? Does he plan to go to Marienbad? Oh, dear God, how can you put it in his mind to come to visit me? Because nowadays, one can come from Czernowitz to Safed in 7 days. From the whole world children, relatives are coming now to visit their parents. Because nowadays there are coaches, railways and on a boat one has to be only for 3 days to come here. Dear father writes I should come to visit him for 6 months, and then he will return with me. I would have liked to do it but unfortunately I don't have the strength to do it. As I have let you know, I was very ill this winter. I undertook a journey to the grave of Rabbi Simon, to which people come from all over the world. I was now here 5 years and was not yet there on account of my weakness, although it takes only 2 hours from here, sitting on a donkey. So how could I make such a big



trip? Thanks God, this year my dear landlady had rented a good donkey for me, with a man to walk on my side, so that I should not fall down, and thanks God I arrived there and I have prayed for the wellbeing and health of my whole family. I hope to God that my prayer had been accepted. I also lighted there oil lamps. I met there a photographer, who comes there every year from Beirut, and I bought from him a photography of the anniversary. When I came home I showed that picture to my landlady and she told me, if you want to send this picture home, you have also to have a picture made of yourself. Although the trip had cost you a lot of money, and the holidays are over, I will lend you a Napoleon, and I followed her advice, and had the picture made of me, and I got 6 pictures. One big picture I had sent registered for father and mother, one for you and Isidor, one for Bertha and one should be sent to Rosa to Berlin. To Klara and Hene, I sent an extra picture registered. I would have liked to send to each of you separately a picture registered, but it would have cost very much. I expect now photographs from all of you. I am sure you had pictures made of you in Berlin. Your mother, Jüte König" "Please don't feel annoyed because I wrote so much. I expect your early answer."

I went with Hedy to Israel on a vacation trip in 1970, and we went also to Safed. I had hoped that I would visit there the grave of my great-grandmother. But I was soon disillusioned when I was told that the Arabs had destroyed all the cemeteries long ago and taken away the tombstones. But at least I saw the small town of Safed where she was



born and where she had lived the last years of her life and that gave me a great satisfaction. It is a beautiful town, situated on the side of a hill, with rather steep, narrow streets and small stone houses. The town is now an art colony and we visited some of the exhibitions where we saw some really beautiful works of art. But they were priced high, in the hundreds of dollars, and up and beyond 1,000 dollars. The land there is dry, stones and sand, very little vegetation. Looking down from Safed we could see far away, the Sea of Galilee, also called Lake Tiberias. We have been at that lake a few days before. Our bus tour took us also to Meron and this is the place, which my great-grandmother mentioned in her letter, where she had visited the tomb of Rabbi Simon. My Jewish lexicon says that his name was Simeon ben Jochai (= Jochanan) and that he lived in the second century A.D., that he was a pupil of Rabbi Akiba, that he was hiding from the Romans for 13 years, in a cave, and that his tomb is a place, to which people pilgrimage every year on a certain day, called Lag ba-Omer. We saw the tomb, which is inside a small temple, beautifully decorated, and I saw that my great-grandmother had to take a rather steep road sitting on top of a donkey, when she visited the tomb. I took some beautiful pictures of that place. (See following page).

The letter of my great-grandmother showed that she was a great person. She lived, while in Czernowitz, in the house of her son-in-law, and he took care of her. But she was very religious and wanted to die in the Holy Land, and she gave up all her possessions and left, to live probably without any comfort, in Safed. There is very little vegetation there and the houses were, as I saw, very primitive. Earthly possessions did not



