

U. S. Navy Yard,
Mare Island, Cal.
Dec 17, 1908

Dearest Papa,

The launching is at last over and the after effects are pretty nearly so and now Ill [sic] try to give you all the latest gossip of Mare Island. I suppose the proper place to begin is the launching as that is still the chief topic of conversation among all Mare Island. For several days before we were all worried about the weather as there had so little rain it seemed as if it would be too good to be true to have it hold out till after the fifth – actual work began at six o'clock [sic] on the morning of the launch and although it was still dark there weren't any signs of rain and it gradually brightened up until a short time before the ship went over the [sea cover out!?] During all the preliminary work of launching absolutely every thing [sic] went without a hitch and exactly on time – finally the time came for sawing off, you know the ends of the sliding ways are very securely bolted to the standing ways and this is what keeps her from starting too soon and its [sic] this piece 30 inches by 6 inches that is secured though to release the ship—of course that the final moment of suspense the saws got within half an inch of through when she broke away and started off slowly. Their [sic] were a few more moments, really seconds of suspense, before she was afloat – and stopped by the drays and then it was all over – the chain drays are used for stopping her worked perfectly and they ship didn't travel over two hundred feet after she left the ways, these have been used in England a great deal but so far as I know this was the first time in this country. Right after the launching there were four or five speeches from the launching platform – the Governor spoke first but Mr. Evans made the most important speech – there was probably about four thousand people in the Yard including most of the prominent people in the Yard including most of the prominent people in the State from the Governor down – up to this stage nothing could have been better. The Vallejo Association joined together to give a luncheon to all the people invited to the launching, arrangements being made for three thousand, it was a very nice but simple luncheon consisting of salads, cold meats, sandwiches, and coffee – every one [sic] got up well pleased with the launching in general and themselves in particular but the trouble began the following morning – I woke up about seven Tuesday morning with a bad chill that all the blankets we could pile on and all the hot water bottles couldn't stop for over an hour – by the time the morning got well under way my temperature was up to 104 where it stayed all day and well into the night, the next day it was down to 102 but in the mean time [sic] I had developed a pretty good case of ptomain [sic] poisoning and the first couple of days and nights were about as uncomfortable ones as I ever had the pleasure of passing and it was nearly a week before I got out of bed and I'm still on the list although I expect to be back at the office on Monday.



So there was a pretty poor ending to the party, as far as they can tell it was the roast beef sandwiches that did the work, altogether there were nearly a thousand people made sick, pretty generally taking in people from everywhere including the Governor who was in the hospital nearly a week – there appear to have been two deaths, one a waiter and the other the wife of one of the [bandservers?] but they were both complicated with other things.

There hasn't been any recent developments as to our probable future plans, the family expects to go back East in May but we are still as indefinite as ever and there is little chance of our going east till the summer at the earliest and there is a good deal of chance that we may not get back then.

All the girls are busy now with Christmas and Christmas has almost superceded [sic] the launching as the most important event – I which you and Margaret could be out here with us but then you will have [?] of the crowd with you.

By the way I have just read copies of the San Francisco Examiner and Vallejo Chronicle which had the best accounts of the launching – I think the New York Herald had a pretty long account considering the distance and every thing [sic].

The fat boy, which is his official name is getting along splendidly, he's never sick and just as happy as he can be all day long and you would hardly believe he's only four months old if you could see him. Its [sic] getting late for the young rascal so I'm going to take him and rock him to sleep, so good bye for the present – lots of love and a dandy Christmas to both you and Margaret –

Affectionately,

Sid

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