

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

New York Harbor,

July 2nd. 1884

My dear Lou.

In one of Mother's last letters she tells me that Father is going to take her on a trip this fall if they can save the money. You know that Father has been cut 15% and perhaps they may not be able to do it, and I would be very sorry indeed if they were not.

Now, I dont know anything about your present finances, but I suppose Father sends you money, and as I want to see them go on their trip this fall, I have just written Father telling him that you can have my allotment (\$25. per. month.) as long as you remain in Canada, and you must accept it without making any "bones" about it. If it is not enough for your pin money, I can let you have a little more.

I understand that Father allows you so much per. month, and if you can get along on what I can give you I think it would be a good idea to tell Father that he can discontinue your allowance until you come home.

This is none of my business, but what do you think of it? Write and let me know.

I can tell you one thing though, and that is that if you let Father find out that this is a scheme to save money for his pleasure, he will send you your allowance

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if he has to sell his coat. He will let me give you money for your pleasure, but he would not accept it for his. So you must be very careful when you write.

Please write me at once and let me know what you think.

My health is about the same, and I have not been on duty for a week or so.

I think, perhaps, I will go to the hospital this week, and the Naval Hospital is a very pleasant place, as you are treated very nicely, and have lots of company, as several Surgeons, and a Paymaster are stationed there with their families. But the best of it is you can go home, after you have been there a time, and remain almost as long as you want to, and for three months after you leave the ship you get sea pay.

I am afraid you have got the idea that I am very sick and present a very emaciated appearance, but you must get that idea out of your head, for, in fact, I feel quite well most of the time. Still I am not cured and need a long rest and a careful diet to make me well.

When I eat anything that disagrees with me I have a little trouble, likewise in rainy or cold weather, but I do not suffer much even then.

I have nothing to do now but amuse myself which I do by reading, playing whist etc.

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I am excused from all duty, and can even go ashore if I promise the Dr. that I wont walk around much.

So you must not waste too much sympathy on me.

Now remember, not a word about all this.

If I go to the hospital I will give some trivial cause, as the reason when I write home, and will console them with the idea that I will come home soon. Of course, I may not go to the hospital at all.

Now I must close and you must write immediately and answer my questions.

Remember me to Min. and Charlie,

Your loving brother,

(Signed) Will

P. S.

When you write tell me all the news and gossip.

(Signed) Wm. S. S.

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

New York Harbor,

July 5th, 84

My dear Father,

I am just dropping you a line to let you know that the "Swatara," will not go out on the long-talked-of cruise. The question was summarily settled last night at 10.34, by the "Aurania" of the Cunard Line of Steamers, giving us a rub as she came in the harbor, and doing us considerable damage.



She struck us as shown in the diagram, and glanced along our side.

I will spare you a nautical list of our damages, and will sufficiently inform you by stating that she broke our fore yard, and "carried away" the several spars with their rigging. The bulwarks, from where she struck to the bow was all ripped off, and bars of iron as big as your leg were snapped and bent as though they had been wax. Many of the timbers at the point of contact and vicinity were badly strained, and some will have to be replaced.

It is impossible to estimate the damage very accurately, but it will probably cost \$10,000. to make the necessary repairs, and, of course, we will have to go to the yard, so

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you can address letters to the New York Navy Yard until further notice.

It was 10.34 P. M. when she struck us and nearly everybody, except those on watch, was asleep so you can imagine the excitement. I had just turned into my bunk and was not yet asleep, when I heard the officer of the deck, hail, "Steamer ahoy"! "bear off!", "put your helm a starboard!"! I could tell by his voice that something was up, so I bounded out of my bunk, and into my trousers; just then she struck us, and heeled the ship over a little, and, in stillness of the night, made such a terrible, smashing, ripping, and crashing sound, that I was impressed with the idea that we were cut in two, and I would have to swim for it, so I jumped out of my trousers and fled on deck in my long night shirt, after having waked the wardroom officers and all our fellows.

It makes me laugh when I look back (from a safe distance) at the scene on deck. All the officers, and all the men came tumbling helter skelter up the ladders, and almost all in their shirts.

Everybody rushed aft, for the steamers spars were rattling and snapping among ours, and they were afraid of the falling pieces (which, however, did not fall).

Just imagine 200 badly excited, and some badly scared men, all attired in shirts, and huddled onto the poop of a

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vessel. It was all over in less than a minute, and we soon found that no damage was done.

The English steamer never stopped his engines, but continued on up the river, nor has he since sent to enquire what damage was done.

I consider such conduct in a commanding officer, unmanly, cowardly, inhuman, and criminal.

If he had struck us 20 feet further aft we must inevitably have sunk. The "Aurania" is steel and 7000 tons, while we are wood and less than 2000. If the vessel had gone down, most everybody would probably have been saved, as it would have been an easy matter for a swimmer to go to one of the numerous vessels anchored about us, but many, who could not swim, must have perished without assistance.

The fact that we did not sink is not an extenuation of his crime.

You probably remember the "Oneida" affair, where an English steamer, stove in an American Man-of-War, but refused to stop or send assistance, although the vessel sunk with all on board. This was at sea off some harbor in China, while the "Oneida" was homeward bound.

If the "Aurania" had not broken the top of her foremast we might not have found her out. One of our officers went ashore in citizens clothes and, seeing the broken mast while searching along the piers, he went on board the vessel,

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and, representing himself as a visitor who wished to see the ship, he was clever enough to get the whole story from one of the officers, He thanked the English officer for his courtesy, and, when he left the vessel, gave him his card. When the Britisher glanced at the card he nearly fell overboard, then, I presume, went below and kicked himself.

When the excitement was all over all the officers assembled below, and had a good laugh over their scare, and each one related the thoughts that passed through his head when the crash came. It would take me too long to relate them all in detail, but I will give you the most amusing ones. We are all good swimmers, and everyone seems to have been easy about his life. I had every confidence in my ability to swim to any part of the harbor, and really felt no personal fear. I had picked out a sailing vessel that I was going to swim to, and felt perfectly easy.

I glanced around on the lockers containing my earthly possessions, and wondered what I could save, but concluded I hadnt time to make a selection, and, as I went up the ladder I thought, to myself that I might as well take my watch with me, but, to save my life, I could not think where I had put it. One fellow thought, as he went up the ladder, in his night shirt, "Wont I be a pretty looking pill going through New York in this rig." Most all of us have just

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got our new uniforms, and we all thought what hard luck it would be to lose them. I know I thought when I got on deck, and thought she might go down, that I would lose everything I had in the world except one night shirt, and the government would only give me one months pay extra. (for that is the law)

"Lemme" Wall was fast asleep alongside me, and, when the crash came, I pulled him out of his bunk and told him to go on deck. His excitement was very amusing, he ran about wildly with his arms spread out but when I made him understand that we were stove in (as I thought) he pulled off his night shirt and put on a pair of trousers, and a cap, and seizing a pair of shoes, fled on deck, with no shirt, vest or coat on.

One sailor, when he jumped out of his hammock, landed in a bucket of water, and "sung out" for someone to throw him a rope - You must remember that all this happened in just about one minute but it was lively while it lasted; and now we are all rather pleased, for we will get out of a very disagreeable cruise.

I only intended to write you a few lines, but find I have spun out a pretty long yarn (long to write, but not to read.)

I would like this letter sent to Hal, Alf. and Lou.

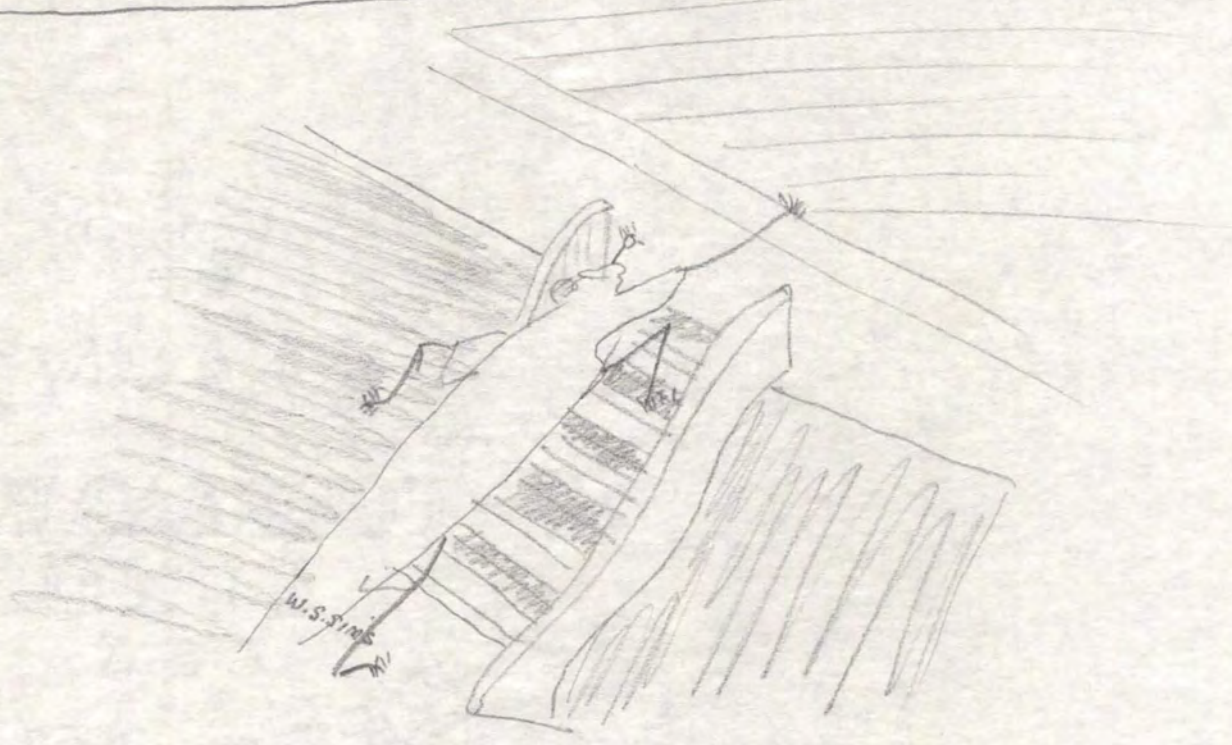
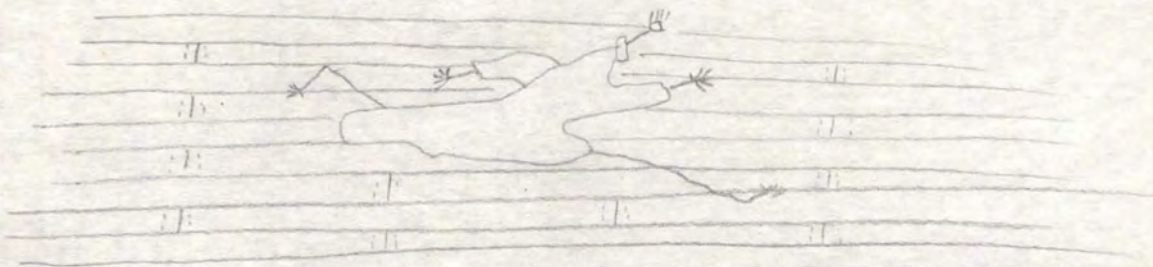
Now I must close, as I have no more news to tell.

