

U. S. S. Monongahela,

June 26, 1899

Dear Papa,

Although nothing of especial interest has happened, I will give you a short account of the cruise so far as it may be of some interest to you. We have seen nothing but water for so long that most anything connected with the land would be interesting. On the whole our cruise so far has been very successful and taking all things into consideration as pleasant as possible. Although we have had more or less sea stores our supply of fresh meat still is not used up although it has outlived the ice by many a day and occasionally [sic] it is worse for wear, still we don't have nearly as bad food as was generally made out. Our suppers are sometimes better than those at the Academy, which is not saying over much. We have so far been too much to the northard [sic] to be troubled by heat, it sometimes seems hard to realize that we are in the middle of summer. We are all pretty well sure burned out at night, when spending the pleasant four hours between twelve and four on deck, it has been really cold. Our quarters are pretty close, I think there must be six hammocks that touch mine under normal conditions and of course when there is much motion this pleasant proximity [sic] sometimes leads to trouble. Our water has a rich brown color and taste that resembles coffee and isn't much of a success in washing, for baths however all we have to do is to attach the fire hose to the pumps and get to work. So far we have had a very quiet passage, and there has not been very much motion although for the first week out there were few who didn't wish themselves on dry land. Thanks to last summer and good luck, I have never missed and what's more to the point lost a meal although one morning I was on the shady edge. It was in the morning when only a quarter watch was on deck and I had to go aloft to furl and unbend the rigger royal. I had to stay up there about an hour and as it was rougher than usual, it slightly spoiled my appetite. After we left Annapolis we were towed straight down the bay, stopping over night and started out on Tuesday morning since which we have been sailing with fair winds with the exception of one day, between fourty [sic] seven and two hundred and twenty three knots a day. We are now in longitude twenty and latitude fourty [sic] -five and hope to get to Plymouth on Friday or Saturday. Then if everything goes well we expect to leave Plymouth by rail for London on Monday and stay until Friday, after we get back I guess we wont [sic] waste much time in getting under way for Madeira, Lisbon has been left out of the programme [sic]. I think we have had our full share of fogs, the old horn has just now stopped its pleasant noise, which is pretty bad on deck but I dont [sic] think a steamer could hear it a hundred feet away. One night we thought that we had run into a gold mine in the shape of an iceberg and were kind of calculating on taking on board a fresh supply. We were just on the edge of the great banks and as night came on a dense fog settled all around us, just before turning it at the late hour of eight, the log showed that the temperature of the water had dropped fifteen degrees in an hour, but if there was a berg near we never saw it. We have passed quite a number of ships but none of them near enough to speak except the Idaho, a cattle steamer, which we asked to report us to the Herald.



It seems kind of queer not to have any news of whats [sic] going on or what has been going on for the last three weeks. There will be a grand scramble for mail and papers as soon as we [touch?]. If there is a pretty strong breeze this old ship is as steady as you could wish but after the wind goes down and leaves behind a heavy ground swell the old tub rolls most unmercifully. The other evening while we were at supper the course was shifted enough to bring the wind off the starboard quarter then nothing could stop the cups and dishes, the racks did only a little good, the middle of the table being a general mix up of coffee, preserves, oatmeal, etc. We haven't passed many curios in the way of fish or sea serpents. I dont [sic] know of any in facts [sic] except a few small whales and an endless number of porpoises, they swarm around the ship, a school of nearly a hundred came this morning and swam right under the ship and then jumped right out of the water not fifteen feet away. I guess by this time that you and Buzz are settled at the Lake, I wouldn't mind being there for a while now. Who all are up at the Lake this summer. [sic] I guess old Hague must look about the same as always. I suppose the middy is in evidence again. We have just been called aft to drill on something so will have to quit for the present.

June 30th

Have been intending to write a little more for several days but with drills, watches, seamanship and navigation, a fellow doesn't have as much time off as at the Academy. However now, thanks to a small sized gale, I have a few moments off. We are now only about fifty miles for the Scilly Islands. Had the morning watch so had to turn out at a quarter to four. It begins at last to look as if we were getting over.

July 1st

Had to begin [sic] my note to an abrupt end yesterday as all hands were suddenly called on deck. Yesterday morning the wind began to increase until it was blowing a gale and to make things more pleasant a heavy fog and rain settled down. About half past eight all hands were called to reef topsails. We changed our course from E to N. W. and under reefed-topsail and storm topsails started north towards Ireland. We ran on this way till nearly dark when the wind slightly let up and we shook out the reef of our main topsail and started out on the course. About nine sighted Scilly Island light. By mid-night the wind had increased again and at half past three all hands tumbled out of hammocks on deck to close reef sails. The sea was running pretty high, the old Monon. tumbling around like a cork. There were a couple of other ships near us, one of them had her topsails hoisted and when a squall a little stronger than the rest came her old topsail split up like a piece of paper and flew off into space. She was making pretty heavy weather. Sighted Eddystone light house about half past nine and come to anchor all right. There is a pretty good harbor protected by a break water. There are four British men of war and one Japanese torpedo boat here now. None of us have been ashore yet, but the junior officer of the deck went in charge of a boat. We seemed to attract ~~of~~ good deal of attention or curiosity.



Some of the kids remarking “They are the Yankees that licked the [dogs?] “ or other similar remarks. The Captain heard this afternoon from the Consul that we had been reported in the States as a derelick [sic] and finally given up for lost. Of course this all a bust, will not cable because can not [sic] get ashore and at any rate you much have heard the truth long before this. Mails came this morning, but did not get a letter from you or any of the boys.

Your Aff. Son,

Sid.

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