

# GROVE'S LETTERS FROM THE MENNONITE RESERVE

*Introduced by Margaret Stobie*

**T**HE FIVE LETTERS that follow, written by F. P. Grove in the first months after he had become principal of the four-room intermediate school at Winkler, Manitoba, are the earliest writing of his in Canada that has so far come to light. It is therefore worth noting that the prose of the letters that are written in English is much more obviously that of a foreigner than is the prose of any of Grove's later writing. Even a year later, he had a much firmer grasp of vocabulary, idiom, and indeed grammar in English. In these letters the tentative quality is sometimes in the misuse of a word — "I stand aloft," or "your figures tackle with my own experience" — but more often it appears in idioms transferred from German: "My account foots up to —," "they are pent up in their own ideals," or "slide them along." This quality of the prose raises the question of how long Grove had been on this continent, and seems to indicate recent arrival. However, Douglas Spettigue suggests in "The Grove Enigma Resolved," (*Queen's Quarterly*, April 1972, 1-2) that Grove may have come over as early as 1909.

At any rate, his first known appearance in Manitoba was at the end of 1912 when he presented himself at the office of Robert Fletcher, Deputy Minister of Education, to ask for a teaching job. Fletcher sent him to Andrew Weidenhammer at Morden (the A.W. of the letters) who was the department's inspector for the 75 German-English bilingual public schools of the Mennonite reserve in southern Manitoba. Weidenhammer sent him to fill the vacancy in the one-room school in the village of Haskett, where Grove taught grades 1 to 6 from January to June, 1913.

Weidenhammer, who changed his name to Willows during the war, had been brought out not long before from the Mennonite district around Waterloo, Ontario, to deal with the very touchy educational situation within the reserve

where the church, strongly opposed to the government schools, supported and ran a considerable number of "private" schools. The kind of tension that existed is well illustrated by an item from the *Morden Times*, January 9, 1913, about one man who "has been summoned before the ministers of his church to answer for his conduct in sending his children to a public school. The ministers are trying hard to force him to send his children to their private school and [he] is sensible enough to refuse. He is in a hard position and needs supporters. Let's all help him and encourage him for the stand he is taking." Such a state of affairs helps to explain Grove's anger when the "poor Farmer" who had brought his children to the Winkler school was turned away.

Staffing the bilingual schools was a constant problem, and to ensure at least a modicum of training in his people, Weidenhammer conducted a ten-week summer Normal course in the Morden High School (fee \$10), which all those teaching in his schools were required to take. Grove and twenty others made up the class of 1913. Their valedictorian was John Enns, one of the Winkler teachers, who, having also passed his grade 10 examinations that summer, now held a third class teaching certificate. At the closing exercises, as the *Morden Times* reported, Weidenhammer made the usual official announcement of appointments within his inspectorate, and among them was Grove's as principal at Winkler. The salary was \$1000.

The Winkler staff afforded a good example of the range of teachers' qualifications in the bilingual schools. Both John Enns and the primary teacher, Miss Wiens, were in their early twenties and had been born on the reserve, but Miss Wiens, not having grade 10 standing, was still teaching on a permit. The second in command, P. H. Neufeld, was about Grove's own age, he had been born and had had part of his schooling in the Mennonite area of southern Russia, and he had been teaching for a number of years, but most of them in church-run schools. He had fairly recently achieved his second class standing (grade 11). On the other hand, the vacancy at Winkler had come about because of the resignation of Grove's correspondent, I. J. Warkentin, a young Mennonite of twenty-six who had a B.A. from the University of Manitoba and who had left for Germany at the end of the summer to do post-graduate work at Leipzig.

As for Grove, his mention of Bonn in the last letter is his only reference to that university where, as Spettigue records, he enrolled in 1898, though he never graduated from it. What the letters do indicate very strongly is that, whatever else he may have been before he arrived in Manitoba, Grove had been a teacher — a trained, experienced teacher — and of course particularly in maths and

science. The evidence is in his comparison of Weidenhammer's course with the rigour of "a really good normal class", in his displays of "Books that every teacher ought to have" and "a model outfit for teaching plant biology", in the way he goes about re-organizing the school and establishing his authority among the other teachers, and in specific remarks: "I come with many things that have been tried out;" "I promised to run this school, and so I do it: do it to the best of my knowledge and ability;" "they trust me and believe that I know what I am doing." The evidence is in Grove's enthusiasm for the new emphasis on practical education and in his opposition to forcing a child. It is also in his sending to Germany for books on teaching methods — books that he must have been familiar with.

