

Steamship Saythia 1200 miles

From NY Sunday 7th Aug 1881

My very dear wife.

I will write you my weeks [sic] letter today altho' I fear I shall not be able to find any post office here but I will send it my next weeks [sic] epistle. As I have seen no sights expect the usual ones on ship board. I will have to confine myself to marine topics & try to tell you something of what has gone on since I caught my last glimpse of your dear face & my boys on the dock [text missing] amused at dear Willie's evident uneasiness lest you should all be carried off to "the big salt sea" – His anxiety was quite funny as was also Jamies [sic] stoical indifference – Nature has strangely marked a separate individuality upon each of them. I find myself often being rather surprised that the children are not all exactly alike – like two or a dozen eggs in one nest but a little reflection shows that we have into right to expect immortal souls to be alike because their earthly casing is derived from the same source. I need hardly say that I felt awfully home sick as the eight of you faded gradually into a mere blue of color against the gray woodwork that surrounded you. To divert my mind from sadness I [dove?] down into my state room to take a survey & stow my hand bag & look after my trunk. The latter I could not put in my room as another be one was there already & no room for more, so it was put on the deck below where I could get at it if [text missing]. I took a look at [text missing] Island as we passed & then wrote a card for you to give to the pilot at Sandy Hook. I hope you got it safely & so got my first communication. After we discharged the pilot & got fairly out to sea I had time to look around & see what passengers we had & if I knew any of them. The ladies were all pretty well – a few slightly pale albeit & were mostly sprawled out at full length on steamer chairs, with a [?] display of feet – a few pretty & well booted but mostly the reverse. Frank & I soon agreed that it would be hard to find a ship company of this size, fewer handsome ladies or distinguished people of any kind. We have father [sic] Grazzi an expriest [sic] & religious reformer in Italy & Canon Serte & a Rev Mr. Murray rector of the parish of Christhurst (where Eugenie lives) & a professor Sill & I believe that closes my brief list of any who can be considered "Swells" to any degree. Grazzi sits opposite me at table & is rather a noble large old man with a head & face indicative [text missing] extent. He like Serte broke away over the Roman church in the plenitude of is power in Italy & I remember on his first visit to the US his life was far from safe when he boldly attacked its abuses – now it is marvelously changed & the Italy of today accepts him as a great & eloquent teacher. The man interests me altho' he is either taciturn or courteous.

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The rest of our people are not marked in any way & are just a fair or average collection just as you would meet any where [sic]. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Osborne the brother who owns one of the five big steam yachts (like Osgood Stranges) I suppose may be esteemed as swell. We have thus far had no amusements or entertainments but on the other hand the sea & weather have been most friendly & as I write now (about 300 miles south of the extreme end of our continent at Newfoundland) we are moving along so quietly that I cant [sic] realize that I am at sea – no more motion that we on a North river boat going to [text missing] almost from the time we left the dock. I may have to sing a different song when I am writing to you at the end of this week before we get to Queenstown when I hope to post my first letter. I dont [sic] think even you Loulie dear, had to sail on as you think yourself would dare to be sea sick. There are six of seven children among our passengers, mostly Jamies [sic] and Willie's age but nearly all little girls – they play about all day in the bright sunshine on deck just as any children would on shore & it seems perfectly safe as the decks are so well protected. The only drawback thus far has been the heat – something which seems to be phenomenal – in my state room I have been in a dripping perspiration over night & one night I slept without my gauze undershirt on & no night shirt. We have a side port or window but the rules of the ship will not allow it to be open after 10 o'clock. Yesterday at noon we reached the longitude of the grand banks & had a heavy fall in the thermometer with fog & I fished out my overcoat as did others & found it very necessary. We have [text missing] moon light nights & the passengers [text faded] lounging about on deck until [text faded] o'clock some singing & talking – I suppose flirting etc but last night it was it was a cold thick fog & the dismal minute whistle reminded me but too vividly of that horrible night last summer & as I know we were come [sic] to the region of icebergs I retired at 10 oclock [sic] to my berth rather dull & anxious. I merely took off my shoes & coat & flung myself on the berth after commending myself and you all to the Great & Good God who has preserved me & blessed me so long in my voyage of life. All night the whistle sounded its dismal note I believe, but I happily got to sleep & only heard it for a moment now & then when, after my habit, I awoke from time to time. A very careful watch was kept all night – one officer being stationed on the very bow of the ship – two sailors on the first bridge near the foremast & 2 officers on the second bridge near the funnel where the steering gear is. This morning brought in the same still tranquil ocean & less fog & all day we have been able to dispense with the whistle and tho' foggy we can see ahead safely & the passengers are happy. We had a very useful [text missing]. We prayed for both the President & the Queen & the service was well attended [?] very agreeably & I hope did us all "good" – I know I always enjoy a good discourse at sea surrounded by the great Solemn Ocean -- which has & often & will be taken as a symbol of eternity in its sentiment of quality of vastness. And now I am wondering what my dear & precious little houseful of people