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With love to all at home

Your loving son

(Signed) Will



U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Navy Yard, New York,

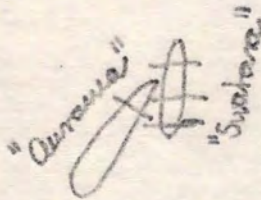
July 7th., '84

My dear Lou.,

I have just received your letter of July 4th.

As you will see by the heading, we are now at the Navy Yard. We arrived here yesterday, and will probably be here about a month.

On the night of July 4th., at about 10.30 P.M., an ocean steamer, the "Aurania" of the Cunard Line came steaming into the harbor, and was lubberly enough to run into the "Swatara." She is a large iron steamer of 7000 tons displacement, and was going at a speed of 8 knots, but, fortunately, she struck us a slanting blow on the port bow and did not do us much damage, only about \$4000 worth.



If she had struck us a few feet further aft, we would have gone down in two minutes, and a great many would doubtless have been lost. Probably all who could not swim, and you know that many sailors never learn to swim.

She struck us with such force that she heeled us over a great deal, for we are only 2000 tons, against

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her 7000. All the crew and many of the officers were asleep, but I think we were all on deck in 10 seconds. I wrote a long letter home, telling them about it, and have directed them to send it to you, so I will not repeat it here.

I was turned in at the time, but not asleep. I heard the officer-of-the-deck hail the steamer, and could tell by his voice that something was up, so I bounded up and put on my trousers, but, when she struck us she made such a terrible crashing sound, and she heeled us over so far, that I thought we would go down immediately, so I jumped out of my trousers and fled on deck in my robe de nuit, and when I go# there I found everybody in the same uniform.

I was not afraid for my live# after I got on deck, for I am a good swimmer, and could easily have reached one of the numerous vessels anchored about us, but my first thought was, that I would lose everything I had in the world except one robe de nuit, that I had on.

I suppose all my traps are worth (to me) \$2000., as I have so many expensive uniforms, besides "cits." clothes, books, and all the little traps, and trinkets a fellow has about him.

Our hull was not badly damaged, although considerably strained. All our rail was carried away forward,

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besides, our foreyard, lower boom, cathead, and a lot of things that you would not recognize by their nautical names.

Your old friend Hulme has just taken breakfast with me. He is on duty on the "Alliance," now at the yard. He is looking first rate, and will look better when he finishes raising his new moustache. He sends his regards to you.

I dont know whether I will go to the hospital or not, but I rather think not. You can address letters here until further orders.

Did you receive my last letter, about the allotments etc. I dont think you have quite had time. Please acknowledge the receipt of my last letter when you write, so I can keep track of 'em.

Give my kindest regards to Charlie Smith, and thank him (for me) for his kind invitation. I would take great pleasure in accepting it, and if I get away from the ship, I might be able to, but I would not dare to until I had been home.

Please write soon, soon.

Only a few lines but often. With reagards# to Min, and all my aunts and cousins in Canada,

I remain, Your loving brother,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"
Navy Yard, New York,
July 10, 1884

My dear Lou,

I received your last letter of July 6th. yesterday. I will write to Father and try and make arrangements about money matters. You might mention in your letters home that you have plenty of money, but dont say anything else, or you may "put your foot in it."

I rejoice every time I think of what a good time you are having, and, whenever I write home I always mention it. It is needless for me to say that I would love to be with you, but it will be impossible, for I will probably not be sent to the hospital. I am getting along pretty well, but am not well yet.

I am not going to write you a letter now for I dont feel in the humor.

We will probably be at the Navy Yard about 10 days longer, then sail for Portsmouth N. H. I will, of course, keep you informed of my address.

Mother's last letter to me was very funny. She commenced by calling me a long string of sweet names, then she asked me right plump out whether I thought there was anything between you and M. W. When I answered her I made a little fun of her, then told her that I knew nothing about it as Lou was very close-mouthed,

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and besides if she (Lou.) told me anything, I would not dare tell etc.

Now I must close as I really dont feel like writing.

I was amused at your chaff about the "Nightmare," but my dear Lou. you dont know how dead this old heart of mine is. I can explain my feelings towards the "N." by saying that nothing would please me better than to see her marry a good honorable fellow, like John Sims, for example.

I always think of John as the finest example of a model husband I know.

Write again soon.

Give my love to Charlie and Min,

And believe me,

Your very sincere

and loving brother,

(Signed)

Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"
Navy Yard, New York,
July 13, 84

My dear Lou,

I am only writing to enclose you two letters from home. One of them, (Father's) gives a statement of your finances, which seem to be pretty prosperous. I imagined you would need lots of money. The other will show you that they are all satisfied to have you remain in Canada.

I have no news to tell you this time.

Our repairs will be finished in about another week, and then we will proceed to Portsmouth, N. H., and join the fleet.

We will probably remain there a month or so, and return here in Sept. for thorough repairs.

Remember me to Min and Charlie.

My health is much better now.

Your loving brother,
(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Portsmouth, NH,

July 24, 1884

My dear Mother,

Your letter of the 20th. inst. enclosing Lou's. of the 18th. was received yesterday, also a letter each from Lou. and Alf. They all arrived here exactly in time, although I did not get them from the P. O. until the next day. As soon as we arrived I wrote a short note to Father to let you all know that we had arrived in port, and I suppose you have received it all right by this time.

Our cruise since we left New York was very pleasant, as cruises go, for I suppose you are aware that nearly all sailors (real) dislike going to sea, and, consequently like to remain in port.

I think it is true that nearly all seafaring men, after a short stay on shore (unless traveling) become restless from an insane desire to go to sea, and, when they find themselves at sea again, curse themselves for being such idiots as to leave the shore. They are queer fish, and restless people.

We left New York on the 16th, and anchored inside of Sandy Hook, about 15 miles from the city, the same evening. The next morning we made a fresh start and proceeded to the rendez-vous, where we expected to find

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the fleet on the 19th or 20th. The rendezvous is in a certain Latitude and Longitude about 200 miles off the Jersey coast. Dont you think Navigation must be a beautiful and interesting science when, by a knowledge of it, two vessels can meet each other at any spot in the midst of any ocean?

We remained at the rendez-vous for two days, putting in the time drilling the crew in various evolutions, the nautical names of which would not convey much idea to your mind. One day we had target practice with the cannon by firing at a floating target while we steamed in a circle around it. I had a fine view of the whole affair, for, being Navigators Assistant, it was my duty to determine the varying distance of the target by taking observations with a sextant, from aloft, at a height of 90 feet above the water. From my elevated position I could look down on the heads of the men as they worked at their guns, and, overlooking the clouds of powder smoke, could follow the shells until they struck the water or burst.

We left the rendezvous on the 20th., and, on the 22nd found them all anchored here, together with several practice ships, the "Portsmouth," "Jamestown," and

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my old friends the "Constellation" and "Dale," that I used to cruise in when I was a festive "plebe."

Admiral Cooper will be relieved on the 27th. by Commodore Luce, when we will probably go to sea for a **couple** of weeks, with all the fleet, but not, however, until the Arctic Relief Squadron comes in here with Greely and the survivors. Poor fellows! they suffered intensely, and all on account of the stupidity and inability of General Hazen. He deserves hanging if any man ever did, not for his stupidity or inability, but for his supineness and procrastination.

By his neglect to issue a simple but vital order he murdered those poor soldiers. Poor fool! I should think his death would be a relief to himself.

Verily the fools are not all dead yet, and the most consummate ones are those who originated the expedition. The idea of sending Soldiers on such an expedition where nautical experience was absolutely indispensible#! These poor fellows embarked in their boats, to make their perilous retreat, and it is acknowledged by them that there was not a man among them who knew how to manage a boat. Besides sailors are the only class of men whose mode of life fits them for such work. They live in the open air with their throats and chests bare and are always actively employed and all athletic. Ever#

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sailor can make and mend his own clothes and shoes, and do his own cooking, besides a thousand and one little practical tricks that a landsman would never think of. A sailor's profession is eminently practical, and he is constantly called on to accomplish certain ends with the means at hand; he is rough, tough, active and ready, and his hardy life gives him wonderful endurance. Comparing his activity and endurance to that of a soldier is like a dog's activity to a cow's.

But I suppose you would rather have me write something more personal, and besides, I can give you more on the same subject, after I have seen the Arctic vessels and the survivors if they come in here. Before I forget it I must tell you that I will send by this mail to Father my commission as an Ensign, which I wish him to keep for me, also a copy of Harper's containing an account of the Greely rescue. I have just subscribed for Puck for 6 months and have directed it to be sent to Father.

A little present which he must accept with my compliments. I think it would be a good idea to send it to Lou. when everyone at home has finished reading it, for I understand that she appreciates and enjoys the paper.

Apropos of Lou. she writes me that she is still

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having a splendid time, and when she wrote was just about to set out on her trip.

I think there is not much doubt but that I will be home this summer or rather fall while we are being repaired, for we must be repaired, and I see no reason why I should not have leave.

Now I must close for this time. Please give my kindest regards to Mrs. Ingham, and Miss Mary Ingham, also Miss Haven, Miss Boyd and the other Misses whose names I cant recall.

With love to all at home,

I remain,

Your loving son

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara, "

Portsmouth, N. H.,

July 25, 1884

My dear Lou.

I received your letter of July 16th. when we arrived here on the 22nd, and I am very glad to hear that you have at last started on your cruise. I understand that you are to join the yacht at Bellville, but you did not tell me whether you were to remain there or go somewhere else, so I will address to Port Hope and have it forwarded.

The "Swatara" left New York on the 16th. and proceeded to a rendezvous in a certain Latitude and Longitude about 200 miles off the Jersey coast, where we expected to meet the fleet.

Dont you think Navigation must be a beautiful and interesting science, when a knowledge of it enables two ships to meet at any spot in mid ocean? We didn't find the fleet there, after waiting two days for them. We passed away the time exercising at various evolutions that you wouldn't recognize by their nautical names. Among them was "target practice" with "great guns" (cannon). We fired at a floating target while steaming around it in a circle. It was my duty to determine the varying distance of the target by means of observations with a sextant from aloft at a height of 90 feet, and

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consequently I had a good birds eye view of the whole affair. We enjoyed perfect weather during the entire trip and, on our arrival here, found a fleet of nine men-of-war anchored in the harbor.

