

Sept

9, 1967

Dear Lucy M.

I haven't a whole lot to say but feel impelled to write you while ~~when~~ I am technically still waiting for a reply to my last letter. It is so luxurious for a sinner to be owed a letter. You have been so very wonderful with your own good letters that I wish to salve my pain a little, if you don't mind, by slipping in a kind of nothing letter.

Item: I now have Marjorie in three different languages, English, Italian and French. (La fin de quelque chose. La fine di qualcosa.) The Italian edition carries all the 49 stories, but the French, in some eccentric way, offer some of them under the omnibus title of Paradis Perdu and others under Les Neiges du Kilimandjaro (Suive de dix Indiens)

On my return from Switzerland I retraced the route in reverse, by which Hem's Lt. Henry in Farewell to Arms rows out of his Italian military duties into Switzerland with the pregnant Catherine Barkley. This story is really an excellent example of how Hem used facts but interwove them in such a way that the result was really fiction. Yes, he had, virtually been in the Italian army and enjoyed the company of Italian officers and he had known a Red Cross girl that is supposedly the prototype of Catherine Barkley. But he knew her very briefly (just before he spent those months with you) and he didn't write the story until ten years later. Of course she was not pregnant nor did she flee with him to Switzerland (as neither did he) nor did she die dramatically a la Helen Hayes. I think the Red Cross girl furnished the start, then, in my opinion, he tacked on some Swiss times with his wife, Hadley, and finally he reproduced his experience with his second wife, Pauline's caesarian birth. But of course she didn't die either. In the story it was necessary, dramatically, for her to die because of the wonderful title. Now it is reasonable, then, to conclude that his studies of other people were also patch quilt jobs, in which he started with something and then changed the facts to please the dramatic situation. The only trouble is that Hem did not hold out his hand to indicate when he was about to make a turn and therefor people whose backgrounds were used, tended to suffer from "brushoff" effect. This happened also to Harold Loeb whom I expect to see in Sicily this winter. He's now 76, a really marvelous fellow whom I have never met but we have clicked letterwise. He suffered a great deal for being pegged by absolutely everyone as the Robert Cohen of The Sun Also Rises. He tried to answer, with a book, "The Way It was," but of course it didn't sell. Loeb is one of the wealthy Guggenheim clan. He and Bill Smith have continued to be very friendly. They were pictured as antagonists in The Sun, Harold being the Jewish fall-guy, but he doesn't seem to be very bitter about it now. Even hurt gets old and dies it seems.....Danny is having an intestinal bout but is probably okay. Ruth is fine. We will fly to Sicily early next week to see about staying there this winter and about finding a place for Loeb and his young English wife. We will give up this stunning place the end of Oct. No other news, except that I have become rather lazy I am afraid.

Love,