

Grand Hotel de Marseille
Marseilles. Friday Oct. 27/65.

My dear Mamma,

After posting my letter to you yesterday I went to the table d'hôte at 5.30 at which about 20 sat down, no English, two Germans and one Italian. The little German waiter was duly attentive to me and after dinner advised me to go across the street to a music hall place where there was some wonderful lady who had got 8000 (qu?) francs to come down from Paris and sing at Lyons. However I was too tired for such amusements and turned into bed at nine. Yesterday morning I left Lyons at 8, going to the station in the hotel omnibus which figured in the bill for one franc, a Frenchman who had been stopping at the hotel just like me and had come in the omnibus too, only paid the conductor half a franc - do they in France as in Switzerland, charge English folk just double what they do their own country men? In the carriage for Avignon there was a young woman dressed in black who turned out to be a German & ladies maid, travelling with an English family, a Parisian lady and her two children and a young man speaking English French and German, who on inquiry proved to be a Frankforter - Germans again! I never yet met a Frankforter who had not highly republican

ideas on all points and this one was no exception to the rule. He remarked, as is quite true, how much time the French spend billiard playing and card playing, at both of which you see them quite early in the morning lounging in the cafes as if business was quite a secondary matter. The first thing that struck me after leaving Lyons was the great number of huge melons or gourds lying in the bare fields, some green, some white and others bright yellow or orange; then the barrels; barrels everywhere, like coals in England. Here I saw the adobe walls for the first time such as one reads of in books on Mexico and California; once built they seem sufficiently lasting, but while building they have to keep them covered, or the clay and stones of which they are built would be washed away.

How fond the French are of suspension bridges, they are to be seen everywhere and always look light and graceful; probably one reason why they are so much used in this part of the country is that the rivers are mostly mere torrents, dry in one season and huge rivers ⁱⁿ another and the one or two piers required for a suspension bridge take up so little of the available waterway. The whole country looks as if it was alternately deluged with rain and scorched up with the sun.

How is it that the water here though generally

as muddy as our own when running, yet so perfectly clear when allowed to settle in the pools and ditches? Does the sun cause this? In some places I observed that the Railway was raised on a slight bank without any apparent engineering reason, as the stuff for the bank had to be ~~sent~~ ^{taken from} beside the line, but I suppose this was done where the country was likely to be flooded. As we got further south the rugged and broken slopes of Dauphiné began to appear in ~~the~~ ^{the} east, olive trees - unsromantically like bog myrtles, - roses and acacias looked Summerlike under a bright blue sky and even the houses began to have an Italian look. Perhaps the most striking change of all was the clearness of the air, very refreshing after the thick October weather in England.

At one place we passed the scene of a late railway accident, the account of which I had read in a Marseilles paper at Lyons; the engine had run down the side of an embankment and was lying there about on its side about half way down; some yards from it lay the tender similarly situated. While talking of French Railways I may mention some particulars which may be new to you; at the station, having taken your ticket you then proceed to register your

* weight allowed free 30 kilogrammes = 66 lbs.

baggage, you present your ticket (which must be obtained before you can register the luggage or enter the waiting room) and the luggage is weighed by a porter who takes your ticket and shouts out the number of your articles their weights and destination to a clerk in an office close by, handing in your ticket at the same moment when you get back with another luggage ticket at a window beside where you are standing. For my portmanteau I have had each time to pay 10 centimes (?) but I believe this is merely registration fee and not overweight charge*. On arriving at your destination you are kept waiting some minutes till the luggage is all set out in the station house and you get it on presenting your baggage ticket; all this does very well when one is not in a hurry and saves a great deal of trouble in some ways, but on the other hand it wastes a great deal of time both on at starting and on arriving and entails a great nuisance - that of people lugging into the carriages with them anything they can possibly carry. ^{This} is I think a silent comment of the people themselves on the whole proceeding and shows how they dislike it.

