

Hotel d'Orient

Nîmes . Nov. 1. 1865

My dear uncle Joe,

This I begin today but probably shall not post it till tomorrow or next day. You will have read already of journey hither, which was pleasant and exactly as I had laid out. I arrived here on Saturday at 4.30 or so p.m. - French time is very puzzling, there is Paris time, post time, "ville" time, in fact one can never be quite sure as to the exact time alluded to in ordinary conversation. As yet (Wednesday morning) I am the only stranger in this house, and the only individuals I see in it are M. Caivin, the proprietor, a jolly, hearty Frenchman who has been round the world on board a French ship of war, as purser or steward I think, one waiter (from the neighbourhood of Lyons) and Miss Caivin, a little girl of 12 or so - none of these speak anything but French and of the very few strangers yet arrived, all seem to be French, nor have I seen an English face or heard a word of English since I left Marseilles. There are many large hotels here and almost every house is "Maison meublée à louer" or "Appartements meublés, au midi, à louer".

* this bon catholique, says M. Carnot.

but all as deserted as an English bathing place
in winter. I asked if Mr Bush the clergyman
or Mr Griffiths the doctor had arrived yet,
but the answer to this and every similar question
is "pas encore". Visitors commence to appear in
the beginning of this month, but I fancy there
will have few this year, Cannes seems all the
go with the English this year and I saw an
article in a French paper praising Cannes as
the most lively of all these sea side places and
holding out as one of its many attractions "Les
Milles Anglaises" who resort to it in such
numbers "pour leurs délicates poitrines"! Amongst
the names in the ^{of last winter} strangers book at the
Hotel I see the Duke of Norfolk, a Hope Scott,
M^rs. Manning and a Mr Ryan Coffee planter
Kandy, Ceylon - you may have met the latter?
Hyères is a lovely spot on the southern slope
of a rocky hill, houses half way up, olives
pines and orange trees to near the top where
the bare rock crops out. The houses are mostly
large and good, built for strangers, all facing
the south and would probably be little better than
overs in summer being built to catch the sun

The feeding here is very good, much like what
one would get at Pondwell - rich and plentiful,
cavi' au lait, rolls and butter, all excellent,
for breakfast, déjeuner, which M. Carwin calls
"le lunch", at whatever hour one likes, of mutton
chops and potatoes, or cold veal or fowl, some
sweets, fruit and vin du pays ad lib, the latter
very good, softer warmer and sweeter than Bordeaux
or Macon - most like the latter. The waiter says
it is very good "pour la poitrine". Then dinner
at 6 (when there are people here the table d'hôte
is at 5.30, but as I am here in solitary grandeur
I choose my own hours) of soup, often cutlets
of turkey exactly like veal, mutton, veal or fowl
all very good, beef not quite up to English; always
two courses of some of these, sweets, fruit and
dessert. Is not that a pretty good carte?

Cooking moreover is excellent, French, modified
to suit English taste and the sea breezes form
a capital sauce. I forgot the vegetables, all
very good, ^{fried in olive oil} potatoes, cauliflower, spinach, haricots
&c.,; I am never able to get through half the
good things on the table and wish there was some
more company to do justice to the cuisine.

From Hyeres to the sea is three miles good, all flat, but not marshy or unwholesome looking, ^{the ground} mostly occupied by olive-yards and where there are streams of clear running water, willows; plenty of huge reeds and at the coast a few umbrella pines. The beach is gravelly and stony somewhat like that of Ravens well only not quite so shelving; available for walking, but rather monotonous. The bay is large but almost landlocked by two peninsulas of low wooded hills, the Isles d'Or ^(or L'Hyeres), nearly filling up the open in the center so that the sea horizon is very small. Ships at anchor in the bay, ^{boats} donaniers, have and there on the sand dunes just behind the beach; there are hills all around, they are picturesque but almost all alike, gently sloping at the foot with vineyards and olive trees, then pines, ^{cork-wood} and rough rocks at the top. The whole place is unlike anything I ever saw before so I cannot give you a simile. There ^{are} available walks close by, and there are actually lanes with hedges. Olive ^{cork wood} Pines, and vines form the staple vegetation, in the gardens orange trees, palms, cactuses &c

Sunday was a cloudless day, hot of course, and not unpleasantly so, Monday at noon it began to pour and continued for 24 hours, to day is cloudy but fine. They say no rain had fallen here for seven months (but query?); the evening seems cool; on the whole it puts me in mind of June in Ireland. I see plenty of small birds, but they are perpetually shooting them, on Sunday I saw a fellow in a blouse take a shot at a little black bird of some kind sitting in an olive tree about as close to him as the tree in little garden at Woodside ^{to window}! Of course he blew it to pieces. I see plenty of magpies or birds just like them,

Butterflies are plentiful, also the large hawk moth so common this year in England; it is a nuisance here coming constantly into the room and making more noise than a bumble bee. Mosquitos are still here, but only indoors they are very aggravating at night, even though I know there were only three or four in the room and I killed two, still the remaining two are troublesome at night coming with a ping-r-r-r over the bed and occasionally biting. I have seen a few small lizards

8.2^d. Yesterday morning came a letter from Oxford,
in the afternoon yours of Sunday from J. M. P. C.;
let me know Dorab address when you get it.

You had better still address to me Poste Restante ~~Hejere~~
as I have left address at the P. Rest., so they are forwarded ^{- ded}
to this Hotel, and any change can be easily rectified
at P. Rest.

There. Yesterday afternoon I had a pleasant walk
over the hills behind the town; the old town, very
Italian like, lies on the hill side and is curious.

The walks on the hills charming, winding, terraced
paths through the woods which are of small
cork wood chiefly. Afterwards I climbed some
rocks at top of a hill about 3 miles from
this and had a grand panoramic view.

So far I like and enjoy the place; still no one
has arrived; the natives ~~the~~ look at me as one
would at a swallow come before summer in
England. Yesterday I saw a few grizzled old
Frenchmen (visitors) prowling about, but ^{very} few of
them; no English at all. I expect the Dublin
family who were to be here on Saturday have gone
to Cannes instead, but this opinion I keep
to myself. Please forward this letter to Tower
Terrace. My next will be to them and you will see
it in due time I hope. Love to all at Combe Down
and Bath. Your affec. nephew Francis J. Prendergast