Our Admiral will be relieved tomorrow by Commodore Luce. We intend to remain here until the Arctic Relief Squadron comes in with Lieutenant Greely and the survivors on board. We will give them a glorious reception. I suppose you have read about them in the papers, and know that they went nearer the North pole than anyone has ever been, and, if it had not been for the criminal carelessness and stupidity of General Hazen, who had control of the expedition, not a man would have been lost. As it was, only 6 were saved out of a party of 23.

I believe everyone understands all about the allotment I was going to give you, and I am glad to find that you have taken such good care of your money.

Whenever Mother writes to me she mentions Mr. W. She is really very anxious, and if I were you I would not say anything more to worry her. She is not afraid you will attach yourself to an objectionable man, for she has implicit faith in your good sense and knowledge of the world, and thinks you perfectly competent to choose for yourself. She would undoubtedly be delighted

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to have you make a desirable match. I suppose Aunt Jue. and Vic. make themselves very busy matching you with various young men.

All women are match-makers, and Thackeray, the famous English novelist says that he would not give a snap for a woman who was not a match-maker.

I have not seen Hume since I rec'd. your letter but will take the first opportunity to deliver your message.

I am getting along pretty well, but am not yet entirely well.

Portsmouth (a place of 30 or 40000) is very lively now that such a large fleet is here. There is a large Navy Yard here, and the society of the place is thoroughly Naval. Many the poor young Naval Officer has been "scooped in" by a Portsmouth girl. There is a ball or "hop," or reception of some kind every night but, bless your heart, I am getting too old for that sort of thing, so I remain on board and bury myself in my books. I have just finished Washington Irving's Life of Washington, five volumes. I have never been so absorbed by anything in my life. I commenced it out of idle curiosity, and principally because it was written by Washington Irving, whose beautiful writings I always read whenever I can get one of his books. At

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first I was surprised to find how little I knew about our grand old patriot, and finally I was mortified at my ignorance.

I dont expect to remain old always; my period of rejuvenation will probably arrive when I recover my health completely.

I feel first rate now and weigh nearly as much as I usually do, but I have no energy. Two months ago I bought an elegant walking suit, but have not mustered up enough energy yet to put it on and go ashore.

Now I think I have written enough for one time.

Please write soon and let me know what you do to amuse yourself, and your manner of living on the yacht and in the tent, etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc.

We will probably remain here until the early part of Aug. and then go on a cruise under Com. Luce. I think we will be in New York in Sept. or Oct., and then I will go home.

Poor Mother tells me every time she writes how much she wants to see me, and so does father, so you can imagine I want to get home.

With love to Min and Charlie,

I remain always

Your loving brother

(Signed) Will .

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Portsmouth, NH.

Aug 3rd '84

My dear Lou,

I received your note of Aug. 1st. yesterday.

I have only time to write a short note, as everybody is busy as can be with all these Greely ceremonies.

Tomorrow morning early the fleet will land about 1500 men for a parade in honor of ^{Lieut.} Liert Greely, U. S. Army,

I will write you all about it in another letter, and in the meantime will send you a clip. describing the ceremony that took place last Friday, during which I was on the Tennessee.

You can well imagine that there are plenty of balls and hops going on while there are fourteen of Uncle Sam's vessels in the harbor.

I am about well and have been going to most of them. A few days ago there was a very large hop at the Navy Yard, in a "mould-loft", which is a room where they "lay down" the plans of a ship, in full size, so you can imagine we had plenty of fun. There are plenty of P. Gs. (pretty girls) in Portsmouth, and many of them are perfect dancers. Last night I went to Portsmouth with 8 of my shipmates, and from there with a party of 25 on one "Tally ho" coach, we drove by moonlight

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2 1/2 miles to a magnificent Summer Hotel where there was to be a ball, and we had a lovely time, and then drove back the same way. I have found a daisy girl here.

She dosent (?) pretty worth a cent, and has red hair besides, but she is a marvelous dancer, and we do the real American 40 foot slide, besides waltzing to galops, and dancing the glide waltze and glide polka etc. etc. Yesterday afternoon I played tennis for several hours before going to this ball, so you may know that when I returned I was a trifle tired, and this morning I was stiff all over. I would not have been surprised if it had made me very sick, but I am really none the worse.

I was very glad indeed to hear from you and only wish you had written me a longer letter and told me all about your amusements, and who is with you on your cruise. I cant find the place you started from on the map. Tell me where it is. When you write again tell me all about the yacht.

Has she two masts or one. How many people will she carry; do you live and have your cooking done on board.

By the by, allow me to correct a grave nautical error of yours. You used the expression when the "Irene" leans over" all seaman#, or sea women always speak of

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a vessel as "heeling" over. You must not offend the nautical ear of an old tar like me with any of your longshoreman expressions.

Now I must close, as I want to drop a line home.

I will write again soon and tell you all about the affair and everything about Portsmouth, etc. etc., but you must not wait for my letter before you write. I will expect to hear from you often.

Give my best to Charlie and Min,

And believe my ever

Your loving brother

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Gardner's Bay,

Aug 13, 1884

9.00 P.M.

My dear Mother,

I dont know when I will have an opportunity to sent this letter, but I suppose before long.

Yesterday the "Alliance" was sent to Newport to get the mail and some fresh provisions etc. and returned this afternoon, but before she took her place in the fleet she was ordered to take the mail from the fleet to a town a few miles away.

I had about five minutes to scrawl a few words to Father to let you all know where I am and that I am well.

I am well aware that I haven't devoted much time to my letters lately, and that they have been principally a succession of promises to do better, and now I think is the time to fulfill my promises.

I will try and give you an idea what we have been doing all this time.

When we left Portsmouth we all expected to go to Newport, and consequently only laid in a few days fresh provisions, and we havent ceased to mourn over our disappointment yet.

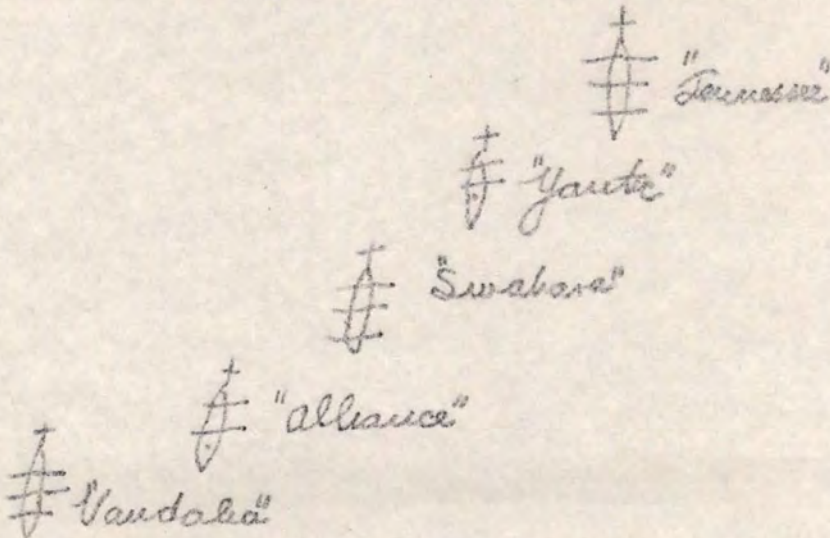
I have often blamed myself for not writing home discriptions# of the "life on board a man-of-war," I

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should have done so when I first went to sea, but have put it off from year to year. When you first go to sea everything is so odd and strange, and there are so many thousand little things to learn about the life, and it takes so long that by the time you are well shaken down, they become an old song to you and it is hard to convince yourself that your everyday life could interest anyone. These warlike times are far too busy for me to attempt a series of papers on the subject now. It requires the monotony and quiet of the tropics for such an undertaking. But someday I will tell you all about it and doubtless upset all your previous ideas about men-of-war.

But all this is not giving you much idea of what we are doing now.

We all came here from Portsmouth in company, steaming in echelon, so as not to butt into each other in the night or fog. I dont suppose you know what echelon means so I will draw a small diagram, - so.



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I was signal officer on our last trip, and was kept very busy, although it is interesting work. There are about eight different ways by which vessels can communicate intelligence at sea. By means of flags in the day time, lights at night, and by telegraphing with the steam whistle when it is foggy. Different series of flags, and different alphabets#, and different lights are used according to circumstances. Counting the Morse telegraph alphabet, I know four different alphabets now.

I think I mentioned in one of my letters that our skipper is and# old"granny." He never did know much to begin with, and has not been to sea for 12 years. Well all this signalling nearly drives him crazy.

I wish you could have seen his face the other day when I received a long signal from the Flagship's whistle through the fog. The signal was "Be prepared to receive signals by the distant code, Pass along to the next vessel"

After I had received the signal I told him what it was, and then tooted it to the next vessel. The old chap was thoroughly bewildered and said in a sad hopeless way that he didn't understand.

It is a little puzzling until you get used to it, for example who would imagine that toot, toot, toot toot, toot; toot toot, toot; toot, toot, toot toot, toot; _____

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toot; toot toot, toot, toot toot; ____ toot toot, toot
toot, toot toot, toot toot, toot toot; toot; toot, toot
toot, ____ toot toot, toot, toot toot; toot; toot, toot
toot, toot toot, toot; toot toot, toot, toot toot. meant,
"How is Addie Sims" but it does all the same.

But this waste of good paper is not telling you
what we are doing now so I will commence with our arri-
val here.

When we anchored we were given to understand that
in a few days we were to land on Gardner's Island a
force of 900 men to remain three days in camp. When
everything was ready we set out on the morning of the
11th. (it is now the 14th.) and established our camp
on Mr. Gardner's beautiful island, on top of a rather
high bluff close to the seashore and about half a mile
from the woods. The situation was the best possible
one for a camp being all on sandy meadow land, the tents
being pitched on a number of small smooth hills or knolls,
and laid out in regular streets, with the six pieces
of artillery behind earthen breast-works.

There were five large tents for the artillery, ten
for the infantry, two for the marines, three for the
officers; two kitchen tents, besides a tent each for
the General, Commissary, Surgeon, and a large "guard
tent" etc.

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The tents were on an average about 20 x 40 feet and constructed of such spars and sails as were found most suitable for the purpose. The sailors with their usual handiness put the tents up in a couple of hours, decorated the tent poles with evergreens and made themselves thoroughly at home. By the time we had been on the beach 3 or 4 hours, everything was arranged, and the drums beat the call for a dress parade on the broad expanse of meadow between the camp and the woods. We "et" our dinner and supper in front of our tents on the grass, smoked our cigars and cigarettes and thought we were having a "bully" time. The Flagship's band was on shore to make music to march by, and the routine of a regular army camp was carried on. Each officer and man carried a hammock - which is a piece of strong, thick, cotton canvas about 3 by 6 feet - in which was rolled up a double blanket, an overcoat and a raincoat. Officers were allowed ten pounds of baggage, which consisted principally of a change of "clos," toilet articles, tobacco, cards, whiskey, and other absolutely necessary articles. We made our beds by spreading our rain coats on the cold, cold ground and placing the hammock on top; then each man exercised his own ingenuity in trying to make a blanket and a peacoat do duty for sheets, blankets and pillows.

