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U. S. S. Wachusett.

At Sea, August 22^d 1884

Lat $0^{\circ} 16' S$. Long $84^{\circ} W$

My darling Helen:

You see by the heading that papa is nearly on the equator and yesterday at noon the navigating officer reported latitude Zero, so we were right on it. I am beginning this letter to you with a special purpose. When you receive it you will be about to return to town in a short time and papa wants to say something to you about your reading during the coming winter. I have been greatly pleased to learn both from mamma and Grandmamma how well you conduct yourself, and that you are fond of reading. It is a great help if our nads were and nads good books, books I mean that are well written. You know how people are affected

by those with whom they live. If you never
heard anything but bad grammar, if all
around you behaved badly and were ill-
fish, you could scarcely help picking up
the same bad habits and you would not
know they were bad. So people who are
brought up in dirt seem not to know or
feel it. It is the same way with books. A
person who, especially when young, reads not only
amusing books, but books which are well
written with good language and worthy
thoughts gets in the way of expressing ^{himself} ~~themselves~~
well and thinking rightly. It is undoubtedly a
mistake to think that one can only like what
one likes at first; children generally hate to
be washed and dressed, but they get so they
would dislike quite as much to be dirty and
ragged. For such reasons I want during the
next winter, without wholly depriving you
of what you like best in the way of child's

reading, to read to some extent books about
which Papa will write you from time to time
St Nicholas, ^{&c} shall be your candy, and the other
books your meat and hominy. It is agreed on
all sides that the English Bible, which is a
translation from the Hebrew and Greek is
one of the finest English writings, and as you
become familiar with it you will be surprised
to see how often people quote its expressions
without saying, or seeming to remember,
when they come from. It is said by great
writers that it is hard to estimate the effect
of this fine writing upon the whole English
speaking people; because all have read it
and by associating with it have acquired
good habits. One very important thing to be
gained is the use of words of the old En-
glish tongue rather, when they can be avoided,
than those from the Latin or French. You
know from your history that the old English

were conquered by the stormans who brought
in many French words. The best and strongest
writers, as far as may be, use the short En-
glish words. It is better to say I began,
than I commenced; better I went than
I proceeded; better I wish than I desire;
better I behave than I conduct myself; better help
than assistance or even than aid. It is said
of one of the great Englishmen now alive,
who has great sway over his people, and es-
pecially the poorer, that you can go over
line after line of his speeches and scarcely
find a word of more than two syllables;
he uses short strong English words that go
straight from his heart to the hearts of his
hearers. When papa wrote his book a year
ago he said: first I will be careful to
have everything right, no mistakes; next
that everything shall be very clear, the
sentences so arranged that the reader

shall easily understand; and then I will
cut out all the big words I can and put
short strong English words in their place.
To do this papa had to write over and over
again, and keep changing words he had
written; what a good thing it would have
been for him had he had such a habit
that he would have written right at first.

But although I have read many good books,
I have failed to cultivate the taste for some
of the best; I don't care for Shakespear
or Milton. If I had kept reading them as I
have the Bible I might have learned to love
them. Papa can write, well but with pain.

For these reasons, I wish you'd spend your
own likings to some extent to my guidance
Mamma and I do not wish to burden you
with much study, but by your reading

you may without hard work live as it
were with those who talk well and think
nobly. It will be as though you had friends
older and wiser than yourself talking
with you whenever you want them to. And
if you do not like them at first, make up
your mind that it is a duty to thus get

the knowledge of them, the liking will
follow. Keep ever before your mind "What
a man soweth that shall he also reap".
And before sowing goes the hard work
of ploughing and breaking up the ground

August 25th I have only time tonight
to say that the book I want you to
begin with, in Elizabeth, is called "Tales
of the Alhambra." Grandama will
give it you and you will read the
very same copy papa loved when he

was a boy. It may interest you to know
that the gentleman who wrote the book
was a friend of papa's grandmother when
they were both young people; he about as old
as Uncle Hartman, and my grandmother
about as old as Cousin Carrie Morris.

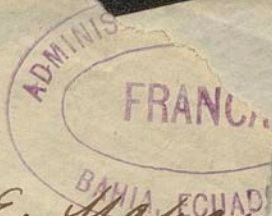
He dearly loved a friend of grandmother's,
but she died when very young and for her
sake he never married any one, though
he lived to be very old. Well, long years
went by and they had quite lost sight
of each other, when grandmother, then
seventy three, went to pay a visit; and
when she went into the drawing room
of the house an old, old gentleman
got up. It was the same Mr. Washington
Ivings. They talked a little of old
friends and then separated again, never

to meet in this world, for she died a few
months later and so did he. After this
book, I want you to read his "Conquest of Gua-
nada" for you will thus get an idea of the
splendid and romantic Court and Chivalry
of Spain, in the days of the good queen Isabella,
and of the kind of people who went out with
Christopher Columbus into unknown seas
and discovered the land of America, in
which we now live. These books will be
up to the "Life of Columbus" also by
Washington Irving and as Spain of that
day had so much to do with your own
Country it is right you should learn about
it; and Mr. Irving's style is thought
to be very good. This long letter about
reading shall not count against your
answer letter. Good bye

(2) (12) Your loving Papa

I wish you would look out the
Spanish cities, named in the books, on the map.

1884



Miss Helen E. Mahan

Care Mrs. M. C. E. [unclear]

Bar Harbour

Maine

United States of America

(12)

Letter about
my [unclear]