To return to the point of departure; having procured your ticket and shown it to the man at the entrance of the waiting room he admits you and you are there kept penned up till five or at most ten minutes (often less than five though) before train time when the doors are thrown open, all politeness vanishes and a general rush and scramble for the carriages ensues. N.B. This is not the case at Havre - perhaps they found John Bull would not stand it. As Bradshaw says this whole system cannot be too much condemned. Indeed it is hard to see what possible advantage it can have either for the public or the railway officials, unless perhaps that it gives employment to a large number of the latter. The French 1st class are about the same as our own and the 2nd class almost the same as the 1st except that ^{they} hold 5 instead of 4 on a side and are perhaps not quite so lavishly padded. The third class seems the same as our own. What hideous engines they have! It is strange that so tasteless a people should be so utterly devoid of all taste in machinery - they seem to have no idea of proportion in the various parts.

About a month ago I had prepared some
wedges to carry with me ⁱⁿ ~~on~~ railway travelling
for the purpose of stopping rattling windows,
little thinking that they would so soon be
used on a long journey like this. I have
been intending to make them for a long time
but this is the first journey ^{on which} I have either had
or used them. However I am taking a long
time to get to Avignon ~~where~~ ^{where} I arrived at
three p.m. and got to the Hotel d'Europe.
Avignon seemed to be a thoroughly Italian
place, tall houses, narrow streets all paved
and rather orderiferous, with women sitting
in all the doorways. I ~~first~~ first made
my way to a very fine promenade by the
Rhône, where a French military band was
performing some rather wild music, seeming
much to the delight of the townsfolk who
were lounging about in great numbers,
then I strolled up past the old Papal Palace
(now a barrack) to the Cathedral and
the heights above it, which are nicely
laid out as a garden and promenade.
This point commands a splendid view,
on one side, the city abounding in churches

all seemingly under the guardianship of the gilt angel on the top of the cathedral, on another the Rhone far below at our feet, a very long narrow steamer slowly struggling ^{across the river} against the stream and further off, the grand old fortifications and walls of the town of Villeneuve. ~~So~~ As if to make the scene a little more romantic a crescent moon was high up in the south, the sun having just gone down, and the strains of the military band could just be faintly heard.

It is one of those views that remain fixed in the eye and can be recalled at any moment. However the hour for the table d'hôte was rapidly approaching and on sitting down to it I found the company almost exclusively English, all en route for Cannes; the hotel people and porters all seem to presume that every one must be going there and everyone asks me if I am not "going to Cannes". There were two tom cats present at the table d'hôte one of them ~~the~~ (red) ~~cat~~ the largest cat by far I have ever seen and quite as sedate as such animals are wont to be.

Here begin the tiled floors (even in the bedrooms)
large open court-yards with trees and flowers,
hearths instead of fireplaces and other southern
signs reminding one of Italy. It is a very
nice hotel and the hostess the first Frenchwoman
I ever met who would speak slowly if asked
to do so. No one seemed able to speak anything
but French, though they call it an English
hotel. The porters too speak a horrid patois
and to my ears not over and above familiar
with rough French it was all but un-
-telligible. I had just two hours yesterday
in Avignon and felt quite sorry this morn-
-ning at leaving it so soon, but it ^{was} drizzling
rain and no particular inducement to stay
so I came off by the nine a.m. train and
after a while emerged into ~~the~~ sunshine.

It is strange country one passes through south
of Avignon, part of it is that dreary barren
plain called the Crau, a stony desert
which makes one feel the luxury of railways
to take one so rapidly across so dreary a spot.
Here I remarked, how small an extent ~~the~~
eye could take in even from the railway carriage
and how small, or rather how close an horizon
a man must have in the Desert or on the Prairies.

To day in the train I observed an officer, probably naval, with a uniform very similar to that of the English Navy, except that he it had velvet cuffs of that peculiar reddish purple which gives ~~so~~ ^{so} rich an appearance alongside of gold.