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About ten o'clock we all "turned in" and then came the tug of war. The ground was hard and lumpy, and as I was a trifle longer than my blanket, I had to stick out a little at both ends.

It became quite cold, and besides a peacoat is a pretty hard pillow. I tried to lie on all sides but it was no use, my hollows and bumps wouldn't fit those in the ground any way I could fix it. Then to add to our misery there were about 1 000 000 000 mosquitos to the square inch, and I dont exaggerate in the least when I say that they would bite through two thicknesses of a blanket and a rubber overcoat besides. They made a noise like a small buzz saw. Their favorite hold is the shin as they are very fond of the marrow in the bones, which they can easily extract.

It was no use to bang one of them against your head, for you would only hurt yourself and make the mosquito mad.

My only consolation is that I got even with one of them. He stuck his bill right through my upper lip, and, before he could get it out again I bit the brass nib off the end of it. I'll show it to you some day if I dont lose it.

I belonged to the Artillery battalion, and was Adjutant. There were 13 officers in our tent, and you

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can imagine what a time we had getting to sleep.

Every once in a while you would hear some fellow's hand go bang against his skull, and then he would make some brief remark that is best represented by a series of dashes, thus _____ etc.

Occasionally you would hear a muffled, but intensely earnest voice, from beneath a blanket, apply a long and varied series of adjectives to some particular mosquito; and one would think it would have terrified any mosquito, and so it would any ordinary one, but these Gardner's Island ones are such crime hardened murderers that you cant insult them. They only smile and back off to get a start for another artesian well. I heard one poor fellow heave a powerful sigh and mutter "What would my father say if he could see me now."

I noticed another fellow who was sleeping in the door way of the tent where he was clearly outlined against the sky. He was striking wearily at an enormous mosquito that occasionally darkened the doorway. Finally he got up, took a bottle of whiskey from his valise, made a pass at the enemy, then drawing the cork, he placed the muzzle in his mouth and slowly tilted it up until it was pointing directly at the zenith.

After keeping it there long enough to make his neck stiff, he withdrew it from his mouth, made another

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weary "pass" at the mosquito, then drawing a rubber boot over his head by both straps, he dove beneath his blanket and so drowned his cares. I didnt have any whiskey so I had to grin and bear it until I finally went to sleep from sheer exhaustion and loss of blood. The next night they were not so ravenous as the point was taken off their appetite.

On the second and third night the officers got up a virginia reel, some being wrapped in blankets to represent ladies.

The sailors enjoyed the whole affair very much. They made good soldiers and did their duty well.

The whole sailor part of the camp was thrown into a fever of excitement and admiration when it became know# that a couple of sailor pickets had captured two marines who were trying to escape in the night. You know that the marines a# a kind of police on board ship, and rather looked down on by the sailors.

The camp broke up this morning and everybody is now on board.

Tomorrow the fleet will make an attack on plum Island not far from here, and then I dont know where we will go. We will probably be pretty busy until the first part of Sept. when we will go to Newport, get our new Admiral, and go to the Navy Yards for repairs.

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I dont remember whether I have acknowledged the receipt of your last letters yet or not, but will do so now. I rec'd. one from you, enclosing Lous. and one from Father enclosing a "clip." Both were dated Aug 7th. I re'cd them just after I had sent my last short note to Father. They had been to Portsmouth first.

I wrote from here when we first arrived, and rather expected to get answers to them in last mail, but I suppose it was long on the way. You can continue to address to Newport until I tell you different address. I think they will send a mail to Greenport, a small town 5 or 6 miles distant, in a day or so but I dont know when we will send to Newport for another. Before I forget it I must tell you that I have just written to John Sims, to offer my congratulations on the birth of his son.

I said as many pretty things as I could think of at the time, and among them I declared that my best wish for the young gentleman's future was that he might grow up to bear, in equal proportions, a strong resemblance to both his Father and Mother.

I will stop and see the little chap if I ever find myself on the way home.

I hear from Lou occasionally. She is having a splendid time, and I understand she is coming home when she gets back from the islands.

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Tell me something about the clergyman's two daughters. I didn't know there was such a man in the neighborhood. I do remember your saying something about a Miss E_____ something, I could not make it out. I can only read your letters by word signs. I am used to the shape of the words but cant spell out the letters, so that a proper name floors me.

And then, Oh! then! you will write crossways. Every page of your last was written crossways.

_____ Please dont _____

Now I think I must close. Please send this letter to Hal, who is hereby notified that it is written partly for his edification, and conveys my best love to himself and Allie.

And my dear Hal, will you be so kind as to forward it to Lou. at Gananoque, Ont. and oblige,

Your loving son, brother etc. etc.

(Signed) Wm. S. Sims

U. S. S. "Swatara,"
Narraganset Bay off
Bristol and Fall River, R.I.

Sept. 14, 1884

Sunday

My dear Father,

I am sorry to say that my letters have been rather slim lately, and that without any very good excuse.

To be sure, we have been pretty busy, but then one can always find time to write a letter, if the inclination is not lacking. The trouble has been that I, - and everyone else for that matter - have been restless and unsettled from being kept in a state of constant expectation for something in the shape of a drill evolution to turn up, - and it generally turned up.

You have seen the account of all our drills etc. in the Herald, or rather those drills that were especially arranged for the amusement of the Prest. and Secretary, but those were only a small part of all the drills we have had.

It has been Commodore Luce's ambition to get as much as possible out of the fleet during the short time he was to be allowed the command, and he has done it and will continue to do so until Sept. 20. when he will be relieved at this port.

These drills, although very unpleasant, are no doubt

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very beneficial for the competition between the ships brightens up everyones wits and teaches both officers and men a thousand little practical things that can only be learned in fleet drills. I believe you mentioned having noticed in the papers that we (the Swatara) pretty generally came out behind.

This effect is clearly traceable to a direct cause, but it would take me too long to explain it, and probably would not be interesting to you anyway. I may, however, call your attention to the fact the "Swatara" is a ship i.e. ship rigged, having yards on three masts, while the other smaller vessels of the fleet are bark-rigged i.e. three-masted, but having yards on only two. This is a heavy handi-cap, but the real difficulty is that the Executive Officer, besides being very stupid and slow, is thoroughly disliked by all the sailors and they wont drill for him.

There has been a rumor lately that the "Swatara" is going to be repaired in Portsmouth N. H. instead of N. Y. Our Chief Engineer received the news from Washington and has bet \$10. to \$5. that it is true, and I am rather afraid it is, for if Chandler has any say we will go there. The Navy Yards will be worked to the utmost during the election. Every vessel, in these waters will be put under repairs, besides buildings etc.

(Sec. Nav.)

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All the vessels left on the stocks at the completion of the war will be broken up, and if they cant find work enough to expend the money on they will hire the laborers all the same as they have done before. But I dont think they can save Jim. B. all the same. By the way I have asked you several times what you thought the chances were for the Democrats this time.

(Blaine)

Whether we go to New York or Portsmouth will not effect my leave, although it will cost me more to get home and back. As I have often, often, often, said before I want a month.

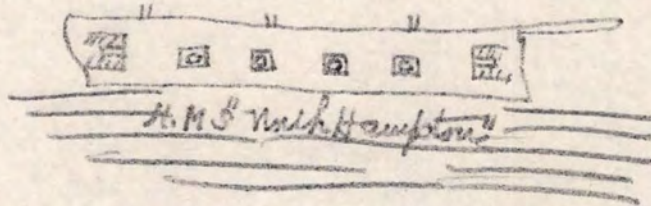
I am sure I can get two weeks, which is a good deal more than half a month, - when you cant get any more.

Before I forget it, I want to tell you something that I have not seen in the papers, viz. when we were in Portsmouth, the Secretary was one day on the "Tennessee" when Ben. Butler came on board alone and unattended in a small boat and was closeted in the cabin with Chandler for three hours, at the end of which interview he "folded his tents like the Arabs, and as silently stole away" ___ ???????????

Did you see in the papers the H. M. S. "Northampton" was in Newport a short time ago? She remained for a week or ten days, then went to Boston. About three days of her stay was taken up with firing salutes and answering

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the same. She came in on a Sunday and on Monday morning



at 8 a.m. let fly a salute of 21 guns with the United States ensign at her fore truck. This salute was answered by fort Adams with 21 guns. Then she fired 21 for Prest. Arthur who was afloat on the "Despatch;" this was answered by the "Tennessee," Then she saluted Com. Luce with 13 guns, and was answered by the "Tennessee."

During the remainder of her stay she was visited

by President Arthur	42	guns
" Com. Luce	26	"
" Com. Johnson	26	"
" Genl. x	26	"
" Sec. Chandler	38	"
Total - -	<u>158</u>	"

Then he returned all the above visits, and received in all, and answered

	<u>184</u>	"
G. Total - - - -	342	"

This is all I remember, but probably there were more. The officers of the different ships, according to custom, exchanged visits. Five Junior Officers

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including myself from the "Swatara," visited the young English Midshipmen. There were 26 of them, their ages, I should judge, varying from 12 to 20. They treated us very politely, and drank brandy and soda without difficulty. We found them, as might be expected, very ignorant even about their own ship and guns, etc., for you know their school is mostly at sea. We did not remain to receive their return visit, but went up the Bay the next day for some exercise or other, and before we came back they had left. The "North Hampton" is truly a magnificent ship. She carries 12 large rifles, two pointing ahead, and two astern, all of 10 inch calibre, and four on each broadside of 9 inch calibre besides smaller guns on the upper deck. She has from 10 to 12 inches of armor and is a ram. She is about 7600 tons displacement.

She is not a handsome ship outside, but is beautifully kept inside, as clean as a pin and all the iron and brass work about the guns etc. burnished like mirrors. When she came in there were the "Tennessee" "Vandalia," "Swatara," "Alliance," and "Yantic," wooden vessels, the Nantucket and Pasaie, nonitors, and the torpedo boat "Alarm," and if she had them all outside where she had lots of sea room she could "lick" them all, for she could steam around any of us and our guns

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wouldn't hurt her much. I wonder if I will ever go to sea on such a vessel flying the American colors?

I must close now or miss a mail that leaves in a few minutes.

Give my love to all at home, and tell them to have a little patience and I will soon be right in the middle of yes#.

Your loving son
(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara, "

Navy Yard New York,

Nov. 6th., 1884

My dear Lou,

I have lots to tell you and not much time so you must excuse careless writing.