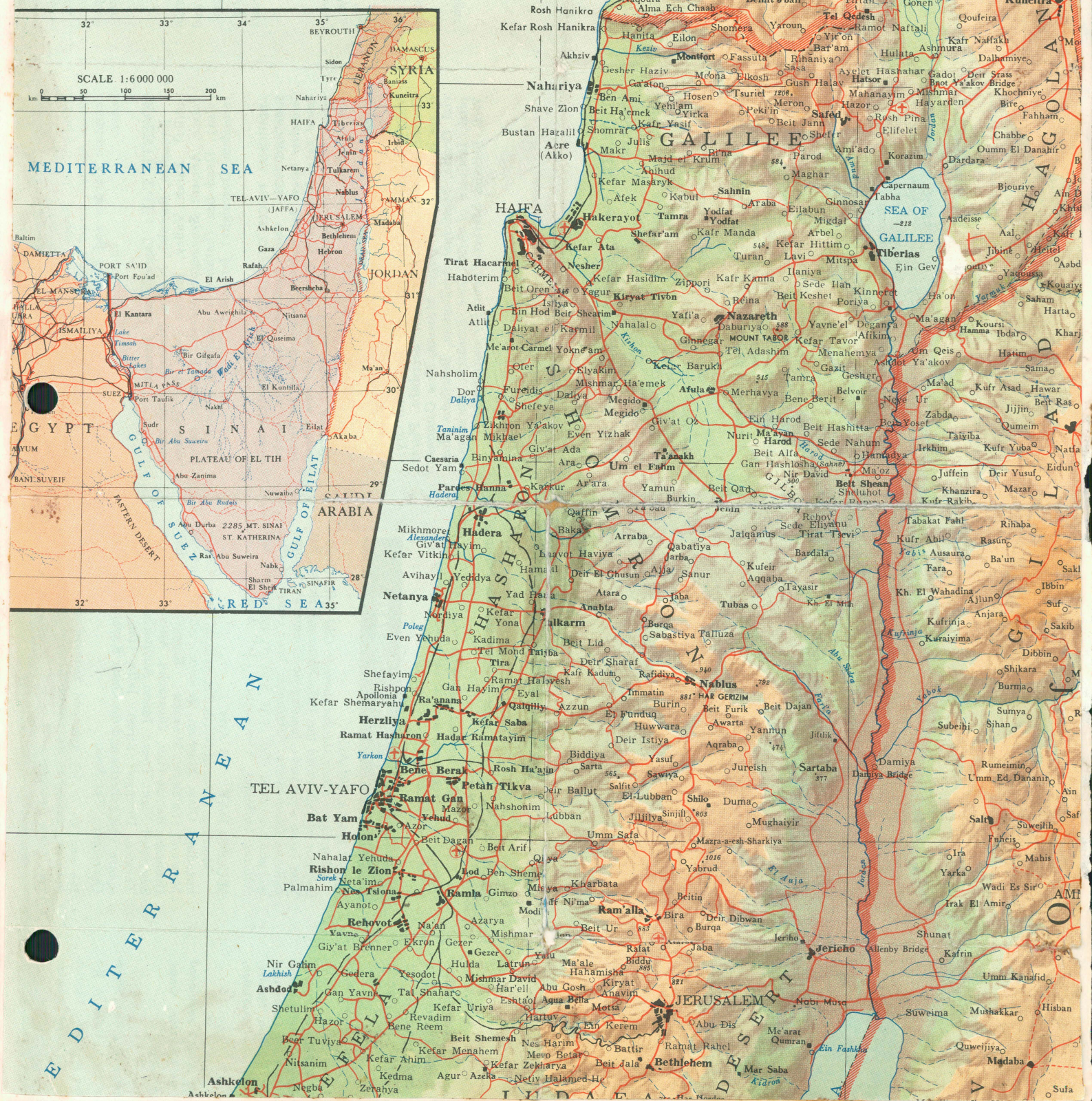
mean much to her. What her letter shows is that she was a kind person, full of love for her relatives, worrying about the health and well-being of each of them, begging for letters which would be of consolation, asking my grandfather to visit her, etc. For all that I can call her a great person.



The town of Safed, where my great-grandmother lived, can be found on the map above near the letter E of the word Galilee, and next to Safed the town Meron, to which she was riding on top of a donkey to visit the grave of the rabbi Simeon ben Jochai who lived in the 2nd century A.D.



