

25th September, 1935.

Dr. László Siklosy.

It was a very great pleasure to me to receive your letter dated September 21st, in which you described all your doings, and it gave me great satisfaction to know how pleased your family and friends are with the sketch of you, which I am so happy I took the opportunity to paint while you were here. I was also pleased to hear how much your friend Gabriel Wells liked it. I only wish we could have seen more of you during your stay in London, and hope this will be the case next time you visit England, when we hope you will stay with us.

I wish to thank you for the photograph you sent me, which I will keep amongst my most cherished souvenirs.

Thank you also for sending me the address of Légrády. I will write to him immediately, and will also mention the portrait of Herczeg Ferenc, on which he is so keen. I assure you I often think how I could fulfil your and his desire regarding these portraits, and I also am very keen to paint them at the first possible opportunity. Both are eminent men, and I would be proud to add them to the list of outstanding personalities whom I have painted.

I am sure you will be interested to hear that I have received a delightful letter from Bickel Gergő Nándor, the Librarian /

Librarian to the Pestvérmegye, in which he says that the County Council wish me to paint the portrait of their present great Főispán and Secretary to State, Preszly Elemér, and suggests their conditions. I feel very flattered that they wish me to paint this picture, to be added to the list of historic portraits already in their palace. I have replied to this effect, but did not mention how or when I would paint the portrait, as they did not, but if it cannot be executed here, I will try to consider coming somehow in a quiet way to Budapest about the beginning of next year. I could then paint the three portraits. As soon as I have their reply, which I now expect every day, I will write to you again in this matter, and if I do come then to Budapest I could perhaps paint the pictures in the villa which Dr. Légrády so kindly offered me, or, if the light is not sufficiently good, I might possibly be able to get some place in the Tudományos Akadémia - but these are just pleasant ideas still, which I hope may be happily fulfilled.

I am very grateful indeed to you for getting the restorer of the National Gallery in Budapest to put in good condition the portrait of Wekerle and varnish that of the Regent. It would not do to show the former portrait in its present very bad condition. It will be a very interesting collection to see, all these pictures, including yours, at the Nemzeti Szalon.

I am happy to know that the President of the House is so eager to show the Regent's portrait, and especially in the Nemzeti Szalon. I had a letter from Madame Hubay, who is a very old friend of mine, and they are delighted to know /

Dr. Siklóssy.

- 2 -

25.9.35.

know that the portrait will be there, where their son Andor now fills the position of President which I once held, when I came home to Hungary after my marriage, thirty-six years ago.

You write of an official presentation of the Regent's portrait in the Parliament, when the decoration in the President's room has been completed. Will that not clash with the time of the Namzeti Szalon Exhibition? I would be glad if you would inform me as to this, as the official presentation is certainly a very important event, and it would be interesting if matters could be arranged in such a way that first the presentation would take place, and then after that the picture be delivered to the Namzeti Szalon.

I am sending you the photographs I promised - one of the Maharaja of Jaipore, one of myself as a soldier, and that of Zach Félicien. The last I painted when I came home from abroad after my military service which was between 1892 and 1893, when there was a general enthusiasm for historical pictures. This picture was first in the possession of the Gerliczy family, who were obliged after the War to sell it here. You can keep all these photographs.

I am relieved that you want to shorten the history of my life. As I already mentioned to you, I do not wish to say too much, as I need all the material for the book of my life, and for this occasion I think a very short history, which you have kindly undertaken to write, will be sufficient. I will just give you a few hints of things which you may not know of my varied, restless youth, when nothing interested me but the one idea, to become a painter - an idea which met with severe opposition in my parental home, at any rate on my father's side /

Dr. Siklossy.

- 3 -

25.9.35.

side, but which opposition I was able eventually to overcome, and so gain independence to work for my one aim which, through unrelenting work, and partly through the help of the Hungarian Government, I was able to achieve.