It is now 8 p.m. and the afternoon reception on the "Vermont" went off splendidly. I invited Miss Maxwell and Miss West. Miss M. brought her cousin Miss Wigand of Phila. and her married sister Mrs. Banks, Miss West came with her brother, my old classmate. I met them at the Navy Yard Gate, and fortunately, both parties arrived at the same time, and still more fortunately Miss M. was already acquainted with Miss W. and her brother so all the people made one party. The Swatara turned out 10 officers, 6 from the Steerage, all (exclusive of course of myself) as fine and handsome a set of fellows as you could wish to see, and all splendid dancers. They were all introduced to my friends and did their duty manfully, I myself, working hard, and, although, contrary to our expectations, there were many more girls than men, still I dont think my party missed a single dance. When the time came for refreshments I managed to secure partners for all, I, with great self denial, taking the married sister. I secured a beautiful stateroom for the party exclusively, and

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the services of two waiters, so that we were provided with everything without trouble, and had a right merry time.

After refreshments we had the Lanciers and with great executive ability I managed to get up a set containing our party and ten other couples besides, making in all fourteen couples, all young and frisky.

It was the Centennial Lanciers, and you can imagine there was nothing stately about them.

I believe it would have shaken the faith of a devout quaker to have seen the real honest innocent fun we had. After a few more dances the affair broke up, and I saw the ladies safely on their way home on the cars. They all expressed themselves very much pleased and I really think they were. Miss Maxwell invited me to come and play tennis and take dinner on Monday, bringing my tennis clothes. Miss West is also invited to be there.

Miss M. is looking very well and looked quite pretty today. She is a very good dancer and pleased all her partners. Miss Wigand dosen't# pretty much, but she is very pleasant and a good dancer. Miss West ditto, except that she is an exceptionally fine dancer.

The whole reception was a blooming success, and I feel much pleased with myself for the way in which

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I managed to get my invited guests through.

Just tonight we (the young officers in the yard) have been talking about getting up a hop to be given in the sail loft in the navy Yard, about week after next. It is not settled yet but I am going to exert myself to put it through, and try and make it of some consequence, - regular invitations, and programs of dances, - refreshments by a caterer etc. etc.

Miss Maxwell says she hopes you will come soon, Miss Wigand was kind enough to say that she hoped you would come before she goes home, although the date is not fixed for her departure. You dont know how I wished you had been here today. I could hardly help thinking I would meet you at the Navy Yard gate. Now you must make all haste and come, for they all expect you.

When you come we are going to make up a party, and "take in" the Navy Yard, visiting the Greely Relief vessels, the Museum, the Tallapoosa, etc. etc. etc.

So run your dresses up lively and get started. You can take a train that will land you in Jersey City, then step onto a Brooklyn Annex boat which will land you in Brooklyn at the foot of Fulton St., where some one can meet you if you telegraph the train, or you can take a Fulton Avenue car, get off at Washington Avenue, and be within one block of 489.

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The baggage man comes around before you reach Jersey City, so you can have your baggage delivered.

When you are coming you had better telegraph to Miss Maxwell and me so that one or both can meet you at the annex boat.

I will do what I can to give you a good time during your stay.

The indications at present are strongly in favor of my being flush, for I think Cleveland will be elected, but at all events I will not be strapped. I suppose you have given up hope in Pennsylvania, surrounded as you are by Republicans.

The excitement here has exceeded anything that you can imagine.

I arrived here at 4 P. M. on the 4th. and the bulletins and evening papers had already begun to predict success for their respective parties. I had the first watch from 8 to 12 P. M. and could hear cheer after cheer go up from the city, above which the sky was illuminated by thousands of bonfires. The evening papers issued Extras every hour all night, and some every half hour. Cleveland seemed to be sweeping everything before him.

It appeared as if the whole city of New York had turned out to look at the bulletins. Union Square,

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and broatway# in the vicinity of City hall was absolutely impassable from thousands and thousands of surging, swearing and excited men.

The Rep. bulletins published# only the Rep. majorities, as fast as they came in and the Dem. only the Democratic majorities. The Herald Times and Sun published them I think as fast as they learned the results either way. Every time a scrap of news was put up, the thousands of throats sent up a cheer, that seemed to shake the granite buildings. I turned in at 12 (night) feeling pretty sure of success. I had the morning watch also from 4 to 8., and got all the morning papers about 4.30 from an officer who had been watching the bulletins all night, and all the Dem. papers gave the election to Cleveland and the Rep. papers, only said "hopeful for Blain."

I wish you could have seen the navy yard workmen when they came in in the morning. Their faces were long and haggard and they had no hope. We democrats on board ship had a sort of communion service of cake off a china plate with Cleveland's picture on it. Towards noon wild rumors began to fly in the air. Blain was apparently carrying the upper counties in New York, by such majorities as to indicate his overcoming Cleavelands majorities in New York City, and Brooklyn.

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Bulletin after bulletin came in, until the democrats looked pretty blue.

On the ship we considered all lost, and were becoming resigned. About 8 P. M. on the 5th. appearances commenced to turn in favor of Cleveland and by 10 P. M. the "Extras" on opposite sides, each claimed majorities of 5000 or less. Things became so desperate# that Blain was telegraphed for but was too sick to come.

Then wild and extremely dangerous rumors, began to circulate. It was known that Jay Gould had been closeted with Elkins, the Republican manager. It was rumored that secret agents were being sent to all parts of New York. That Jay Gould was controlling the associated press and keeping back democratic returns, in order to speculate in the fluctuating stocks. That he had given unlimited gold to the republican managers, etc. etc. etc.

The city was in a turmoil of excitement, curses were hurled at Gould, and the monopolists, from all quarters, and if the state should finally go republican there may be trouble.

In one of these paroxysms of excitement all that is necessary is an enflamatory speech and a single cry of "down with Jay Gould" and the murder will be done. All the men who are rich enough to have their wealth

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generally know#, would have their houses, razed to the ground, and there would be fearful bloodshed before it could be put down. The republicans havent got niggers to do with in this state.

All this danger, however, will be avoided by the state going for Cleveland. All the dem. papers claim the state as sure and the election also, the Sun concedes it to Cleveland, while the other Rep. papers hold out, and claim the state by a small majority.

I think from reading all the papers, that the election is pretty sure for Cleveland, but it depends entirely on New York, and it will be close. Perhaps we will have to wait until the official count before we will know.

Now I must close as I am tired.

Of course, you understand that all this politics about New York, is for Father's benefit, as I dont suppose you care much about it.

Now I must close. Try hard and come soon. Did Alf bet any of my money?

With love to all at home your loving bro.

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. Swatara,
Navy Yard New York,
Nov. 24, 1884
1 a. m.

My dear Mother,

I am very sorry that I have not found time to write home for such a long time, but I positively have not had time. No man was ever busier than I have been for the last ten days, but now that I am comparatively at leisure I will tell you what has kept me so busy.

When I found that Lou. was coming here I conceived the idea of trying to get up a ball of some kind. I spoke to many of the wardroom officers of the fleet but no one seemed disposed to start it, so I determined to get one up among the Junior officers.

A day or so before Lou. came on I started to make my arrangements, having persuaded, (after talking a blister on my tongue) enough Junior officers to go into it. On the day Lou. arrived (14th) I ordered the invitations (200) and from that time until last Thursday the 20th. I was on the jump. There was not time to organize committees, or rather, not enough time for them to accomplish anything, for you know large bodies move slowly, so that I had the management of the whole concern. There has not been an entertainment given in the fleet for a very long time and the Senior officers know

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very well that they should have given something, but in addition to the indifference, laziness, and stinginess that always abounds, there lacked a moving spirit, a man with rank enough and sand enough to tell them that it was time they entertained somebody, or else stopped accepting invitations. Of course I could not tell the wardroom officers their shortcomings, but I could and did tell the steerage officers, and finally about 30 agreed to contribute.

Then I was in for it, and had six days to get ready in. If I succeeded I would get one thirtieth of the credit, but if I failed I would get all the blame, of course.

Three days out of the six I was on duty, and there was engravers, caterers, musicians etc. etc. to hunt up and bargain with, besides endless red tape among the navy yard authorities. The party was to be given in the Sail Loft. The Commandant had not objection to letting me have the hall if the officer in charge of that department had no objection, the officer in charge of the department had no objection if the Sailmaker had no objection, the Sailmaker was not sure but that he would need the floor space on that day etc. etc. etc.etc. Finally I got the hall. Then there were flags and bunting for decorations, chairs and benches, lanterns,

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offices for ladies reception rooms; ditto for gentlemen, permission to use the band; permission to have Navy Yard tug make a trip to New York for those coming from that city; ladies maids to engage; orderlies to ask for, sailors to ask for to help decorate, etc. etc. Small things requiring as much red tape as large. The Navy Yard authorities were all disposed to assist us, but the tape is the accumulation of centuries and had to be gone through with. The fleet authorities were not so willing but a little blarney won those in authority. For example after ascertaining that Capt. Stanton's wife would not be here for a month, I called on him on the "Tennessee" and expressed a wish that his wife would receive with me at the reception. It tickled the old man very much and placed the resources of the "Tennessee" at my disposal. Then I called on the Captains of the "Swatara," "Alliance," and "Yantic," and offered them blank invitations etc. etc.

Our invitations were as follows.

"The Junior Officers of the U. S. Ships "Tennessee," "Swatara" "Alliance" and "Yantic" request the pleasure of your company at a reception to be given in the Sail Loft, Navy Yard New York, on Thursday Nov. 20th. 1884 from two until five P. M.
Dancing"

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All invitations going to New York City contained an engraved card as follows viz;

A Government Steamer will leave
the foot of 23rd. Street East
River, for the Navy Yard New
York, at 1.30 P. M.

There was of course endless trouble finding out who to invite on general invitations. The names of all officers stationed at the Yard, and Hospital, and whether they had wives or families or young ladies staying with them etc. etc. Invitations were sent to all naval vessels in the Yard and New York harbor, to Governor's Island, Genl.(?) Hancock Fort Hamilton, and all army stations within a radius of 30 miles. I intended to send one to you but we ran short.

Did you ever fold seal, address and stamp 200 invitations?

Finally after several periods of almost despair everything was arranged. You will see by the paper I sent you that Mrs. Capt. Kane, the wife of the Captain of the Yard, and Mrs. Lieutenant Peck, our Navigator's wife, and your humble servant received.

There were about 400 guests and the affair was a "blooming success." I impressed it upon all the fellows that they must all officiate as floor managers, and they

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worked hard introducing strange men to strange girls, so that everybody had a good time.

I suffered much anxiety for fear something would go wrong. That my caterer, or music or something would fail. I dreamed the wildest dreams. I dreamed I was sliding with fearful velocity down a mountain of slippery invitations (all yet unaddressed) into a lake of ice cream of many colors, while thunder clouds decorated with bunting and lanterns, showered down claret punch, fancy cakes, and cream sandwiches upon my devoted head. The ingredients of the above storm with the addition of coffee constituted our refreshments. The dancing started off well. The first bowls of punch were made weak, and the ladies finding it was harmless imbibed it freely. Then I ordered the caterer to make the remainder of the punch according to the following receipt, which you had better copy, as I can recommend it, viz;

4 bottles (Qts) Claret

1/4 bottle brandy

Sugar, sliced lemons, and oranges.