MEDITERRANEAN SEA



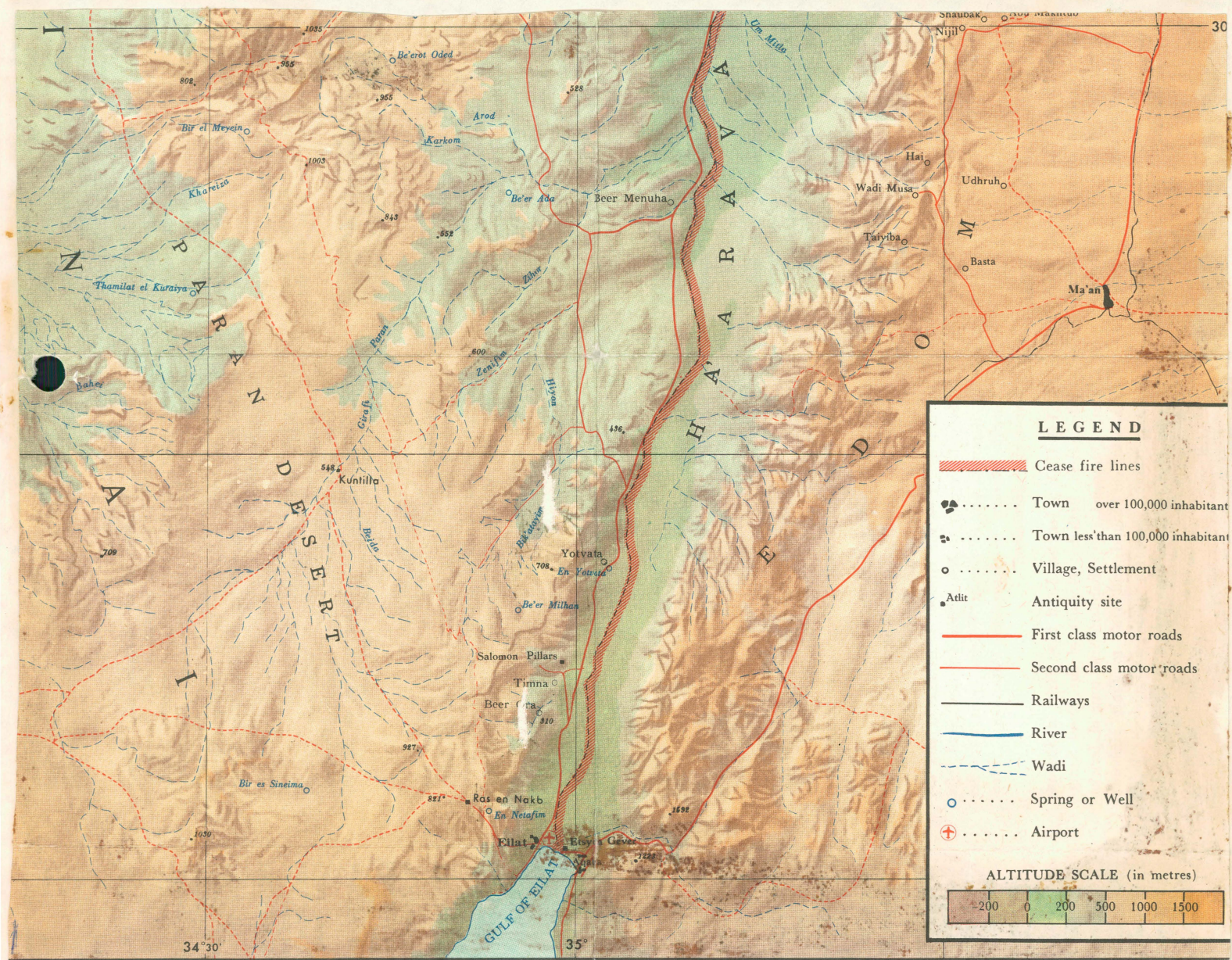


(Map continued to the south)





(Map is a further continuation of the map on opposite page)





Saffel den 5 Juni 1905

Liebeliebste meine Kinder!

