

U. S.S. Monongahela

July 21st, 1899

Dear Papa,

I received your letter in London just before we left and was therefore unable to answer it before sailing. Also received one from Reg at the same time. The Bay of Biscay seems to have proved our Jonah for we have been drifting about for a week without making any headway. We will probably make Madeira on next Monday (24th) and leave a couple of days later. It is a long trip from there back as the trades bring us far south but if the winds are good, we will be to strike dry land again as nothing but water gradually gets tiresome. Well our trip to London is all over now but it was fine while it lasted. We struck a gale in the channel the night before Eddystone hove in sight and ran nearly into the harbor under reefed topsails, picked up a [julot?] just outside of the entrance and ran in without any assistance. The harbor is pretty good the entrance being garded [sic] by a large break water. It would be a hard place to capture. There is besides large forts on each side of the entrance a big steel turret right in the center, enormously thick and containing a couple of thirteen inch guns. The morning we arrived the whole channel squadron was in the harbor, on Monday morning they set sail for the Mediterranean so had the benefit of seeing some of the best ships Renown, Thunderer, Niobe, etc.

On Monday morning a lighter came alongside and took all hands over to the depot, leave having been granted until Friday evening at six. A special train was gradually gotten together composed of first, second and third class coaches which however didnt [sic] differ much from each other. At first couldn't help comparing them with our trains and they seemed very antiquated, in fact everything in Plymouth seems kind of out of date. But so we had a little crowd of our own in one of the compartments finally came to the conclusion that they weren't so bad after all. No two cars are built the same way. We left about ten oclock [sic] and ran as far north as Bristol and then turned East and made for London. The country didn't differ much from ours a little more cultivated, the hedge fences made it look attractive. The train reached Paddington Station about five o'clock and four of us piled into a cab and drove to the Cecil, Victoria and Charing [sic] Cross and got the last room at the Charing [sic] Cross as every thing [sic] in London was jammed being the height of the season and the time of the Henley races.

Everything seems quiet compared with New York, no cars, no trolleys and very little crowding or noise. In the evening we went to the Alhambra Theatre. The next morning was the fourth and we started out to see all the buildings, etc. that you hear about. We first drove up the Strand to the Bank of England just stopping there a minute as there didn't seem to be much to see and not much time to see it in. From there we went to the tower and went through all the buildings, crown jewels, etc. Went over the Thames over the new Tower Bridge. Came back and went though St. Paul's saw Nelsons [sic] and Wellingtons [sic] tombs.



From there went through National Gallery and British Museum and wound up by going all through Westminster. After leaving the tower went all through Whitechapel and saw where Jack-the-ripper killed each of his victims. About this time the people began to find out who we were, and from then on they couldn't do enough for us. I think if we had staid [sic] there a couple of weeks longer we would have owned the town. In the evening (4th) All hands went to see Edna May in the Belle of New York. It was played by an American Company and was about the finest thing in its line I think I ever saw. They made several jokes about Annapolis, Monongahela, etc., and all hands made enough noise to wake the dead somewhat to the surprise of the audience. That morning some of the fellows met Col. Gouraud who was an old American and like nearly all others we met desirous of doing what they could for us. As the following day was to be a big day at Henley, he made arrangements with the R. R. Company for us to have a special car. When we got out there, we were entertained as guests of the Sports Club. It was really a beautiful sight, the Thames which is not very wide was fairly crowded with all kinds of gondolas, canoes, punts etc. Everybody was out there but no one paid any attention to the races, in fact no one would be noticing when suddenly a couple of shells would race by, no enthusiasm and no cheering. An Englishman invited several of us to go out with him on the river, the most remarkable thing was the universal good nature. There would be a hundred boats jammed in together each trying to go a different direction yet no one lost his temper. We were entertained at dinner and supper, the band played "The Stars and Stripes Forever" and "Yankee Doodle [sic]." We returned that evening to London. On the way back Col. Gouraud thought it would be a good idea to go to the Theatre together in the evening, so he sat down and scribbled telegrams inviting the Duke of Cambridge [sic], and any number of Generals and Sirs to a dinner after the theatre. In the evening about twenty of our class went to the Savoy Theatre to see Pinnafore [sic]. Which was very poor as I knew it would be, still we occupied all the boxes and went in style. After the Theatre had a dinner at the Savoy. Everything was beautifully arranged in the special dining hall. There were besides about twenty of us there besides the Col., his wife and two sons, who are young officers in the British Army, Col. McCook from Ohio, General somebody of the Royal Engineers and

Miss Goodrich. We toasted everything and had several fine speeches. The next afternoon went to a reception given by Edna May to us, she had a beautiful home with a large garden, it seems almost like country right in the middle of London. She entertained us in fine style and every passed a very pleasant afternoon. In the Evening saw the "Runaway Girl" at the Gaiety, it was however rather disappointing after the Bell of New York which was so much better in every respect. The next morning we saw a little more of the Town and then left by special train for Plymouth, a rather sad crowd. There were quite a number of prominent men down at the Station to see us off and when the train left all the people anywhere near the Station took off their hats and waved adieu. If we had had a week or two more we would have owned London, nobody was able to do enough. Every day some gentleman would come up and introduce himself as General or Colonel or something and say how delighted he was to see us and insist on doing something.



In fact the uniform was an open sesame everywhere -- quite a striking contrast to what it would be in one of our own cities. However that [sic] all over and we are now very slowly making our way to Madeira. The marks for the first month were posted some time ago I stood 8 in Seamanship with about a 3.5. Six in Efficiency with a 3.5 and two in navigation with a 3.65. It has been so long since I started this letter that I have nearly forgotten what I wrote at the beginning so guess I had better close. In a gale we struck soon after leaving Plymouth carried away our main topmast staysail and main topsail sheet but no damage was done. When it was blowing its hardest about one o'clock in the morning everything was pitch dark, one minute all hands would be hauling on a rope and the next piled in a heap the be scuppers [sic]. The people that laid out on the topsail yardarm when the sheet carried away had to hang on with all fours for when she gave a big role [sic] the foot ropes seemed to be nearly perpendicular, it was a little more comfortable after day break.

The trip to London used up much of the money that we would have had available in September, so if you will lend me about fifty dollars I think I will be able to make both ends meet [sic]. We will probably get back about the twenty-eighth, if you are not in Annapolis at that time could I draw a check at the bank.[sic] If you write to the Maryland Hotel I will stop in there before leaving. We have the class supper in Washington the day after our return and then I will go straight out with Allen, if nothing is changed. Remember me to any body [sic] at the Lake that I know. I wouldn't mind spending August there instead of drifting around in this canal boat. How is Reg getting along. [sic] Are either Rob or Will coming up later in the summer.[sic] How late do you expect to stay up at the Lake.[sic] If you are there when we return write me a letter at Annapolis so I can get it before going West. Don't know as yet what the address will be but will write if I do not see you.

Your Affectionate Son,

Sid.

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