

5 a. A. W. Schlegel an Frau Smith

[Göttingen, Sommer 1790]

Madam,

You will excuse, I hope, my troubling you so soon with another letter after my last. The occasion for it is yours sons last letter to Mr. Smith, which accidentally fell into my hands, he having left the first copy of it lying open in his room.

I scarce should think it necessary to mention anything about what he writes concerning me, because I may be sure you will not judge against me by his misrepresentation of matters without having made further enquiries. But as you and Mr. Smith live so distant from this place, and as his letter might give you the idea, that he is living here without any inspection, I hope I need not fear your being misunderstood by you when I lay candidly before you what I have to answer to his opinion, about a matter which he is not able to judge of.

He thinks I am of no use to him. I forgive easily a young man, who likes more to live without a governor than with one. The reason why he thinks so is because I take and from the beginning have taken care to let him feel his dependance as little as possible. What can be obtained by gentle means, I would not use harsh ones to obtain it — friendly advices and admonitions I gave him continually, reproofs only, when it was not to be avoided.

I need not be afraid of talking to you about your sons failings, Madam — you called him extremely indolent he is so indeed and therefore wants somebody to excite him to constant occupation. Let him answer for himself if he has not been much more diligent since I live again with him, than during the time I was at Hanover.

As to his acquaintances, I know very well people with what he converses, though I find it not necessary to accompany him when he goes to see them. Till now I have not had any occasion to confront him in this respect, but if he should happen to form bad connexions, I quickly should put an end to them. If he is not more in my company, it is his own fault — he knows I am almost constantly at home in his leisure hours before supper. It would be a very easy thing to chain him to my side — but then it cannot be thought fit, that I should run after him where he pleases; he must stay at home as long as I do, and only walk and see people when I chose to do so.