Another very strong impression that comes from these letters is a sense of urgency. No doubt part of the reason for the urgency lay in the fact that in mid-November Winkler was to be host to the thirteenth Annual Conference of German-English Bilingual Teachers of Southern Manitoba, and Grove wanted to make a good showing. He had obviously been put in charge of the book exhibit, and from that experience came his naïve report that "All the big American publishers came to the front with exhibits of educational literature," as though the text book publishers were doing something unusual. His other contribution to the meetings was a talk, in German, on elementary education in Germany. Preparations for the conference probably account also for the haste in collecting plant and insect specimens, in ordering physics and chemistry equipment, and in re-allocating classes so that, according to the school attendance record, by November Grove had only high school grades in his room. But his efforts went beyond the mid-November event. At the beginning of the term he advertised in the *Morden Times* "a special teachers' course in the evening, comprising the work for full third and second classes (Grades X and XI)" in order, as he says in one of the letters, "to give the reserve a chance to raise the standard of their teachers," and also, of course, to further his drive to get high school status for Winkler. Again, in an attempt to involve the community and to give evidence of the practical value of education, Grove published a notice that the school would test farm and garden seeds at no charge, "under the strict supervision and responsibility of the principal." All of this activity, with its exacting pace that he details in the letters, gives a new glimpse of depth behind Grove's reflection when he was writing *Over Prairie Trails* in 1919: "We live for something — do not merely live. The wage-slave lives for the evening's

liberty, the business man for his wealth, the preacher for his church. I used to live for my school."

Yet there was some special urgency behind the activity in 1913, as Grove hints when he writes in December, "*I have got to win out.*" This underlying necessity undoubtedly affected the degree of his chagrin when his efforts did not meet with the gratitude that he expected. There were complaints in the town that Grove was arrogant, presumptuous, officious, that he had offended the school board, and that high school status would mean higher taxes. Within the school, the inevitable clash occurred between Grove and P.H. who was a deeply religious man — and Grove made no secret of the fact that he was not — and who had strong support from the more conservative elements in the community. As Grove's sense of injury grows, the tone of the letters changes. His world is now a small one, depending on small things that have suddenly ballooned to blot out distance, perspective, judgment, proportion. The detailing of the bottles of seeds, the mounting of insects, the cost of postage sounds like the cry of a man who sees a last chance slipping away. He is an outsider and unwanted. To ease his mortification, Grove escapes into the legendary world that he had already devised of the Swedish father and Scotch mother and of himself as a sophisticated man of the world, a scholar, a far-traveller.

In the last, long, whirling, incoherent letter, everything can "go smash." The Byronic note is strong: he will renounce the world; he will become a recluse at Etaples; he will be a spectator of life. He will trust only animals for "their life is the only sincere, the only untainted life." Two sentences after that declaration, the reason for it becomes clear: the young woman to whom he went so eagerly at Christmas, whom he thought he was about to marry, had turned him away. "I did not know my world any longer! It was so changed." The intense, driven, emotional, *young* person that these letters reveal has a very different aspect from the stern face in a high collar that Grove even then publicly assumed.

And then the letters stopped. There were no more. Perhaps Grove had already found a new confidant in the Miss Wiens who was so good with the swing, and whom he married the following summer. Certainly he found companionship with the two teacher-students whom he tutored in their high school subjects at night. As one of them recently said, "John and I loved him. I think it was love." And he was asked back for a second year. By the time that school year began, Grove's correspondent, like many other Canadians in Germany, had been interned in a prisoner-of-war camp, the one that included Ernest Macmillan.

