

Madame Superior

Before Clara leaves your house, I am writing to urge you to give her, very prudently however, a few lessons on propriety and reserve, even towards her papa. That dear nephew has been complaining to me on several occasions about the childish expressions of affection his daughter shows him. He has more than once suffered to the point of blushing from the embraces she allowed herself, which he was not expecting and which, because of the presence of worthy people, he was unable to repress at once. To put order into these excessive demonstrations, Henri will give her, on her return from Malines, severe lessons on that subject, and he has begged me to help him by giving his daughter advice both on that subject and on others. So that the father and uncle may be understood by Clara it will be very useful for you to give your pupil instruction on the subject, and on the care she must have of her reputation and the respect a child owes her father.

It is absolutely essential to say nothing to Clara about what I have written above. So do not let her know anything about this step of mine nor about what her father and I propose to say to her and to prescribe for her. You and Mme Superior General are the only persons I authorize to know anything about this letter.

I will also regulate the correspondence that will be allowed between Clara and her sisters, your pupils. We have firmly decided no longer to tolerate that wasting of time, that satisfying of dangerous curiosity, and those inventions of vanity and sensuality from which the character of Clara has suffered so much and that it would be a great pity if we were to see them transmitted to her sisters.

I have received a letter from your novice Apolline; I have answered it, without knowing that person. I will write to you later about the worth of her writing.

The novice Adélaïde has also written to me. As I do not know that young person either, you would do me a service by answering her on my behalf, saying that I will pray for her, etc. Always put the family name after the religious one, the first time after the taking of the habit for those subjects who are known to me but a little or not at all. It would be still better if you told me a little about the character or the needs of the novices who write to me; that makes things clear.

You can see by my writing that I have to conclude after offering you my excuses.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd February 1861