Mein Liebe und Theiere Güterl dein lieben kleinen Brief habe ich erhalten welches es hat mich sehr gefreut und auch Kräfte gegeben, du schreibst mir das die Mutter geht es in der Gesundheit gut, und Ihr macht ein Reise nach Berlin welches es mich sehr gefreut hat, nach mehr bin ich mit Hoffnung das Ihr dort vielleicht für der liebe Bertha Ihr Parthie finden. Ihr schreibst mir das Ihr Egon in ein Geschäft führt dieses freut mich nicht den Egon sehr sehr nach für ein Geschäft ist weiter Herz klopfen leidet und wieder von Eltern so weit entfernen sich dieses gefällt mir nicht, nur gebe der liebe Gott das es ja gut sein soll den wann Ihr dort sind verstatet Ihr sicher besser von mir. Hoffentlich sind Ihr schon mit Gottes Hilfe zu Hause gekommen, habet Ihr dort die Zeit gut mitgebracht? mit vergenügen? wieviel Tagen wart Ihr dort? wie befunden sich Rosa? und Ignaz samt die l. Kinder wie geht es sei ins Geschäft? ist bei sei schön in der Wohnung? hat sie mehr Wein zu was? sie hat an Ihr Gross Mutter gänzlich vergessen? ich habe geglaubt das du wirst sie erinnern wann wir waren bei Ihr 2 Monathe und wieviel es hat mich gekostet diesen Post habe ich allein bezahlt.



Wie befindet sich die l. Mutter in der Gesundheit?  
Hoffentlich zum l. Gott das es gut ist. Fahrt sie  
in ein Bad oder ist sie schon gefahren? bitte  
Dich schreibe mir von Ihr die reine Wahrheit,  
wie befindet sich der l. Vater sieht er gut aus  
sinkt er Mineral Wasser? ist er gesonnen nach  
Marien Bad zu fahren? ach mein Gott wie  
giebst Du ihm in seinen das er hier kommen  
son den heile kan man in 7 Tagen von  
Cernowitz in Taffel sein, von der ganzen  
Welt kommen jetzt Kinder, verwandete  
Ihre Eltern zu besuchen den heile gibt über  
Wagen, Bahn, und auf der Schiffe braucht  
man nur 3 Tagen zu fahren. Der l. Vater  
schreibt mir das ich soll hier kommen  
auf 6 Monath dan wird er mich zurück  
führen ja leider ich hätte es gern geküsst  
mir wie habe ich Kräfte dazu? so wie ich  
ich bekannt habe das ich wahr diesen Winter  
sehr schwere Krank habe ich auf mir genom-  
men auf Rabbi Pinon's Jahrzeit zu fahren wo  
hin man von der ganzen Welt Fahrt auf diesen  
Tage, und bin 5 Jahren hier wahr ich nicht  
dort wegen meiner schwachheit obwohl  
es nur 2 Stunden von hier auf den Esel zu  
reiten ist also wie so soll ich noch so eine  
Grosse Reise machen. mir Gott sei dank



und wie so habe ich mich <sup>mit The</sup> wochen <sup>Bett</sup> geplagt mit  
The und mit The l. Thim, ach l. Gott dieses ist  
ein Himmel schreiende sinde an so ein alter  
Grossmutter ganzlich zu vergessen und kein  
from Zahlen zu schreiben. sondern es wie geht  
es sich liebe Thinder in der Gesundheit?  
der lieber Isidor ist schon benönt als Bezirks  
Arzt? ist er noch Bahn Arzt in Sterzminia  
hat er weite strecke zu vertreten. Wohnt  
The in Bahnhof? wie steht murrel in der  
Schuhle? in was für eine Klasse? ist Egon und  
Murrel bei die eltern auf Kost? vertragen sie  
sich gut mit Bernas Thinder? die l. Tri geht  
gewiss in Sterzminia in der Schuhle. wie geht  
es dein Schwiegervater in der Gesundheit?  
hoffentlich besser, bitte Dich mein viel viel  
geliebte Gusta das Du solst mir verantworten  
alle meine Fragen den es liegt mir alles sehr  
in Härzen. Es soll bei dir nicht schwache sein  
die alte schwache Grossmutter dies vergeniege  
zu mittheilen das ich alles wissen soll den es  
scheint mir wann es man lest den Brief das  
ich bin bei allemen. Ich lasse ihm mir  
einige mahl vorlesen dass scheint mir das  
ich dabei bin dieses ist noch mein eigene  
Trost.