\* \* \*

Winkler, Man  
7/IX/13

Lieber Herr Warkentin,

Ich bin so froh, jemanden in Dtschld zu haben der mir vielleicht behilflich sein kann, dass ich Ihnen möglicherweise lästig fallen werde. Vielleicht wird es Ihnen zur Genugtuung gereichen dass Sie ja schliesslich Ihrer Heimat helfen.

Ich habe 3 weitere Büchertitel über die ich gern Auskunft hätte:

*Fitzga*, Die Leitenden Grundsätze für den Elementarunterricht in Rechnen und Geometrie (Wien 1897)

*Knilling*, Die Naturgemässe Methode des Rechenunterrichts (München 1899)

*Rein Pickel*, Volksschulunterricht (Leipzig 1889)

*Petersen*, Methoden und Theorien für die Lösung geometrischer Konstruktionsprobleme (Kopenhagen 1879)

Wenn Sie noch nicht bankrott ("broke") sind, kaufen Sie mir doch, bitte, den *Rein Pickel*; ich werde Ihnen, sowie ich Nachricht über den Preis erhalte, den Betrag schicken.

Vielen Dank im voraus

Ihr

F. Grove

NB. Wir erregen Aufsehen hier durch die Neuerungen, die ich in Winkler eingeführt habe. Sie werden wohl davon hören. A.W. ist starr und sieht trauern den Auges zu.

*[I am so happy to have someone in Germany who may perhaps help me, that I may possibly become a nuisance to you. Perhaps you will count it a satisfaction that, in the long run, you will be helping your country. I have three more titles of books about which I very much want information:*

*Fitzga, Governing Principles for the Teaching of Elementary Arithmetic and Geometry (Veinna 1897)*

*Knilling, Teaching Arithmetic by the Natural Method (Munich 1899)*

*Rein Pickel, Elementary School Syllabus (Leipzig 1889)*

*Petersen, Methods and Theories for the Solving of Geometric Construction Problems (Copenhagen 1879)*

*If you're not yet broke, please buy the Rein Pickel for me. I'll send you the money as soon as I know the price.*

*Many thanks in advance. Yours, F. Grove.*

*N.B. We have had great excitement here over the innovations that I have begun*

*in Winkler; you will probably hear about it. A.W. is stunned and looks on with sorrowful eyes.]*

Winkler, 20/X/13

Dear Mr. Warkentin,

Thanks for your letter. It sounds a little homesick? Now you, too, want money! You'll have to wait till next Saturday. Did I want the 8 vols of Rein Pickel? You bet I did. So slide them along, please, as soon as I send the money.

As far as our innovations go, there is not much to report. The swing works fine. Miss Wiens is a very good teacher, at that and in her room, too. The boys — I had to take them myself. I have given both P.H. and Enns a chance at it. Enns simply cannot manage them. And P.H. fooled away his time: never got started. Enns is glad that I start it now. P.H. is mad. He thinks I am the most interfering fellow he has ever met with.

You see, one of the worst troubles here is undue and rash promoting. When a kid does a little good work for once — swish, up he or she goes into the next grade. Nobody really masters the course. P.H. has not the faintest idea of teaching. "Er salbadert," as we used to say in Germany — "er seift." [*He babbles; he blathers.*] If I stay here next year, 14 years will be the age limit for entrance. Why, we have kids of 13 in the 3rd class! Getting permanently hurt by cramming. For what else is it? So far I have the trustees on my side. I had to fight a little. But it seems they trust me and believe that I know what I am doing. — Bench work will be started this week with a class of 6. The rest of the boys do raffia and reed work — basketry, in short.

I think I told you that 2nd class work has started. My teaching day is 9 hrs. long — besides 3 times a week 2 hrs in the evening, (Full matriculation). We need 3 more students for 2nd class, in order to get high school standing. I wrote a letter to your sister — but it seems she does not think it worth her while to answer. Quite apart from the personal affront it is a little disheartening to see *Winkler* students go to Gretna instead of helping their home cause. Unless we get the high school grant we shall not be able to put in the laboratory. Also your brother Peter does not turn up! Nor your brother Cornelius!

