

Munich, Germany, April 8

Dear Dad:

It's been a splendid eight or ten days since I last wrote you. I wrote—if I remember rightly—from Monte Carlo. Anyway, after five interesting days there, as it was a beautiful day, when we left, we blew ourselves to a motor car and drove to San Remo along the road between mountain and sea, now high up among white plaster villas with flowers brilliant against them, now down on the shore, looking out on small freight steamers loafing along from, perhaps, Egypt to Marseilles.

Where ordinarily one crosses the frontier of another country with considerable fuss—getting out of the train at the customs house, having one's baggage examined among a horde of more or less crazy fellow-passengers, here it was a cinch. The border line was along a deep gorge, and the customs house—since it governed just the roadway and not a railroad—a small shack out of which loafed a young customs official in uniform, who looked up at our small truck on the top of the car, in at our bags, yawned, asked me how many cigarettes I had. And ambled away, and that was all.

At San Remo we found Lincoln Steffens the journalist—do you remember when his “Shame of the Cities” was the sensation of the hour? Now he has a villa (to say nothing of a wife and child) in San Remo, a rather easy-going town, full of palm trees and Germans. We had lunch with them next day—marvelous Italian food, done by a cook who when she came to them saw that Mrs. S. was pregnant so charged them fifty lire a month less than her usual price “because the Signora will be needing so many things at a time like this”! She gets, by the way 250 lire a month, which is a whole ten dollars, and she's as good a cook as you could find in Paris.

From San Remo we went on—but by train again—for a day in Alessio, another small town, this time full of English—there were twenty retired English and generals and admirals living there at one time this past winter!..... we had been staying at perfect hotels--- almost too perfect, because they were so much alike that one had no sense of change—and it was rather agreeable at Alessio to have a real native Italian hotel, a huge room with high ceilings and vast lambrequins at the window, but no bathroom, no running water.

We had dinner there with Major General Guy Carleton Jones, who commanded the Canadian medical corps during the war—a charming fellow with a nice wife who writes rather cheap fiction under the name of S. Carleton. They have a villa high, high on a steep hill overlooking town and sea. Next day, with the General, G and I had a good hard walk, about ten miles in length an climbing something over a thousand feet; first up through vineyards and quite olive groves, by steep rocky paths then by a road swinging up through a high-lying little old stone and plaster village which looks down on old watch-towers built to defend the road in the old days when there were always wars—with the Saracens from the South or with neighboring barons. We carried our lunch and ate it at a gap in the hills with the Mediterranean on one and snow-capped mountains far across a pleasant valley on the other.

Then, that same afternoon, on to Genoa—not so interesting, perhaps, as its fellow port, Marseilles, but with a jolly Old Town full of incredibly narrow dark little streets, with steep hills

up which the city climbs to a broad view, a harbor full of steamers from all the world—Japan, America, Norway, Madagascar—and fine old palaces of the nobility of from 1300 to 1600. We saw Claude Washburn and his wife several times; wandered through Genoa with them; went down to their charming house at Nervi (half an hour from Genoa), right on the sea, with a good-sized garden at the back; and with Claude tramped miles over the hills and down to the famous old village of Portofino, from which we went by boat—old fashioned fishing boat and old fashioned Wop fisherman but entirely new-fashioned outboard motor—across the bay to Rapallo, and so back by train. Claude is working on a book of essays and soon starts a new novel. A few weeks ago he had a new novel published by the firm of Albert and Charles Boni in N.Y. —“The Prince and the Princess” it’s called; and if you’ll send for it, it’ll give you an idea of the kind of life lived by many of the expatriate Americans who settle down in Italy or France.... Claude spoke with the greatest pleasure of calling on you and having a good long talk with you when he was last in Sauk Centre—two years ago, that must have been.

From Genoa we came to Munich but we could not get a through sleeper and we made it in town days, breaking our trip at the lovely mountain-ringing town of Bozen—Bolzano in Italian. We went rough mountains to busy Milan, across the flat Lombardy plain, past lovely Lake Garda, where the Romans used to build villas and have a few select wars, and up into the Tyrol—Austrian before the war, Italian now—that is, Italian in government, in policemen, in military uniforms, in railway signs, but just as Austrian as ever in the people. We heard Italian spoken only twice, once by a policeman. But they are making the kids learn Italian in the schools, and it may all change in twenty years.

When we landed in Bozen we assumed that we would be able without difficulty to find a good hotel room as we have done everywhere. We condescendingly picked out what seemed to be the best hotel, drove up there, made noises about a room with bath—and found we couldn’t get one with anything—every room taken in every hotel in town! They sent a porter out with us, and behind him, through dark streets latish at night, we trotted meekly while he asked for us at all sorts of little pensions and boarding houses. It began to look as tho we’d have to sit up all night at the station—not to pleasant after travelling all day. He had us go have dinner—which we did most agreeably, with good beer and Wiener Schnitzel, at a little place under dark arches—while he went on hunting. He came back to report a place—a private house—and we spent the night most comfortably in an old-fashioned room, the beds with feather beds, the walls jammed with family pictures showing father in Austrian uniform, in a corner a vase filled with peacock feathers, the sweetest politest people—“Gruss Gott” and “Haben Sie wold geschleafen?” and in the morning, we had three hours for a stroll before the train went. Bozen is set right among abrupt high mountains, and the town itself is a charmer, with old church towers and pleasant squares.

So on to Munich. We have seen a lot of the town, museums as well as streets. Unfortunately my German publisher, Kurt Wolff, also his editor, and their wives, are in Italy. So mostly we have seen Baro and Baroness Schey—lunched and dined with them, danced a little, and gone to a fine Brahms concert, with the famous Ellen Ney as piano soloist, and to a curious local vaudeville performance, very bad mostly with one superb actor. Today with a friend of the baron, a Dr. Krause who is quite a well-known chemist, we are to drive sixty kilometers out to a famous old village, Wasserburg, through real farming country.

About next Monday—day after Easter—we're off to Vienna, then probably Budapest, then Berlin, then probably back to Paris.

We are by no means certain yet, but we're likely to return to the States some time late in May and be home for at least a year. If we do come home I'll run out to Minnesota to see you and the rest, though I probably won't stay more than a week—I must get settled down now before long and get busy on my new novel, and that settling down will probably be some where in New England..... from what reports I get from "Arrowsmith" it seems to be a great success critically, and not to be selling too badly.

Love,

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