Ice.

This was imbibed quite as freely as the former, and the effect was a large crop of smiles and general friskiness in dancing. The hall was not lighted by gas,

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and was too large to light with lanterns, only a few being used for the musicians. At 4.30 the sun went down but the dancing went on until it got quite dark and quite 5 o'clock. **when** I ordered the band leader to play two waltzes in succession and then "home sweet home" without stopping. When they were finished it was almost too dark to distinguish faces, and everybody departed well pleased. I, of course, could take very little part in the dancing, except in the interval between the arrival of the last and the departure of the first.

Miss Maxwell, Miss Wiegand, Miss Shunk, Miss Sims, and Mrs. Banks nee Miss Maxwell were on hand and I think had a very good time, but Lou. must tell you all about that. You can imagine that I was pleased at the success of this affair, for I dont think I could have survived a failurs.

However I have gained a good deal of experience in the last few days, the most valuable of which is never to attempt to manage another reception alone. I haven't got quite rested yet. If you will reflect a moment you will realize that it is tiresome to bow and smile to 400 people, on entering a room, and shape# hands, and bow and smile 400 more times when they depart. My face is not quite rested yet. We (Juniors) propose to give a German in the yard so that we can have some fun without

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quite so much work. Your daughter Lou. will be there for she seems to be quite popular with the young officers.

Now I must close. Tell Addie I will write to her soon, and thank her for the picture and baby (?) she sent me.

With love to all at home,

Your loving son

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Navy Yard New York

Nov. 29, 1884

My dear Father,

I suppose you have noticed in the Herald our proposed cruise. The program is substantially correct. We will be ready about Dec. 10th, when we will probably sail direct for Port of Spain, Trinidad, thence to La Guayra, Puerto Cabello, Cartagena, and Aspinwall, then Havana, Key West and New Orleans arriving in the latter place about Feb. 1st. where we expect to have a very good time. I will enclose you a copy of the Admiral's Gen'l. order No 6. which refers to our visit. Before we sail you and I must have an understanding about cigars. Lou. I suppose will remain here until we sail. She is having a very good time as far as I know. She has been to West Point with Nan. and Miss Maxwell twice; the last time to attend a "German."

I suppose she writes home all about it, so I will not give my views on the subject. I have been to see the poor "Nightmare" and had a long talk with her. I found her looking a little thin and very pale, and dressed in deep mourning, but with a cheerful face and bearing her terrible sorrow without flinching. She not only conversed freely about her loss, but seemed to take a pleasure in recounting the circumstances, pleasures and

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humors of their courtship. Then she gave me a detailed account of his illness, of the wretched grief and despair of his Father and Mother, whose greatest joy and pride he was; how his Father could not bear to remain in the room when he was delirious, but could not remain away; how she could quiet him with a word when two strong men could hardly keep him in bed; how he continually raved about her; he thought they were married and traveling and he was always buying railroad tickets and paying bills etc. She explained that he would have survived the fever, and that it broke several days before his death but that he died of tuberculosis, which is a sort of pulmonic consumption, or very rapid superation of the lungs. This disease is supposed to be hereditary in his family. She said he made a brave struggle for his life. He drank two quarts of milk and brandy every day up to the very last. She told me how she held his hand while he died; how easily and naturally he passed away, and how beautiful he was even in death. All this she told me with a brave heart and a sad smile, but not the sign of a tear.

Mrs. Thompson told me that throughout her entire trouble she (Alice) never shed a tear. She would chat and sing little songs and amuse poor Foster when he was conscious, and when at the time she knew that his recovery

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was impossible, and when his family and friends could not bear their grief.

At his grave she stood like a marble statue, and while strong men wept about her she joined in singing his favorite hymn with a clear voice.

Alice is intensely religious, almost fanatically so and, before her engagement to Foster she talked seriously of retiring from the world, so that I should not wonder if she did something of the kind now.

Mrs. Thompson told me that this is the second time she has passed through the same trial. Her eldest daughter (now Mrs. Ferguson) lost her intended by a sudden death.

But all this can't interest you much, and besides I want to ask your advise# about something.

The Swatara is ordered to make a report on the Panama Canal and I will be one of a board of three detailed to make the report. I don't know whether I will be the senior or not. I have the old man pretty well by the ear and have already got him to appoint an officer of my choosing & junior to me. He wants to appoint a Lieut. while I want another junior officer. However if a Lieut. is appointed it will only be for his signature.

Now I would like you to give me a few suggestions as to what to report on; what heads to divide the report into; how much detail to report; what statistics of workmen,

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and death rates etc. etc.

I have not given the subject any thought yet, and will write you again about it.

I must close now as it is 3 a.m. and I have another note to write.

With love to all at home I remain

Your loving son

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Navy Yard New York,

Dec. 2nd. 1884

My dear Father,

I never have been quite so busy in my life as I have been in the last few weeks, consequently you have received very few letters from me. I have only time now to scratch a line or so, which I must find time to do, as I have some very good news to tell you.

A few days ago I made a formal application to the Secretary of the Navy to be ordered to the Swatara as a regular watch and divisional officer. Capt. ^(Wiltse) Wittse(?) approved it and, I wrote a letter to Capt. Harmony in Washington, and I got my orders by return mail, so that I now have a stateroom in the wardroom and all the privileges of a wardroom officer. My friend Lieut Comdr. Strong was opposed to my getting these orders, consequently it affords me so much the more satisfaction.

Last night I took my first dinner in the wardroom and by way of celebrating the event, I invited Mr. Banks, Mrs. Banks (nee Maxwell) Miss Florence Maxwell, Miss Wiegand, Miss Shunk, Miss Sims, "Lemme" Wall, Naval Cadets Jones H. P, Jones H. W. Hill and Shoemaker. There were two wardroom officers there (besides myself) Lieut Goodrell and Paymaster Barry.

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Menue. Ox tail soup, turkey, roast beef, sweet and white potatoes, parsnips, green peas, corn, celery, olives, etc. etc. with all the "fixins," Desert Charlette de Russe, cream puffs candy. - Cafe noir and cigars and cigarettes, - Wines, claret, and Champagne.

I think they all had quite a pleasant time, and enjoyed the novelty of the occasion. All the girls promised to make me some gimcracks for my room, and Lou is coming down some day to take measurements etc. Today the girls are coming down for a little dance, in the sail loft, On Thursday there is a reception on the Vermont, and on Friday 25 of us young bucks are going to give a German in the sail loft. We bought 150 pretty favors and the girls at the Maxwells have made us 50 more.

So you see we are very giddy in the Navy Yard, and are having lots of fun if we are getting strapped.

I may have to send to you for a small check before I leave for the south.

I dont think Lou. will come home for some time for I think they like to have her at the Maxwells. They have plenty of Naval callers, and Miss Maxwell (the head of the family) has been pleased to express her approval of off# the young men I have brought there, at the same time paying me a complement that I am too modest to repeat. The young fellows on our ship are certainly

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as gentlemanly and agreeable a set as I have ever come across.

I have not time to write half as much as I want to, and must close now. Tell Addie that I have not forgotten than# I owe her a letter for her last very long and pleasant letter, and to Mary I owe one too.

With love to all at home,

Your loving son (Signed) Will

U. S. S. Swatara,
Navy Yard, New York,
Dec 6th, 84
11.00 P. M.

My dear Father,

I am writing on watch again, for that is about all the time I have to write.

I am very busy with my social duties. This week we had a splendid hop on the "Vermont," and the next day (Friday) we had a German which another fellow and I got up, and it certainly was a monumental success. Miss Maxwell, Miss Wiegand, Lou. and Nan. have been to them all and have enjoyed them very much.

Miss Maxwell said (to Lou.) that she never had such a good time in her life. She owes as much to Lou. as Lou does to her.

I am getting somewhat thinner but am still "in the ring."

We will leave by the 15th, if not a few days before. I dont know when Lou. will start for home, but probably soon.

I will write you before we leave, giving you all the information I can about where and when to send letters.

I will have to "turn in" in a few minutes so I will close, but not before requesting you to send me from my bank account two (2) checks for \$30.00/100 each.

Dec 6th, 84 - page 2

You must not think I have been extravagant for I have \$30.00/100 in my pocket at this moment. But I have to pay an entrance fee to enter the wardroom mess, and pay my share in advance for three month's sea stores., - canned meats etc. etc. - Besides I want to buy a share in the Wine mess (\$23,) which is a paying investment, as the percentage charges to outsiders increases the shares, and, I will not be charged extra for tobacco etc. Please send the money soon. Give my love to all at home -

Your loving son

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. Swatara,
Navy Yard Norfolk, Va.

Dec. 10, 1885.

My dear Lou.

Brace up and drop me a line.

I have no news to tell you, for everything is moving along quietly.

The Training Fleet left today, and I suppose there is weeping in Norfolk.

My health is very good now, but I am remaining very quiet, and reading stacks of books.

I call occasionally in the Yard, principally on Mrs. Truxtun, (?) the Commodore's wife. They are very pleasant people.

Lemme and the Jonesii are on the go all the time as usual.

Drop me a line soon and let me know what you are doing.

Remember me to Florie when she comes.

Your loving brother,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Navy Yard New York,

Dec. 11, 1884

My dear Father

I have rec'd. your letters enclosing checks for \$40. and \$20. Some of these days I will send the money back, as I wish to keep the allotment intact.

We will sail from here for Trinidad on Saturday the 13th at 9 a.m. if the weather is favorable. Tomorrow I will write you again and give you all the information about mail steamers etc. This is my last day off duty, and I must make a few fare-the-well calls and do a little shopping. Lou. is busy getting curtains etc. ready for my room. Nan. is hemming and embroidering a doz. handkerchiefs for me.

Last evening I called on the editor of the New York Times, and in a very business like interview of five minutes duration arranged for a series of not more than six letters on La Guayra, Panama Canal, and Hayti, not to exceed one column and a half, and to be paid for at the regular rates i. e. \$10. per. column.

Some time in the future if I can manage to acquire a "readable" style my letters will be worth much more. But even as it is it is an easy way of turning an honest penny.

The letters will be published in the Sunday Edition

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of the Times.

But I must close now as I did not intend to write much of a letter this time, as I intend to write again tomorrow.

Give my best love to all at home,

Your loving son

(Signed) Will

P. S. Sunday edition of Times \$1.00 per. yr.

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

At Sea Dec. 23rd. '84

Lat. 24° North.

Long 61 ° West,

which is about half way
between the Bermudas and
the Windward islands.

My dear Lou,

I am writing this letter to you because you know many if not all the officers on the ship, and a good deal about the vessel, and I can write to you directly about them and you can explain to everybody else.