As for the exhibition — the govt — as always — was prompt to promise and is slow to act. I have a splendid collection of books, though. All the big American publishers came to the front with exhibits of educational literature. Personally I make an exhibit of "Books that every teacher ought to have" — and "a model outfit for teaching plant biology." — For the library I have bought a flora that costs \$15. (Britton-Brown — you may know it.) The Museum grows slowly but

steadily. — Moths and butterflies that do not fly any longer are being hatched in a home made pupa incubator. — The aquarium is transformed into a terrarium — full of caterpillars, beetles, frogs etc.

Now for you: what are you hearing, whom? Let me know some details, please. If I cannot have those things myself, give me a “farbiges Abbild” (“Im farbigen Abbild haben wir *das Leben*,” sagt Goethe.)<sup>2</sup> [*We possess life in a coloured image.*] You will probably say: “there speaks old age!” — yes, or experience! (I wish I could get the “Insel-Verlag Taschen-Ausgabe von Goethe’s Werken” in soft leather!) I wish I could get a decent critical edition of Homer’s *Odysseus*. The older a man gets the more he wants to be left alone with the 2 or 3 companions that he has found worth while — Goethe’s *Westöstlicher Diwan*, the *Odyssey* and Shakespeare’s 2 *Richards*, *Lear*, *Timon* and *Midsummernight’s Dream*! Give me those and a life-sentence and I will rest content. I tell you I get mighty tired fighting stupidity — *Mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens* — [*Against stupidity the gods themselves contend in vain.*] Well, well — catch me complaining!

Our friend A.W. is my stoutest ally — I knew it. You know he is not a bad fellow. I doubt whether his influence is *all* to the bad. Seeing those young students of his now I sometimes wonder whether a really good normal class — theoretical — would not dislocate their joints, disintegrate their self-sufficiency to such an extent that there would be nothing left except shreds and rags. Of course, the right thing to do would be to drop all the theory completely and give nothing but the practical part. But A.W. sees that himself, and he really likes me. You know I have avoided knocking him — and *he appreciates that*. Fletcher told me that I could not have a better advocate than him, and that his recommendation had been such that I could command any position that I might wish to get next year. I told him if Winkler went along I might wish to stay right there so as to carry through what I had started.

But enough for today,

Cordially

Fred Grove

I have been sick — 4 da in bad; now I am crawling about with very little “vim.”

Winkler, Man.

1/XI/13

Dear Mr. Warkentin,

Enclosed please find 17 M. which will cover what you paid out so far. I hope

to send you the balance for the rest of the vols on Dec. 1st so I will then have the complete work (Rein Pickel, I mean). I have very little time at present. We have now 5 2nd class students, 1 full matric. I have bought chem. & phys. outfit to the tune of \$300 out of my pocket and we have not yet what we need. Manual outfit also was insufficient, and I had to throw in another \$35. (Total cost now \$136.65). That sounds pretty, does it not? Well, somebody has got to start things, or they will never get started. I will write more fully soon.

Very cordially yours

F.G.

und dennoch hab' ich harter man die Liebe [*and yet, hardened as I am, I too have experienced love*]<sup>3</sup>

Winkler, Man.

6/XII/13

Dear Mr. Warkentin,

Your letter amused me immensely — chiefly because I had expected something of the kind. You American people are funny: preferring the destructive downpour to the slow, penetrating, fruitful drizzle. And when things are not done in a hurry you think they are not being done at all. Those boys who seem old to you have it in them to go far. You live faster, but do you make faster progress? Has not good, staid, old Germany gone to the front, slowly, but surely? Who is beating out the English on the South American market. Whose trade in Canada grows double as fast as that of old Engld? — I was much interested in the report about your curriculum. Only regret: I do not see any of the exact sciences nor the classical languages represented. I am teaching J. R. Wolkof full matric. now. With our friend P.H. it is fight, I am afraid. It looks as if the issue will soon be — he or I. Well, I am ready. I believe, when the question comes up as it is bound to do within a month or so, I can at least say: look what I have done! The fight has sometimes exasperated me, sometimes galled me, but my dander is up, and as long as I can get living wages here I am going to stick it out and to refuse better offers of which I had four since Fletcher gave out his interview about our school — of which you probably have heard. The Dept. anyway is sitting up. But I am bleeding. The things said about me here are sometimes funny, sometimes they hurt because there is a kernel of truth in them. I cannot afford to pay any attention to that. *I have got* to win out. I am remodeling the whole arrangement:

Room I	Grades I & junior II
Room II	" sen.II, III, IV



Room III       "    V, VI, VIII  
 Room IV       "    IX, X, XI

This was my last fight. P.H. opposed me again although I did it because *he* proved incapable of handling the 4 grades. — The open war broke out on this ground. Some people had come to the school to see if we could take outsiders. P.H. caught them and told them: impossible (enrollment 160). For several days I did not hear about it, but when I did I went straight up and asked him whether he was the principal? I made it plain to him that *I* was running this school, not he. That if I assigned pupils to him he had to take them, whether he liked it or not. I went after those people again — poor Farmers whose only chance is with us. And I told the trustees that if they did not think it worth their while to discuss the school affairs with their principal instead of one of the assistants, said principal would not think it worth his while to go on with his work beyond next pay day. Well, I conquered along the whole line. Old man Wiebe stood by me at last. The assistant teachers are my assistants now, not hidden bosses. — I have put in a physical & chemical equipment out of my pocket (cost close to \$300) — a botanical outfit (cost close to \$200) — manual training (cost \$139.65),<sup>4</sup> and we are going to have a flag or banner that will cost \$68 in materials alone — and all that has not cost the district one red cent. — I believe I deserve a little credit, if it comes to that, instead of being run down as I am, don't you think so? Besides we have a collection of insects, mounted by yours truly, a large collection of weed-seeds — a nice number of dried plants — a series of microscopical slides (mounted by myself) — a pond vivarium — culture chamber for bacteria — 200 or more glass jars filled with all the farm seeds of Canada — specimens of chief manufactures in all stages of manufacturing — and a large collection of minerals. It is true that for some of these things I got the co-operation of the govt., but who *got* it? Nobody ever even offered to help me write the hundreds of letters. My postage account foots up to \$59 at present. — My expressage account shows an expenditure of \$63. — If money counts, well, I think, then these figures tell. —

But enough, it goes against my grain to give vent to my indignation.

Will you do me *a big favour*? I would like to get 2 piano selections: the one: Das Preislied aus den Meistersingern von Nürnberg. The other one: "Am stillen Herd, zur Winterszeit . . ." (Stolzing's first song) aus der selben Oper.

If you possible [sic] can slide them along — or if the store can ship C.O.D. (I not knowing the price) — you would oblige me immensely. —

Did I tell you that I am going to get married soon?

Cordially yours

F.G.

Winkler, Man.

10/II/14

Dear Mr. Warkentin,

Thanks for your letter which I received yesterday. I am glad you wrote me a little more fully because I see now where the hitch is. Of course, in many things you are dead right. Also, of course, I hate Germany. I hate America, too, but probably a trifle less, because I am here. Excuse me for saying what I am going to say, but you know, I am quite a trifle older in yrs and maybe still a little older in life. I was anxious for you to get your trouble's worth out of this undertaking. I did not at all want you to like Germany — but I did want you to like the experience you are going through. To every question there are so many sides, and very few people see more than a fraction of their own side. I have very little patience with narrow mindedness. My father was a Swede, my mother a Scotch-woman, I was raised in Germany, I have lived in pretty nearly every country of Europe, in N.A. & Canada, I have travelled in Africa, through Asia, in Australia, I know India and China a little, the Islands south of Asia fairly well — so I believe — speaking merely geographically — I can claim a certain “Manysidedness.” Also as far as “education” goes (the “ ” means that I think very little of what is commonly called education) — I speak English, French, German, Italian and Arabian — and I have a fair knowledge of Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Spanish and Swedish with their respective literatures; I believe I have imbued myself with the fundamental principles of modern Science, and I do not know of any corner of Mathematics where, f.i., I meet difficulties in reading the latest and most advanced treatises. I have travelled a good deal, *mentally*, too. And what have I got out of it? Nothing, except a certain broadmindedness — and an extreme fastidiousness in matters of art, literature and women (excuse me again!). I have one longing: to leave the world, to retire to the little corner just west of Etaples, south of Boulogne, on the French coast that seems to swing in resonance with the vibrations of my inner tuning fork — to live there is absolute seclusion, write a poem now and then and finish a book that I have been working on between times for 20 yrs. — But there is one thing that I hate: patriotism, which for me is synonym with ignorance and “cornerdom” (“Winkeltum” we called it in Bonn). I never can be a “citizen” — which, after all is merely a translation of “behäbiger Burger.” You see, there are things in German: Bier,

