

Hotel de L'Univers et de Castille
Marseilles. April 25. 1866

My dear Mamma

Yesterday morning at eight I left Cannes; it was a wet day and I reached Marseilles at three, after a tiresome journey of seven hours. Luckily it was not raining in Marseilles and at the Station I got a cab and thereby discovered an excellent plan they have here. As soon as you get into the cab a Railway Official asks your destination and gives you a card with the fare and drivers name written on it, thus preventing overcharge. Perhaps you did not know that Castille was not in the "Univers" but the proprietor of this hotel seems to think it is not, from the title he uses. Madame Fato's recommended it but I do not think it very good. Yesterday I did not feel inclined to go and look up Mr Taylor and prowled about the town. This hotel is semi-Spanish, has Spanish newspapers, Railway guides and waiters

who speak Spanish. After breakfast this morning I walked ~~down~~ down the Rue Impériale now nearly finished; I think it will be one of the finest in the ~~the~~ world, the houses are magnificent.

It is estimated to cost ~~twelve~~¹⁸ millions of francs (~~£10,000,000~~ £720,000) of which the government contributes one third. After walking down this street to the new harbour and coming back by the old port I made my way out to St. Marguerite and found Mr & Mrs Taylor; their place is about three miles from the town and is very nice; he has about 20 acres of land and on his land at the highest point is a most abundant spring which irrigates all the land and bubbles in fountains near the house. Mr T. is an old man of eighty with a snowy beard and fresh English complexion. He busies himself about his place but has not been in Marseilles for years! It is 15 years since he gave up business.

His works are now in the hands of a Limited Liability Co and one of his sons is chief manager; they are much increased since he gave them up, but in consequence of French Official Routine system now only produce 15 per cent instead of 20 per cent as under his more practical management. However that is a handsome percentage. He asked me to dine there tomorrow and gave ^{me} a note to his son, introducing me and asking him and his family to come tomorrow. I have just seen Mr Arthur T. (the son) and he has asked me to dinner to day, so the time is well filled up.

What a gay, busy city Marseilles is!

It looks like what it is, the Emporium of the Mediterranean. When Mr Taylor came here 36 years ago there was not a steamer in the Mediterranean he set up his factory and soon after

a government Line to Alexandria
(of English built ships) was established
and the government wrote to know if
he ~~not~~ would undertake all repairs
of their engines; this was his great
start; then he commenced iron ship
building at La Seyne close to Toulon
and now he has disposed of all his
interest in it (leaving in it his
capital) to a Company called
Les Forges et Chantiers. He says
the administration is very heavy, two
staffs, one here the other at Paris
and every written document having
to be done in duplicate.

I see beef and mutton advertised in
the shops here at one franc the kilo
(2 lbs 3 oz). How perverse the French
are about some English words; they have
adopted revolver but spell it revoluer
in many advertisements; then they will
write Wauxhall, Wauxhall though they
have no w in their language!

April 26.

yesterday I dined en famille with Mr A. Taylor; the only people were his wife (a French woman) their two children and his wife's mother, who is a German. He showed me some lovely photographs of buildings and landscapes ^{of his own doing}, and gave me a letter of introduction to the works to a Mr Drury the only Englishman on the staff. I went there this morning and Mr D. was very kind in showing me over the place, but except a huge ~~drift~~ dredging machine for the Suez Canal there was little of interest to me in the works but the drawings were more in my line. Mr Taylor also gave me a letter to the foreman at some more works they have at the other side of the town but I spent so much time watching the building and hoisting of materials in the Rue Impériale that I had not time to go to these works, but they are only ditto of the others.

I have a most uncomfortable place for writing - the top of a chest of drawers and can scarcely get at the paper.

To day the sun has come out and the dust and glare are tiresome.

I had intended being on the road northwards to day but in consequence of Mr Taylors invitation to dinner do not start till tomorrow. I expect to be in Paris probably some time on Thursday Saturday. I am writing in a hurry as it is nearly time to start for Sainte Marguerite.

Your affectionate son
Francis E. Prendergast.