are in the already far off home which is fast receding from me. I looked at your pictures today after church & wafted back to you all a heart ful [sic] of loving wishes & prayers. I hope you all got safely & pleasantly back on Wednesday to Garden City & I suppose the boys will talk for some time of this first experiences on board the big steam ship & excite the envy of poor Robbie Bobbins & [text faded] Syd with their strange & wonderful accents. I hope they all miss me & you must tell me what they said & thought of my sudden [?] – no longer any fear [text missing] the accustomed [text missing] Papa's coming [text missing] boys! I miss them terribly. I hope Dody too is getting along nicely & will really take my place in looking after you all & make you happy & comfortable. Tell me about the hospital & how things stand. I will stop now & finish my letter as we approach Queenstown which will be if (God wills) on Thursday as we hope to be at Liverpool on Saturday.

Tuesday 9th Aug – My dear good little wife – It is after lunch – I will write you a few lines. We are now six days out & are about 2000 miles from New York & the Good Lord has brought us safely this far on our voyage which has thus far been very pleasant & smooth as you can judge from our not having yet had the racks on the tables & I doubt if any one has been racked by sea sickness. We have not however seen the sun or blue sky since Saturday & have had more or less fog all the time – but as I remarked to Frank I might have come safely thus far in the Isabel or the Curve for that matter. The intense heat we have had in the first 3 days vanished as we reached the Grand Banks on Saturday & since then overcoats have at times been in demand & quite comfortable. We have I think a very commonplace set of passengers this trip & barring a little singing have had no entertainment, lecture, or dancing. I have made some acquaintances, and only among the men & have not found any especially agreeable. The ladies seem to spend their time sheltered out on their sea chairs & the men smoking or betting on the ships [sic] run. I am [?] to say that I have been very well in all respects. I make one sad mistake in not bringing my sea chair [text missing] is now so universal a custom that everyone shall bring his or her chair that the [text missing] not provide any seat except a [text missing] along the side of the [text missing] – Frank is a pleasant young [text faded] together at table. We expect [text faded] on Saturday & will [text faded] to Glasgow or its neighborhood [text faded] & start on Monday [?] [text faded] highlands & Inverness. I shall hope [text faded] one first letter by The Boshnia about that time. I wonder how you are getting along with the girls & how you manage your absolute [?] since I left. I trust you will be pleased with them & have much comfort after all your trouble.



Friday 10 AM

Dearest Louie,

We have just passed the extreme west end of Ireland in full sight & will be at Queenstown by 1 o'clock [sic], so I will add a few lines & then put this in the mail bag which the purser is making up to land at Queenstown & which will go home by the steamer which leaves Queenstown tomorrow & ought to reach you by the 22 or 23 Aug. We hope to land at Liverpool tomorrow Saturday at 11 or 12 o'clock [sic] & I shall leave by rail for Glasgow tomorrow in the afternoon. Shall spend Sunday there & Monday at 7 by steamer for Obass & then by Caledonia coast to Inverness – thence to London where I expect to be by the end of the week & so get your first letter there. I shall look for it with great interest my dear wife to how you & my dear little family have gotten on since I left. Our voyage has been in the fog ever since last Saturday (what would Is---) say to 1800 miles of fog it was worse than Greenport. We have seen blue sky only a half a dozen hours since our 3 day visit. I have been about as well as [text missing] but no sea sickness [text missing] in fact there has been no possible excuse for as the voyage has been perfectly smooth except a few hours yesterday. I fear we shall have wet weather in England for the next week owing to all this fog coming from the west & so my sightseeing will be a good deal [text faded] – but I hope for clear skies on the continent.

I will write you regularly every week so you may know a letter is on the way [?] received it will come. Please write me as long letters as you can, all the talk you can think of regardless of style – just as you would talk [?] gone.

I think of you and my precious little family now so very far away very often and lavishly. Give me also your poor father's news when you hear. We have not had a very [?], lot of people on the ship this trip but on the whole all has gone well. Till we have my dear Is---has been getting one & if he is at Charity & what he thinks of it [not clear] and now I must close as we are close in with the Irish shore & I want to look at it. With fondest love to you & all my dear children & pray to God that we may all be spared to meet in health & happiness when we can.
your loving husband

J Buchanan Henry

PS: I wonder how poor little Roger is getting on.

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