Behäßigkeit, "Gemütlichkeit" (!!!!), that smell like a badly aerated room: but do they smell worse than baseball, than divorce scandals of married life, than the abominable religious and moral hypocrisy of America? Take the "sexuelle Frage." I believe that your figures are correct: they tackle with my own experience. *But!* are you aware that things are just as bad in every densely populated district in the world? The nauseating percentages of sexually diseased are to be found in N.Y. City, Chicago, New England, Cape Town, Canton, *England* above all, just as well. Germany has (as France, too) at least the courage to take the bull by the horns. Now let me make an alarming statement: I do not object to sexual intercourse without marriage — but I object to just those consequences. I also object to premature development of sexual instincts. I have suffered immensely myself from that very cause. I think I was 15 yrs old when I was "seduced" by a married woman, the young wife of one of my old professors. If in spite of that I have managed to keep free of sexual infection I owe that to my mother's broadminded advice and to luck, I think (that first experience resulted in a public scandal, as the lady in question went through a divorce suit with me — 16 yrs old — as the witness — ). I also believe that, since German civilization is essentially a city civilization, these things partly account for the fact that Germany has no aristocracy of the mind or of achievement. *But:* what kind of aristocracy has America? They *call* it an aristocracy of achievement. It is an aristocracy of grocerdom, of mental hollowness, of dollar wisdom.— In America all fortunes are self-made; in Germany all mental achievement is "Parvenutum." There is only one real aristocracy left in the world: that of lamadom in the Thibet. I do not believe that Germany as a power is declining. It is just the infantile diseases of the country that I loathe. I prefer downright decay. I prefer "the golden hues that herald and beautify decay," as somebody, I don't know who, expressed it. — As for the men of science in Germany — Nietzsche said: "Sie sind die Mehlsäcke: klopft sie, und heraus fliegt der Staub der Gelehrsamkeit." [*They are like flour sacks; beat them and out flies the dust of academe.*] I love France.

*But!:* Germany is the one really instructive country where Americans ought to go: just as much in order to learn what to avoid: what they themselves are drifting into, as what to imitate.

Yes, I am afraid, I *am* an American, always was one, sorry to say so. *I* could no longer live in Germany.

Superiority! But do you know that this ridiculous feeling of superiority to the rest of the world is much more prevalent among Americans than Germans? I

believe I have been through every representative part of America with the exception of the extreme Northwest of Canada, and everywhere I found the closed mind: "We are leading the world in everything: we have nothing to learn." As far as making the best of this poor job that we call life is concerned, I think we ought to try what works out best — not hastily or rashly but observantly; in any case we must give things a trial. Now take Winkler — quite true, the people are slow to move, but so am I. Only I come with many things that have been tried out. I tell them you have a bunch of "bad boys" here that *are not* bad. They are being treated wrong. Why is it that I can do *anything* with Willy Neufeld, with Jake Loewen? Even make them work? But the people here condemn me — not because they know anything about my work — nobody has even been in school! But because they see me introducing a few innovations — slowly — carefully — and because they are pent up in their own ideals — because they listen to the talk of a disgruntled man *who belongs to them* and whom I have shaken up from a 10 years' sleep. They do not see that we have 20 pupils more than ever before; they do not see that by working night and day I give the reserve a chance to raise the standard of their teachers. Counting everything I shall send more than 30 candidates into 3rd and 2nd class examinations. And I should not even mention it if people would only leave me alone. In a way I should like to stay here at least another year. I am open for a proposition: but it seems I am not even going to get the chance — judging from what a few adherents tell me. Of course, I do not care. I know I have done what a man could do — I have even waited till the holidays before I lay down to get rid of the fever I had contracted. Even now I still keep working for the High School standing which is practically assured to Winkler for next year. — But that, too, is American, I mean the way I'm treated here. —

