

## To Miss Lucretia P. Hale

NERVI PRÈS GENES, January 24, 1897.

DEAR LUC., -- Last night, before climbing into my steep German bed, I prepared for the occasion, by spreading over it, besides my (new) Arab blanket the *Mädchen* always sees fit to make up in it, my red bear dressage and fur cape, rejoicing in the possession of such luxuries in a tropical climate. By winding my little head-shawl round my feet, I managed to fall asleep comfortably, and must add that the fur cape slipped off to the floor in the night without my minding it. The weather was on my arrival, at first, warm and lovely, open window, sun streaming in, but a big storm was brewing, and all yesterday the sea was in a glorious pother, the sun all day raging through an angry sky, making the most wonderful peacock tints on the water, and great surf breaking on our rocks, which everyone went out to see.

Really as fine as Atlantic storms. . . .

It 's very beautiful here, and intensely comfortable, and I have a few friends in all languages in the hotel, and, oh! the joy of being by myself, I mean as to making plans, no one to worry about, for fear she is not happy. Then there 's no one to say, "I thought you meant to do so and so." As for Lucca, it 's no great consequence whether I go there or not. So I 've passed the week, getting a good rest after that Columbia business, sitting in my lovely window with its surpassing view, mending all my clothes, and making a *digado* to hide the rags of my other gown, writing up letters (sadly behindhand), doing Italian *meisterschaft* and an Italian novel, walking on the enchanting *spiaggia*, or going to Genoa to shop.

There was a nice English girl here with her uncle, and evenings I sate with them in the hall, where sometimes is orchestra, and one evening was a prestidigitator, who reminded me of Francis, only he spoke Italian and French. These Hanburys are gone, and the only American man is gone; I 'm glad he 's gone, for he made me tired, puling, and of no great account. So now evenings I have my *café noir* sent up here, where my nice lamp, novel, and Fooley Ann, await me. By the way, last evening I beat twice running! I bought a new pack of cards (French) in Algiers, and for a long time they could *not* get the hang of the game, but now they beat quite frequently, and when they don't, I cheat.

So now I want to hark back to those last days at Algiers, which I never quite described, and I want to review the period before it 's forgotten. I think very fondly of the month at Kirsch, and in fact Genoa is gloomy in contrast with laughing Algiers. You see Nora and I decided to go down to the town for a few days. . . .

The rooms, *deux chambres communicantes* they gave us at *l'Europa* were one good, one very bad, and Nora very kindly gave me the good one. This was bad for us both. Hers was utterly dark, only having a window on a well, which was far from well, as the smells were of the kitchen; so I had to have her come into my room for coffee, etc., etc. She had to give me the good, on account of my superior age, of course.

In general I prefer the bad, for then there 's no grumbling, or else I can do it myself. However, my room was enchanting, and I should have had her there anyway, most of the time, for us to enjoy the balcony overlooking the amusing town and harbour, where we hoped to see our steamer coming in; as it happened our backs were turned just at that moment. (Sun now shining in nice and warm; affections got the better of rage, and clearing off fine.)

Well, we got there and settled in P. M. after a *scrimmagio* of departure from Kirsch. Seems to me I wrote you or somebody about that. Nora went out and bought up half the town, jewels, embroidery, all kinds of things, and I met her at the pastry-cook's, and we had tea together, and met the Beans. I feel now as if I did write before about all this, no matter.

On Tuesday we had a laughable expedition with Madame Kirsch. I wrote Carry Bursley a letter about this, which she will show to you, but not make public. She brought her omnibus to our hotel, and we all limbed in, Miss Homer, Mrs. Bean, Madame herself, me, Nora, -- five fat fools of middle age, and we went to see some Spanish dancers and afterwards, the Moorish bath. Then we went all about the Arab town and saw houses' insides, etc. I may have said to you that all these sights are less *genuine* than our visits to Hassan's wives, and such. Here there is always *quelque chose de réclame*, the things got up to appear Arab to foreigners, and the *cinquante-centime* business, or more likely *vingt-francs*, appears through-out. We got back to the hotel about four, and Nora, untiring, went out again to ransack shops. I was in fevers from finding the Hennis' cards, lest I had missed them, and an immense bunch of violets from Henn, and I saw before the hotel door their funny little trap with the prancing pony. So I stirred not from the spot till Hennis returned, after a long absence from their trap, when they came in, and we had

the nicest, long, confidential talk in the *entresol salon* of the hotel. They are very dear, affectionate people, and it seems they were disappointed not to have me staying with them. . . .

Meanwhile, Tuesday, Nora and I lunched at the fish-shop, which is my joy and delight, and she liked it just as much. You sit in the dark before this great arch, and eat *crevettes* and fish and *entrecôte*, with a bottle of some wine, and outside is the blank white wall of the mosque near the sea; but between, is a great broad staircase, public, down and up which goes everything, Turks, donkeys, Jews, Arabs, dogs, women, Rag-bags, sailors of all nations. Women, selling parrots and monkeys, live on these stairs, and below make a living tending cockles and mussels and snails, which nobody seems ever to buy, in little dishes. Musicians twangled and sang-led naughty French songs, cats came out from behind boats and ate entrails of fish, a man brought violets I bought for a sou or so. About one o'clock we saw grand muftis, all done up in clean turbans, with arrogant burnouses over their shoulders, go sailing into the mosque, so we went in on our way home, and found the same with their shoes off, kneeling before Kaabas.

We like that, Nora and I, and, in fact, we did the same for luncheon the next day, only sitting up-stairs over the arch. That day, *Wednesday*, we meant to go to Point Pescade to luncheon, on the border of the sea, where often Mrs. Church and I drove, a beautiful sort of Cornice drive. But our *tram à vapeur* only stopped at St. Eugène, and would n't go any farther. Nora was a little displeased with me for not knowing this at my birth, but I did n't, so we walked round a little, watching the waves, and then got on the front of a stray bus and came back to town.

They had a small, loose lamb under our seat running round amongst our legs. Nora bought more things that P. M., and I got a copper jug, -- either then or previously. Now came *Thursday*, a day of hurry and worry. My gown came not home from Gaze till the last minute. Nora still wanted to do things, and we actually were on the bus to go out and lunch once more at Kirsch, when it came over me that I couldn't and would n't spend all that time, get tired, see all the Kirsch folks again, after saying good-bye once, so I broke loose, and jumped off the bus, and came back to hotel, very luckily in time to pay Gaze, finish my trunks, and be all calm when the steamer arrived sooner, at one instead of three, o'clock. . . .

Yours,

SUSIE.

**Fonte:** Caroline P. Atkinson, "*Letters of Susan Hale*", Marshall Jones, 1919