The last station we stopped at before Marseilles was Cognac after which the character of the country changes entirely, and assumes what I fancy to be a Mexican look - plains, with mulberries and olives scattered over them and here and there rocky hills, gently sloping at the bottom and suddenly getting precipitous at the top where the rock is quite bare, then comes a tunnel $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles long and on emerging from it the Mediterranean comes into view, to day looking rather hazy and not very blue, in fact looking very much like any other sea. I had been advised to go to the "Grand Hotel" at Marseilles but on referring to Bradshaw (there are new hotels everywhere since the date of my "Murray" - 1861) I find "Grand Hotel du Louvre", "Grand Hotel de l'Univers", "Grand Hotel Noailles", "Grand Hotel des Colonies" "Grand Hotel de Marseille" Pretty well is it not? However I selected the last named and it is a large and most

excellent hotel - the bill of course I have not yet seen. There is no table d'hôte but you dine à la carte in a courtyard roofed in with glass, ~~and~~ very light and cheerful. It is in fact a regular large 1st class hotel.

The head waiter and some others are Germans so German proves my travelling language, it is a most useful Hotel language on this account. I got here at 1.30 and after having had a good déjeuner of omelette, ~~and~~ real cutlet ~~and~~ claret went off to explore Marseille. It is a magnificent city very gay and with fine shops and Quays. This ~~the~~ street (Rue Canabière and Noailles) is a very fine broad handsome street leading right down to the port. I first went to the post and got your ^{letter} (enclosing card of hotel at Hyères) which I see by the post mark arrived this morning. Then I went down on the Quays but as the vessels lie at right angles to the wall there is not much of them to be seen. I did not hear a word of English or see an English face either there or anywhere except in the hotel, to day, which seems very strange to me. There must surely be so very many English here. Afterwards I made my way up to a chapel on a hill south of the town from which

There is a magnificent view, panoramic in fact, taking in the Mediterranean, the whole of the city, surrounding country and coast in the east. The chapel, Notre Dame de la Garde is a curious building filled with pictures of all kinds of escapes from shipwrecks, accidents &c, really very curious and though Murray calls them daubs, they do not all deserve that name.

I have seen faces and costumes and heard languages to day that I never came across before; indeed from Lyons down everything has been new and interesting to me and I never enjoyed a journey more. The weather too is nearly perfect for travelling, warm enough to be summerlike and pleasant, yet not too hot for comfort in Railway travelling where heat gets very unpleasant. The only things I have to grumble ~~at~~ at are the Frenchmen and their language, but perhaps I shall ~~take~~ know and like both better before long. I have not written anything about the people as I do not yet know enough of them to criticize without prejudice - they are not like things that one can read at a glance. However I have one thing

to growl at and that is my writing apparatus - the paper has been folded and is odious to write on, rising and falling with the strokes of the pen, the case is new and sags when one tries to write on it and finally the table is a thoroughly uncomfortable one to write at; the ink (my own) is the only good thing in the lot. However I have written these 23 1/2 sheets this afternoon and only hope you will be able to read them easily. It is 11. p.m., so I stop. Hotel d'Orient, Hyeres. Oct. 28th

This morning after breakfast I resumed my wanderings about Marseilles and went down to the new Port of la Joliette by the new Rue Imperial, a magnificent street nearly completed and which when finished will be the 2nd, if not the first street in the city; it ~~now~~ connects the ~~last~~ ends of the new and old ports.

They are building at a most astounding rate all round the new port, I should almost fancy they were overdoing it, but probably they know best. They do not seem well off in the matter of docks. I was amused at the signs over the shops on the Quay, in every language imaginable - Greek, Russian and Turkish or Arabic amongst others. One sign was "G. Murphy Ship Chandler"; another "Richards Store over the way"; another "Good Wine!"