Now just a word about Science and the slow German mind. Yes, Germans are slow — yes, as individuals Germans are thoroughly despicable. But even if they do work slowly — they keep at it. The instances you quote have made me impatient thousands of times. But on the other hand, are they not trifles? Let me say this: I am for education for education's sake. I also am for knowledge for knowledge's sake. In the whole of life I do not see any sense. If I want to be truthful I must say that in our individual effort I see only a struggle to get over it in the best possible way. *I stand apart, aloft, if you want to put it that way.* It is a horrible thought to me that I am *acting*, "doing," at all. Whenever you touch life you make a mess of it. When you are young you don't notice it so much. My love for dogs, pups and all kinds of animals rests in the firm conviction that their

life is the only sincere, the only untainted life. On the other extreme stands the contemplative life — the life of the spectator who wants to *know*, not to do. That is my only salvation. (As for my marriage, that has gone to smash: something I have been working for for the last five years. I don't blame the girl — I merely don't understand her. Difference in age was considerable: she was my pupil before she went to college. At Christmas I went down to Arkansas — into the hospital!! And when I came out, after a week of raving fever, I did not know my world any longer! It was so changed. Well, enough of that!) So naturally I value even one tiny little bit of found knowledge immensely much more than all the deeds ever done. You say: "If we had waited for German philosophy to decide . . . where would we be?" But where *are* we!?! Is life one trifling little bit less raw, less cruel to-day than it was 10,000 yrs ago? Only the *robust* thick skinned people ever could endure active life: the rest of them went to the wall or into the wilderness. I am of the latter. I do not see that we have come any nearer to the solution of essential problems. Even Science never explains: it describes; describes more and more minutely — and I enjoy the spectacle. Let the slow, careful German laborers of the mind work for me, and let the whole city of Leipzig go to smash, let traffic be stopped and the fire department lift trolley cars!!

By the way, you misunderstand the Germans there. Again the dense population accounts for it. Why should any body dirty his gloves to drag a horse out of the way when there are people specially appointed to do that? It is none of *their* business!! Here, where men are scarce, everybody does everything. *I* should have bought a horse this fall if I could afford as in Germany to hire a man to keep it in tiptop condition and appearance, but I do not care to curry it myself, or even to draw a strap tighter when that is needed. It would be different if I thought it my business to *teach* how to saddle a horse. I promised to run this school, and so I do it: do it to the best of my knowledge and ability. But do I like it? I believe if I really wanted to stay I could pull that off, too — but is it worth while? I don't think so, not for myself. Fletcher says: "you *must* stay there and finish what you have begun." But why "must" I? I spent the greater part of my salary on this school — that puts me back one year. Instead of being through 1918 I shall have to work on till 1919 before I can retire: but I believe there ought to be a school somewhere that *suits* me. Selkirk has been offered to me. One school in Sask., one in B.C. In each case they are willing to let me pick my assistants — so why should I fight for this position? And yet I'd stay if they wanted me to — because I like to be of help — but they don't.

Well, I believe I have wearied you enough!

Yours cordially

F.G.

NB. — The Meistersinger selections will be heartily welcomed. Thanks ever so much. Give me a chance to “revenge” myself, will you?

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1970, the late Mr. I. J. Warkentin showed me these letters and gave me his permission to publish them. He then generously donated them to the Grove Collection at the University of Manitoba. Subsequently, the Grove estate also gave me permission to publish them.
- <sup>2</sup> Grove here misquotes Goethe’s line:  
“Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben.”
- <sup>3</sup> Grove did not finish the line:  
“und dennoch hab’ ich harter man die Liebe auch gespürt.”
- <sup>4</sup> The discrepancy is Grove’s, between this sum and the \$136.65 of the previous letter.