

U. S. S. Newark

Off Santiago

July 2, 1898

Dear Papa,

I have been intending to write for some time to let you know that everything is all O. K. but the only chance to send mail was at Key West and our stay there was so short that I did not have time to write a line. Our cruise so far has been rather short but still quite a variety of accidents and incidents have happened, hardly a day has passed since we left Norfolk that something hasn't turned up. For about a day and a half I felt a little under the weather but I neither missed nor lost any of my meals. Of course we are living on sea stores but the most unpleasant thing is the water which we are lucky to find warm for very often it is actually hot. At Key West Com. Watson came on board and since then we have been flying his pennant at the mast-head. I have taken a series of pictures with a pocket kodak [sic] which some day will be very interesting. As far as heat is concerned it has never been as severe as it was at Norfolk where for about three our [sic] four days we paced the sunny deck for four hours at a time when the thermometer registered 103° in the shade. I suppose we are no [sic] having regulation tropical weather, we nearly all wear flannel bands around our stomachs and no shirts. For awhile [sic] we stood watches in the dynamo and engine rooms where the heat ranged from 105° to 150° but we dont [sic] have that any more. I am the junior watch and division officer of the second division, we stand four hour watches. During action I have charge of two six inch rifles except at night when I have to manage a search-light if on duty at the time. So much for incidentals I will no [sic] try to give you some account of our trip down. We left the Norfolk Navy Yard on the fifteenth of June and damaged our port screw in leaving the wharf we then arrived safely off Old Point where we stayed a few days to await the coming of our deck-hoisting engine which had broken a couple of days previous. We started out with an entirely green crew consisting largely of Illinois naval reserves. On the day after our mud hook was dropped at Hampton Roads we had our first call to general quarters, the British ship Shenandoah loaded with wood caught on fire and drifted directly towards us but luckily it drifted by about ten feet from us, it was like a roaring furnace burning from stem to stern. We pulled out in a few days and ran as far as Cape Henry where we had to come to anchor partly to repair our engine and partly to wait for the Hannibal which we were to convoy to Key West. On account of her miserable speed our trip down the coast was a long one, we were out of sight of land till after we passed Jupiter Inlet, from there to the southern coast of Florida the shore did not vary the slightest. After leaving Key West we kept a very vigilant look out for war ships as prizes. Off the north-central part of Cuba we had our first real experience and one which I do not care to have repeated for some time.



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At about a quarter past four when everybody was turned in the alarm for general quarters was sounded and we all piled on deck in trousers, pajamas and ay old thing and jumped to our guns and were getting everything ready for any engagement when the order was suddenly shouted to close all water tight doors and steam syren [sic] began to make an unearthly noise. It was so dark that we could see nothing and in fact not the slightest idea what was the matter when suddenly we felt a terrible crash and bumping and saw the mast of some ship but did not know whether it was Spanish or American. It proved to be the U. S. S. Dolphin which had rammed us on the port bow, after striking she glanced off and scraped all along the side. They say that if she had not hit in the exact spot that she did we would have sunk immediately as it was it knocked a big dent in our bow extending from near the deck to way below the water line. ~~It was~~ Bombarded and probably have full possession of outside fortifications of Santiago. Bombardment lasted two or three hours. We were not struck but a number of ten inch shells struck near us. We are safe now at Guantanamo Bay. Write Soon. Mail is leaving. Will write again.

Syd.

P. S. Have not time to look up number of last letter, have not received on since left Norfolk. [at top of first page]

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