I began to draw already when I was six years old, and neglected my studies for it. My first turning point was when in the Népszínház, at the time when Eva was Director, a very popular play was produced, called "Strogoff Mihály". There was a need for little boys and girls to take part in a scene with a group of deportees to Siberia on a sinking burning ship. Through a school friend I took part in this for several evenings, for which I received 10 Kreuzer an evening, which made me very proud. But what impressed me most was the setting, and the painted scenery. I made the acquaintance of an employee of the scene painter Lehmann, and became obsessed with one idea - to become a scene painter. After much persuasion I induced my Mother, secretly, and unknown to my Father, to take me to see Lehmann. I remember so well the morning we were received in his studio on the fifth floor of the Népszínház, and I cannot describe my excitement when I was in the presence of the great man. When my mother told him of my ambition he said "Well, but how could I employ your little boy? You must let him grow and study longer. The brushes with which we paint are higher than he is". However, when he looked through my drawings, which I had specially done for that purpose, he decided to keep me. I was with him for eight months, and was the happiest boy in the world, working very hard, preparing canvases, cooking colours, painting small scale models of scenery - and later painting scenery itself, and already earning money. There was a staff of twelve or fourteen people employed, but one day when I had been there about eight months Lehmann called me to him and asked me to carry for him a letter to a young lady who I knew called from time to time (like many others) on my master. His asking me to be his messenger, to carry/

Dr. Siklossy.

- 4 -

25.9.35.

carry a love letter infuriated me to such an extent that I went home and told my mother I would not carry it, it was too great an insult, and I would leave him. I sent back the letter to him, with one from me saying that I was not his messenger, and refused to return. It made such an impression on him that he wrote to me himself asking me to stay on, but I kept to my decision.

I think gratefully of Miklós János, Director of the School of Arts and Crafts, and later of Kelety Gustav, Director of the Hajtamar Képezde and of my Professors there, Gregus Imre, Székely Bartalan, and last but not least Professor Lotz - all men of the highest integrity.

At twenty-one years old, after I had left the Munich Academy, I went to Paris, and was given introductions to Munkácsy by Szmrecsányi, and Count Csaky, then Minister of Education and Art. Szmrecsányi was then the able and distinguished Secretary of the Műcsarnok. One of my dreams was fulfilled when I found myself in the presence of Munkácsy, and after looking through my drawings he said "Many come here from Hungary, but only a few live up to their duty. Either you will go up, in this big city, or you will go under. You must concentrate on fulfilling the purpose for which you are here."

Another event which made a great change in my life was when I met Miss Lucy Guinness, from Ireland, who nine years later became my wife. It was in Munich, in 1892, in the last year of my time at the Royal Academy there, the same year when I began my one year of military service. I presented myself for service with my regiment, the 32nd Infantry, on the 1st October, and before that I had studied and passed the necessary examination to allow me to serve one year only.

My first official work on my return to Hungary after that was the then Prime Minister Wekerle, then Count Andor Festetics, and the great Minister of Justice Desider Szily, whose /

whose portrait I painted for the Palais de Justice at Szolnok, and another for the Palais de Justice in Budapest.

The first picture I exhibited in Paris, which had a great success, was that of a little girl, Daniela Granelius, whom I painted in Frankfurt in 1896. In 1899 I painted Prince Hohenlohe, at that time Chancellor of the German Empire, and at Rome in 1900 I painted Pope Leo XIII and Cardinal Rampolla. In January 1892, while I was still in the Academy in Munich, I received the prize of the Milbarátok Kőre for my picture of an old woman whom I painted in the Bácska surrounded by listening children.

In 1912 the King of Hungary, Francis Joseph, raised me to the nobility, after I had painted him for the third time.

I have given you only a few indications of events of importance in my career, and I leave it to your consideration and good taste to work it out to your liking. There are many things which could be added, but you know them, and if you want to know more you will find many details in "Who's Who", of which I am sure you possess a copy at the Editorial Office of the Pesti Hírlap, or write to me.

Now, dear friend, before I finish I must ask you another favour. You may remember that through the intermediary of Lady Chilton, the wife of the former Ambassador, I was approached to give a picture to be sold by auction or lottery, for the benefit of my Hungarian colleagues. This was about two years ago. I heard then that they were unable to raise the necessary sum, since when I have heard nothing. The picture is at present at the Ministry of Education, and was hanging in the office of M. de Wlassics, Secretary to the Ministry. I gave them one of my best works, a Spanish woman dancing, three-quarter length, in its frame - I think you reproduced /

Dr. Siklossy.

- 6 -

25.9.35.

reproduced it at the time. I would have expected that they would at least let me know what they intend to do with it, and I would be very much obliged if you would look into this affair, and find out what is their intention regarding the picture.

No more just now, dear friend, but I hope to hear from you again soon, and get further good news.

My wife joins me in best wishes and warmest regards to you and your wife. Please remember me to all your friends whom we had the pleasure to meet at your house, and especially to Légrády, Ferency and Kornis.

Dr. Siklosy.

- 7 -

25.9.35.