I will first give you a complete list of all the places we are to visit and the distances between them.

Knots.

New York to Port of Spain - - - -	1900
Port of Spain to La Guayra - - - -	340
La Guayra to Puerto Cabello - - - -	70
Puerto Cabello to Curacoa - - - -	110
Curacoa to Cartagena - - - - - -	468
Cartagena to Aspinwall - - - - - -	281
Aspinwall to Havana - - - - - - -	1049
Havana to Key West - - - - - - - -	94
Key West to New Orleans - - - - - -	<u>550</u>
Total	4862

Now before we commence this trip I have a few words to

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say about Brooklyn etc. As you, of course, know by this time, we left New York on Sunday morning the 14th. You were to leave at 1.00 P. M. on Saturday, and we were to wave a handkerchief to the Annex boat as she passed, which we did, but as she did not come nearer than a mile I suppose you could not see us. Lieut Wood told us (Hill, Joneses, Shoemaker, Wall & myself) that Mrs. Wood (your chaperone at the Sailor's ball) was to be on the same boat. We all had our glasses on the boat but could see no handkerchiefs. I suppose, however, that you got off all the same. We were all very blue at leaving, for we had not realized what a good time we had had until we were off.

On Saturday when we left the Yard, a large party of ladies visited us, including Miss Pultreau (however you spell it I dont know) the Misses Parker and a lot more and as they "saw the ship go around the bend" they waved "good bye my lovers, good bye" with their handkerchiefs, from the Cob Dock, close by the "Vermont." Davy Peacock, and Howard, also Dr. Means, were with the party.

The "Swatara" left a good reputation, and I dont think did any damage, unless the irresistable Joneses brought away a few hearts apiece. They all expressed themselves very much pleased with the Maxwell delegation,

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and I think justly for it certainly was a very pleasant place to visit. I alway# enjoyed myself (except at meals, where the stupid and illbred conceit of our mutual friend always made me angry and savage).* However, I never had a more pleasant month in my life. To be sure, I had lots of work to keep things moving, but I enjoyed it and gained an immense amount of social experience.

Only last night as we were smoking on the forecas-
tle in the moonlight, I asked "Lemme" Wall and Ben.
Hill how they would like to visit Orbisonia with Hulme
& me, and have "Flimse" Nancy, and yourself there, -
and I thought to myself, perhaps, Helen Markley, or some
other Harrisburg girl. We could all put up (sleep) at
the Hotel, and you four girls could have your room and
Hens, while they took the other room, I mean Hen and
Alf. Then we would have, Addie and Bob Ingham

Hulme and you

Hill and "Flimse"

Wall and Nan

Alf and the Harrisburg girl

Me and Mary for extras, or

supernumeraries to change off with.

These with Mary Ingham and a few people at the Hotel

* Very lightly crossed out in pencil, I think later - ASF.

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would make us very independant# and very gay.

But this is all visionary and not at all likely to come about, for we have very little idea where our ships will be next summer or what they will be doing but it is very pleasant to talk about. All our fellows were very much taken with Florence Maxwell. I include myself among the fellows, for I think her a very sweet and clever young lady. Nancy was liked very much after she relaxed a little of her dignity or hautiness which I imagine is more in her manner than in her heart. I quite agree with Father and Mother that she is "a very fine girl." I do hope we can manage to get a party together next summer and have a free and easy time in the country, but dont set your heart on it for experience must have taught you by this time how uncertain it is that leave can be gotten at any particular time, - and then Wall, Hill and I would make three from the same ship. If they would only put this ship out of commission in Sept. or Oct. then we could have our picnic and not be limited to time. However, this is all idle talk this early in the game, and besides I have many things to write about, but, before I proceed, let me explain that there is considerable motion on the ship, and that I have to balance myself and write at at# the same time, hence this irregular penmanship.

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I sent Alice Thompson's two terribly sad letters home to Mother. By reading the second letter you will see that I wrote a letter in answer to the first. I endeavored, to the best of my ability to comfort her, but I know without any success. She is bright and smiling to everybody, and only lets her best friends get a glimpse# of the deadly sorrow that I sometimes fear is sapping her young life away. I have known her nearly five years and as you know, admired her greatly. We have been constant correspondents, and but for her beneficent influence, I would probably have been a tougher citizen than I am now.

But I must not bore you with these sorrows, for it would be an endless letter if wrote all I thought on the subject.

In one of Father's letters just before we sailed he complains that I have not written a word about Cleveland and the election, which I must confess is quite true. It is a hackneyed excuse to plead lack of time, so you must explain to Father how uncommonly busy I was during your stay in Brooklyn. However, Cleveland is elected all the same and no one has enjoyed his success more than I have; and not merely as a partisan victory, but because I think the country has had a fortunate escape from a thoroughly corrupt and despicable villain.

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I shall watch the coming administration with intense interest, and endeavor to understand its policy. Ever since the election, when I have had time I have been reading up on the tariff and English free trade, and I must confess that at present I am much perplexed, but inclined to believe that comparative free trade would be beneficial to this country. We have on board a "History of the Free Trade Movement in England," and I own a handsome copy of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," which was made a present to me by Mr. Rider's Uncle. These subjects I will read up and try get hold of in my leisure time.

I expect to be pretty busy, for what with my letters to the New York Times, and perhaps some to the Chicago Times, and my report on the Canal, I will be pretty busy.

If I do make a report on the Canal, I intend to get the credit for it for I will not make the report and let the credit go to a dead head who ranks me.

I think I have the "committee under my thumb," and that our imbecilic old "skipper" will appoint Rider, Shoemaker and me to make the report.

If he does we will work hard and acquire of course considerable experience and a little Naval reputation.

Now I think it is time to start on our cruise, but

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to be quite correct I must inform you that the last half dozen pages were written today the 24th., consequently this evening is xmas eve and tomorrow is xmas day, and if I wish you a happy xmas tomorrow, as I sincerely do, you will not find it out for about three weeks.

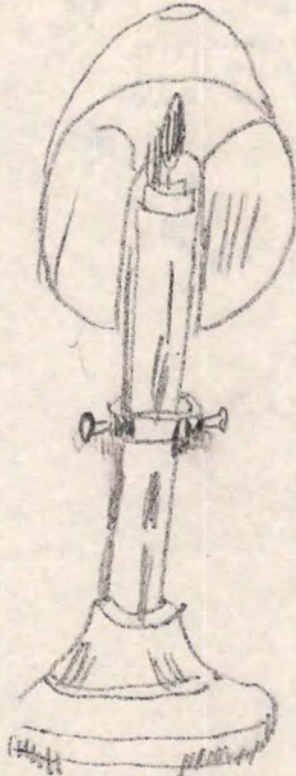
On Sunday morning at 9.00 a.m. all hands were called up anchor, and a few minutes later the aforesaid anchor was dragged very reluctantly from the mud and stowed in its sea berth on the bow, and the old engine with a wheeze and a snort, and a very discontented-sounding rumbling and grumbling, roused himself from his long rest and settled down to his regular work of making the ponderous propeller go round, and the old Swatara was forced to run ashore or leave the harbor.

She did the latter, and did it in a very stately manner moving steadily through the smooth water on her way to Sandy Hook and the open sea, little suspecting, I guess, the rough handling she was destined to get from the same open sea. But first let me tell you about my room. I have it now all fixed up so that it looks quite pretty. The lambrquin - which has been very much admired by everyone - is in its proper place and the curtains are all up. I have two neat little book cases that hold my small library and under one is a small wardrobe, in front of which is a cretonne curtain. The

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door curtain is lined with the same kind of cretonne.

I have two reflecting brass candle sticks that make a



light like a small locomotive light. - and an ordinary candle stick besides. I find on overhauling my traps that I have three white bed spreads, and all together I am very well fixed and very comfortable. I have a very good servant, a West India

darkey and he takes good care of me and keeps my room in fine order. The candle stick, basin ring and curtain rods all brightly burnished and everything is neat as a pin. He places my slippers and night clos. in their proper place every evening and turns down the bed clothes, - gets a bath in the morning etc. etc. etc.

But I must tell you about my particular friend Lieut. Comdr. Strong. He was very much opposed to my being made a wardroom officer, as he has disliked me since a couple of years, and I can tell you it was a bitter pill for him to swallow when I came into the mess,

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so bitter that he could not bring himself to make the slightest congratulatory remark to me about it. I ride a pretty high horse; take every privilege I am entitled to and make myself numerous, and all the time, without fail, I totally ignore him, and never address him otherwise than officially. As the saying goes he would hate my corpse. All this I can afford to do as I never commit myself and he cant touch me.

But I am not making much progress on our cruise.

We steamed out past Sandy Hook and steered SE intending to cross the gulf stream and then sail with our fires hauled and the propeller uncoupled. That evening I had the first watch, i. e., from 8 P. M. until midnight. It was cold. I had on everything from a capot down to overshoes. It was blowing a fresh breeze from the South'ard and the weather towards midnight commenced to look threatening. The weather was more threatening - I dont mean that at all, - I mean - The water was more phosphorescent than I have ever seen in before. The ship left a long white trail in the water, and a glance over the taffrail, that is stern rail, showed the propeller apparently surrounded by a sheet of ghostly fire, like an enormous pin wheel, and the boiling and bubbling water thrown off, resembled more than anything else a pot of boiling sulphur. The friction of

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the ship's side against the water illuminated the water to a distance of about a foot from the ship's side so that it looked exactly as if the bottom of the ship were made of glass and the interior was brilliantly illuminated.

But the most curious sight of all was to see our old friends the porpoises disporting themselves in the firey# water. I think I have told you in previous letters how they will come tearing and plunging for a ship as soon as they get sight of it, and, after tumbling and frisking about the bows until they get tired, skipping off again about their business which appears to consist in sticking their heads out of water and snorting the water out of their noses every two minutes. They are about 6 or 7 feet long and of a dark brown color and they are excellent swimmers as I have seen them playing about the bows of a vessel going 10 or 11 miles an hour. Well, on this particular night they could be seen a long distance off coming for the ship, usually in pairs, and leaving a very long phosphorescent trail behind them so that they looked for all the world like a political campaign, sky rocket. The trail they left behind them must have been nearly a hundred yards long, so you can imagine how curious it looked when a dozen or so were around the bows at once. But, as I was about

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to remark when the porpoises interrupted me the weather was becoming threatening towards midnight, and when I was relieved at 12 by Mr. Wood (~~whem-I-am-seerry-yeu-did not meet~~) it had just commenced to rain and was blowing pretty fresh.