Near the post office I was delighted to see a green "London Chatham and Dover Railway" advertisement. I should not wonder if they had put one up on the great pyramid or somewhere in the rocky mountains; they certainly are ubiquitous. I walked out to the point on which the Baths (sea) are situated and then part of the way along a fine road round a high rocky point, but was fairly driven back by the wind.

It was blowing a strong gale from the south and the blue-black waves were rolling in and breaking into spray on the rocks some 60 feet below, the wind sending the spray up over the road and making the gravel and dust fly about in the most unpleasant manner. However it was most enlivening and invigorating and much pleasanter than a burning sun. There is a curious little cove in this headland which seems as if it was made for boats and is occupied by fishing craft; the entrance to it is by a great archway under the road leading from the inland from the sea. At one, I left Marseilles and can recommend the Grand Hotel de Marseilles for everything but economy; however its charges are only in proportion to its luxuries. It is a lovely line of rail all along the coast to Hyeres, bright sunny glimpses of blue seas dashing into white foam against the rocky islets which stud the coast all along, vineyards and olive yards, the latter with the rugged looking old olives straggling

over the burnt up ground and gigantic reeds waving beside the railway. Near Marseilles the meadows were green and in some they were just getting in a crop of hay. The hills all along the coast are very romantic, some being of bare rock, others pine clad to their very top. In spite of the gale that was blowing the sky was summerlike with fleecy clouds flitting over it and getting banked up into darker masses in the north. Near Toulon the coast is very lovely and some grand rocky hills rise up ~~behind~~ behind it. Near Toulon I saw the first olive, looking very tropical, but on the whole I am disappointed in the vegetation, and the olives look dusty and dreary; vineyards seldom have any beauty in any country.

At 3.30 we arrived at the station of Hyères and it is a drive of four miles from the station to the town, a place of some 9000 inhabitants with gas, telegraph and other signs of civilization. There seem to be many large hotels here, this one is at the eastern end of the town and seems a nice place. I am the only stranger in it, but M. Carvin says he expects a family named Dooley (?) from Lower Gloucester Street Dublin on Monday. The only person in the house is ~~the~~ who can speak anything but French is the inter-

-preter whom I have not yet seen. M. Cawrio though he has travelled so much does not seem to have learned any new languages thereby.

I have^a comfortably, and indeed very nicely furnished room on the 1st floor looking towards the south; ~~and~~ room, breakfast, lunch and dinner - everything in fact except lights and wood for firing (last not likely to be wanted) 10 francs a day, or in other words nearly £3 a week. This is expensive but will do till I can look about and ^{see} what else can be got.

I have had a grand dinner to day (at 6), pea soup, cutlets of turbot fish, exactly like veal, potatoes, mutton cutlets with beans, beefsteak, apricot preserve and dessert.

Is not that good feeding? I had almost forgotten to add that the vin du pays seems a much warmer and more Italian like wine than either Bordeaux or Burgundy and mixed with water makes a delicious drink.

I have not had a single contretemps the whole way out and have had a pleasant journey without fuss, worry or hurry of any kind; total expenditure from London to Hyeres, ~~at~~ 1st class to Lyons, 2nd from

that £ 7. 13. 7 - from Monday to Satur-
- day.

M. Carvin says he expects his
head waiter on Monday, - he is a German
of course, and Carvin assures me he speaks
English "très bien"; however I shall not
trouble him much in that line.

No one has arrived here yet, Nov. 1st seems
usual date of first arrivals.

Of course you will forward this to uncle
Joe; I shall write to himself in a few
days when I see how matters go here.

I wish I knew what day C. M. P. and Co,
were to pass and I would go and see Toulon
and come back this far with them that day.

This will be as a letter, but it is the winding
up of my travels for the present and I don't mean
to go on writing letters at this rate.

Your affectionate son

Francis B. Prendergast.

There were numbers of English in the train
en route for Cannes and Nice. Cannes
seems the favourite this year.