

[The first section of the letter is missing]

M:...did Edel tell you that?'

A:'I hardly speak to her at all because she is too close to Gothold, and whoever sticks with him is my enemy.'

'So then it was Mother who told you this!'

"I just said Good Day to her and I no longer go too near her.'

'Well then it was Gustav!'

"I never discussed anything like that with him.' I said, 'Then it was Lydia. And Anna, you can't deny that any longer She said neither 'Yes' nor 'No' to that, only: 'Its someone among the relatives, and I won't tell you who.'

I said, 'Okay, I'll go to Lydia and ask her once more.' Then Anna said, 'You needn't do that and stir up strife there again.'

I said, 'That's not what I want at all! I just want to know who really said it to you. For now it's just as if I wanted to make your children look bad, and that was certainly not my intention.'

When I went to Lydia she said that her conscience was clear. She (Anna) must have heard it from the Sonntags the last time she was at church, when they called in on Lydia that afternoon. But I don't want to assert that she (Mrs. S) told her that, because I'm to blame and I have felt very sorry for you, again receiving another letter like that while you are still so weak. Henry has had pneumonia but is getting somewhat better.

Dear siblings, this is a very suspicious-looking, deceitful story. Lydia did not tell Mother anything about Anna's writing you another rough letter, and that all the evidence points back to Gothold. Only when I demanded to know whether anyone had told Mother about it, did the whole story come out. She was truly surprised.

Now I am sure that the person who so shamelessly denied it, will never have a peaceful conscience, even after years have rolled on over it. And some other time I'll know whom I have before me. For 'up here' one is against the other, and from now on I'll distance myself from them all. For as you yourself know, I have already had a lot of things pushed onto me of which I knew almost nothing. And if you get close to one person then you offend another.

I would gladly bear the blame if I could only uncover how it happened that the talk got back to Anna and got you into so much trouble again. I never said anything about it to Lydia, but Gustav did pass it on to her. But now I want to let the whole matter rest and entrust in to the One who judges rightly and sees deeper into the human heart than we ever can.

D.S. things look really beautiful hereabouts this year. If we continue getting a little rain to keep things moving there well nice green feed for a long time to come. The garden provides me with a nice lot of veggies for the pot. I have 5 cows to milk; we sold one that was too fond of crawling. They are again producing abundantly; I make almost 50lb of butter from the 5. The good one is in milk again and the black and white heifer from Kentish has been in for a long time. She had developed into a good cow. I was very sad that you lost your pretty heifer so soon. But who knows what that may be good for?

If I can manage it I will go and visit my sisters in Quorn on September 1st since Maria also lives in Quorn now and Sophie then has another week of school holidays. We want to go by train, now with the buggy.

So let me close for now with the hope that you are all hale and hearty again. All of us had a real bout of coughing and nose-blowing too, but with God's help are pretty well better again. I remain with hearty greetings to you all, from all of us,

Your loving sister-in-law

Mathilde Becker.

(Comments by Rufus Pech

This fascinating letter from Alfred Becker's wife was postmarked 26 July and would have arrived in Ebenezer about the same time as Edel's. The first of four page-folds is almost certainly missing, but the remainder could be successfully sequenced. Here there are two sections beginning with her usual form of address 'Liebe Geschwister' which I have translated literally as: Dear Siblings.

What remains of the first half is the conclusion of a blow-by-blow account of Mathilde's discussion with her aggrieved sister-in-law Anna Winter, in which she attempts to find out who had made those remarks about Anna's children during their stay with Bertha, which had provoked Anna into writing Bertha the 'rough letter' referred to in the second part of this letter.)