

DEC 4 - 1942

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Dear Helen:

To-morrow I shall feel like a Christian. I have the promise of a hot (?) bath! Since there are no taxis and it takes so long to find a horse drawn vehicle that isn't already hired, I usually walk--and how I sweat!

Monday I get up early and take the train for Rabat where I present the Ambassador's letter at General Nogues' office.

One poor refugee woman who has not seen her husband for three years asked if I could do anything to help find where he is as she now receives no replies to the letters sent to him at his old address in the south of France. I cabled Lindsley Noble to see if they could get any information in Marseille. I fear it is a deportation case.

One day I was invited to lunch with M. Berti, who helped Edith Wharton with her book on Morocco. He has invited me to visit some of the prison camps with him if I can get any gasoline. He has made some very helpful suggestions.

I hope to have more data after I visit Rabat and soon hope to make at least partial recommendations to James Vail.

Tuesday I am scheduled to have lunch with Begby, American vice-consul and the Mexican consul from France. Also have a bid from Count Czapski, Polish relief head to have lunch with him and Comtesse du Luart who has organized a hospital unit for the prison camps. Hope I can work it all in.

Forgot to say that M. Berti is the active head of the French Red Cross in Morocco. He wishes me to meet Mme. Lyauty when she returns from France with Mme. Nogues.

This is the month of Ramadan for the Arabs. They are not supposed to eat anything between sunrise and sunset ~~anyday~~ on any day for a month. After sundown they may eat and the stories are that they do eat and stay up all night and have a great time. The result is that many of them aren't much good on the job the next day and some employers do not relish the coming month! It sounds worse than a darky revival down south. That was usually for a few days at the most.

Was shown a new business building the other day with the statement that it was built on holy ground to the Arabs, being built by Arab money. So all the income from the building is God's money and therefore given to the Arab poor! Looks to me that they need several blocks of such buildings!

In addition to their other shortages here, they now have an acute power shortage. It has been an extremely dry summer and as a result the hydroelectric plants have drawn off nearly all their storage and there is not enough coal to run the steam plants at sufficient output to meet the normal demand. Train service has been drastically cut. Industrial production has been cut and there are other severe restrictions on the use of electricity. However if the fall rains begin next month as they should, it is said the power shortage will end then very shortly.

They seem to have plenty of chickens and eggs here. The chickens are different ~~structurally~~ breed from ours and do not seem to have white meat but they are good eating nevertheless. Their bones are structurally different from ours hens particularly the leg bones.

Sept. 22, 1942

Well I have been to and returned from Rabat. As the train left ~~xxxx~~ here at seven o'clock, it meant getting up at five and walking quite a distance from the hotel to the station through streets without any light whatever. I walked in the roadway rather than on the sidewalks as I thought there might still be Arabs asleep on the side walks and I did not want to stumble on them. Fortunately I took the small flash light along and it helped me find street signs. Arrived at the station three quarters of an hour before the train left and just managed to find

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a seat

a seat. It was quite a long train quite similar to those I remember in France, except the upholstery was leather instead of cloth. The railroad has a motley clientele--Arabs of high and low estate -in rags and in resplendent robes, French army and navy officers of all varieties, - their families and the usual nondescript mob of travelers found everywhere. The ride was very cool and comfortable with no dust, -the road is electrified.

The picture of the Arab hut that I sent Tacie, I thought was probably in some remote district. Such huts, singly and in small villages were all along the way to Rabat. While they look crude when finished, yet the frames supporting the grass or reed covering are exquisitely made in regular geometrical pattern and show a high degree of skill in construction. The poorer Arabs seem to live, all of one family huddled into one of these huts. The more prosperous appear to be distributed among several huts. We passed one such small group, surrounded by a small corral of brush. They had a camel, several cows, two donkeys and some dogs. They all looked happy and contented with so little. Huddled as they are, particularly in winter, it is easy to see how diseases spread, especially with the present lack of material for new clothing. In fact I have heard, in several cases, of the Europeans hiding the burlap sacks used for vegetables so that the Arabs cannot steal them for winter clothing! It is really surprising how close such tents are to the good part of the towns. In Rabat, for example, only a few blocks from fine new French buildings behind some old Arab walls, is a small village of similiar huts almost hidden in a grove of small trees and cactus growth. There are even small stores there with big piles of grapes and other fruit and vegetables for sale. There was a community bakery with youngsters coming in with dough on trays and bearing away the baked loaves. I saw one of the Sultan's "black guards" there. He was an enormous man in a scarlet costume. He looked like something from the Arabian Nights. He was so black charcoal would make a white mark on him. They tell me there is a garrison of several hundred like him at the place. Also saw a swarm of Arab school children coming out of an Arab school. Many of the teachers were French. Except for the costumes the children were like any other boys school.

Was very well received by the French authorities at Rabat. The general was in France but the letter was handed to his alternate who talked with me some time. He spoke English --but he was born in New Orleans! *****

At Rabat I learned a bit more clearly just what the status of needs are here and it all makes the status of the camps clearer. I think there will be no difficulty in visiting at least some of them and I hope all. However it may be disheartening to see them and to be unable to do much due to the shortage of material, supplies and lack of transportation. However we shall see.

Tuesday Count Czapski of the Polish Agency here invited me to lunch with M. and Mme. du Quart who have a medical unit for the Moroccan camps. The unit was originally used as a French hospital unit near Paris and then later Madame brought it here. I am to visit them at Serrat the latter part of next week and they have offered to take me to some of the camps. The distances at which some of them are located from here--nearly four hundred miles, makes a car and gasoline an essential, particularly with the railway service what it is; and some of the camps are not near any railway.

So one can see that even with the best intentions it would be extremely difficult for the French to provide for these camps adequately with the virtual paralysis of all transport in Morocco and the shortage of textiles, clothing and medical supplies.

Transport paralysis isn't complete but with the very much reduced and infrequent railway service it is extremely difficult to move anything and evidently a large part of the traffic was by motor before the war. So with the disappearance of gasoline, that has ceased. The gasogenes for using charcoal to run cars (in some cases even wood chips are employed) are good only for short hauls and apparently require a huge amount of attention and are really no adequate solution.

Have had letters from Lisbon and Marseilles. It is good to know that communications are working.

Marseilles says there are plans on foot for sending 1000 children from France to the U.S.. In the past when refugees have come from France for the States they have had temporary accommodations here until the Portuguese ship arrived to take them; but with the rainy season coming on it would be practically impossible to find adequate shelter for 1000 children here, so I believe they will try to keep them on the ship in the harbor until they are transferred to the Portuguese boat