I turned in and promptly went to sleep. Sometime in the night I awoke with the idea that I was in a swing. First away up, then away down. First on one side of the bunk then on the other. Sometimes the door was in the floor and sometimes overhead, sometimes the curtain hung straight towards me, sometimes directly away from me. The chairs in the wardroom were dancing round dances. Two soup plates and some forks and spoons were having an exciting race from one side to the other of the pantry sideboard, and everything was rattling and banging. The wind was fairly screeching and howling through the rigging on deck, and the sea roaring and every timber in the ship groaning and squeaking. Every once in a while a shock was felt that set the ship vibrating, and indicated to the seaman's mind that she that she had shipped a sea forward, that is, that a wave had come in over the bows. In fact there was every indication that a storm was on the wave, as it were,

* Added in pencil later, and crossing-out ditto, -(writing is different). Will interpolate pencil changes through-rest of this letter, and cross out as above. - ASF

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and the-~~Swatara~~^{ship} was in for it. There was nothing to be surprised at in ~~the-ship~~ being caught in a gale except that we were not used to it, as it was the first one in two years, ~~ex-since-I-joined-her.~~

I thanked my lucky stars that I didn't have another watch until the "first dog" that is from 4 to 6 P. M., so I could remain turned in which I did until about 7 a.m. when I turned out, got on a few clos. and asked the "boy" for a little breakfast, - a cup of coffee and piece of toast, - but was informed that the galley fires were drowned out and nothing could be cooked; so I had to make a frugal meal on crackers and cheese with one with one hand while I held on with the other, then I turned in again and "chinned" with ^{the Doctor} Dr.-Ashbridge who lives just across the street from me. We could not light the galley fires all that day and half the next, but we managed to get a little muddy coffee, and tea made in the engine room. Towards noon I got up and managed to get a pretty good meal of cold meat and crackers and some tea. ~~Thanks-te-my-abstemious-habits-my-stomach~~
~~was-in-excellent-condition-and-I-was-not-a-particiale-sick,~~
~~and-in-fact-I-have-never-been.~~ When I had finished my breakfast I went out to see the fellows in the steerage, and it was a sorry sight, but with some touches of humor all the same. All the books from the racks and

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all small movable articles were spread over everything. All the bunks were made up and everybody not on watch turned in. All the drawers had slid out on the floor and everything was in confusion. ~~Jones-H.-P.-and-Sheemaker~~ were both turned in in the same bunk for mutual support and they looked very tired indeed. They were all sick but "Lemme," and he was eating crackers and cheese and singing "Love I will love thee ever," but sadly out of tune, which, however, I dont think was on account of the stress of weather, but simply that the tune was gradually sharing the fate of all of his tunes, that is gradually floating off into the common tune that does for all his songs & operas. Then I went on deck to take a look around. We were then under sail, close hauled on the starboard tack under close-reefed main-topsail, fore-storm-staysail, main-trysail (?), and storm-mizzen, all of which I suppose you know all about. But, at all events, it was blowing what seamen call a fresh breeze, but the sea belonged to a gale that must have been blowing somewhere near us, for it was very rough to say the least. The old "^{ship}Swatara" was making a gallant struggle. She is a splendid sea boat and easily handled. She would meet an insurmountable looking wave and mount it like a duck, her graceful bows flying up into the air until it seemed that her

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forecastle was at the top of a steep hill, then she would come down gracefully and try it again, at the same time rolling deeply and occasionally taking in the top of a wave over the rail. When, however, the poor old ship rose bravely to a wave, and plunged into another when she came down before she had time to recover herself, she buried her graceful head booms in the sea and shipped a solid green wave over her bows, which came rolling off the topgallant fore-castle in a cascade, sousing the galley as it came aft and sweeping from one side of the deck to the other until it finally ran out of the scuppers. Of course the sea could not get below as the hatches were too high.

When a ship takes so much water on board that it commences to come down the hatches they batten the hatches down; that is cover them with tarpaulins and nail little strips of wood around the edges.

Well it blew pretty hard all Monday and Tuesday, and cleared up on Wednesday and Thursday and blew a little again on Friday and Saturday, and all this time it was pretty rough and the ship was uncomfortable. During the first blow when the fires were out and the men could get nothing cooked, a good many of them were sick. About two thirds of the "ship's company" (which includes everybody) were seasick. Many of the wardroom officers

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were under the weather. Our crockery suffered quite severely, for during the height of the blow our "boys" (servants) were very seasick and who cares for his master's crockery when he is seasick? On Sunday the weather turned out pleasant. For several days we had been under sail with fires hauled and when the sea went down, which it does very slowly after a blow, we were very comfortable. The weather has been getting warmer and warmer every day until yesterday. I tied my overcoat up in a pillow case, and put away all my winter clothes of every kind. By the time we get to Trinidad it will doubtless be hot, not warm, but hot; ~~but-I-will-tell you-about-that-later.~~

Sunday, Dec 28, 84.

This is our third Sunday at sea on this trip, consequently we are just two weeks out. We have had very light winds for the last few days and the most delightful weather imaginable. We don't expect to arrive until Tuesday or Wednesday, but that depends entirely on the wind. We will remain there only a few days, but that depends entirely on the kind of time our old skipper has there. I have been talking to him about La Guayra and Caracas, in order to induce him to remain there long enough to allow us to go up to Caracas, and I think I have finally persuaded him to go up to Caracas

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and call on the President of Venezuela.

I want to take another trip to Caracas, as I have to write a couple of letters to the Times on La Guayra and Caracas. But I suppose that, with the aid of a little imagination I could get along without the trip.

A propos of newspaper letters, I intend to mail at Port of Spain a letter to the Chicago Times on the Salute Islands, and later one on Cartagena, and perhaps Curacoa, but, as I have made no bargain with that paper, I dont know that they will be published.

I will request that if they are published a copy be sent to Father to be kept for me. I dont intend to write very much more on this letter; only a few pages after we arrive, for I have a number of other letters to write and will be pretty busy.

All on board are well but there has been a vast sacrifice of good looks, as many of the officers and men have had their beards shaved off and hair cropped with one of those horse shearing arrangements, that take it off close to the skin - Jones, H. W., Shoemaker, Seymour, Wall, and Hill have been letting their beards grow and they look very scraggy, but I fancy they will shave before they get in for they are all more or less vain. I have not shaved my beard and dont think I will, as I will be better able to collect information from

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various officials in Aspinwall, if I dont look quite so young.

Port of Spain, Trinidad,

~~Jan. 3rd. 1885,~~

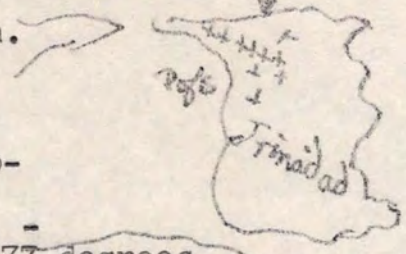
~~--2-A-M--~~

two days ago

We arrived here ~~Dec. 31st.~~ and will leave today at 9. or 10. a.m. ~~for La Guayra.~~

Since Sunday, when I wrote the last few pages, until we arrived here we had delightful weather, - but getting a trifle warm. In this sheltered harbor, which is protected from the trade winds by a range of hills and mountains, it is very warm.

At this present moment -
4 bells (2 a.m.) - there is absolutely no motion to the air, -
77 degrees
although it is not very warm now. The water is like a mirror and it is bright moonlight (full moon.) It is so quiet that you hear the dog barking a shore, a distance of over two miles.



About 5 a.m. the sun will make his appearance over the hills and if you are exposed to his rays you will think you are standing in front of a red hot stove. As he mounts higher and higher in the heavens he gets hotter. Without a breath of air stirring, you can imagine what it is like at noon. About 1 P. M. a land

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breeze springs up and then it is comfortable on deck under the awnings.

I havn't much to tell you about Port of Spain for you know there is not much difference between an English Colonial-town and an English town, or between an English and an American town. The place was originally built by the Spaniards and there are many old Spanish buildings standing yet. There are, of course, plenty of negroes here, who until 1833 were English slaves. At present, the labor on the plantations of this island is done by "Coolies." They are brought from India by the shipload, bound to serve for so many years, for a certain amount of money and provisions. I found myself too lazy to go ashore here. There is nothing to see but the town and I have seen that twice, and no amusement but drinking rum at the clubs. There are two very nice clubs here, and we were made honorary members during our stay. (~~Our-Naval-Gadets,-who-are-on-their-first~~
~~erwise,-have-enjoyed-their-first-pert-very-much,---some~~
~~ef-them,-as-well-as-some-ef-their-elders,---a-little~~
tee-much.

I will either send this letter ashore here or carry it to La Guayra and put it on a Red D. Line Steamer which will take it homw quite as quickly.

I often wish I had you all here, ~~and-especially~~

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~~Mary-and-Addie~~, to show ~~them~~ ^{you} all the queer trees and things that grow here. I think ~~they~~ ^{you} would enjoy it very much. But some day when we all get rich we will travel on our own hook and see them all. We expect ~~to reach~~ Curacao some time before Jan 15, where we will get our first mail, newspapers and letters; and I hope to hear that you are all well at home and everybody happy.

This letter I think will reach you about the 15th or 20th. From that time on you can mail letters care U. S. Consul, Havana, Cuba until Feb. 5th. When we leave Aspinwall I will mail a letter home that will arrive about the same time we get to H. telling you when to address to Key West and when to New Orleans. When you write again please tell me whether you ever received the photo. (group) of our fellows on the quarterdeck. Also, did you send for a doz of my photos. and send them as directed? and again also, did you get my little curtains and things finished in time to catch the "Tennessee" before she sailed? and may I expect to find them in New Orleans?

Now I think I must close as I have another letter to wind up, besides I have already written as much, counting newspaper letters as would equal 100 of these pages.

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Give my very best love to all at home and tell Addie I will send her a letter from La Guayra or Curacoa, and one to Mary also.

My health is perfect, and has been so ever since we left.

Dont forget to write and dont forget to send this letter to Hal and Allie.

Ever your loving brother

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. Swatara,
Santa Ana, Curacao,
Jan. 10, 1885

My dear Mother,

Your letter of the 18th reached me at this port.

As I have already said in Addie's letter, this is too soon to write another 40 page letter, and besides I am very busy.

Since my last letter to Lou, which was mailed in Port of Spain, we have only visited La Guayra and Puerto Cabello, and this place, and if I am not much mistaken I have described them all before.

La Guayra, you will remember is the sea port of Caracas, and the place from which I had such a pleasant trip over the mountains to Caracas, all of which I described to you at considerable length.

I am going to write a letter to the New York Times on La Guayra and Caracas, which you will, of course, see, and which will contain everything I have to say about them. We only remained there two days, and we were not allowed to go to Caracas, because our old idiot of a skipper was afraid of yellow fever that they had there about three months ago. I was very much disappointed as I wanted to buy a couple more mantillas, and besides I wanted to see the new railroad. I am afraid the time's# information will not be as accurate as if

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I had seen it. However, I did see something new in La Guayra, and you will be shocked to hear that I did go to see it. It was a bull fight, or rather "bull baiting." I was very much amused and not at all shocked, for they do not kill the bulls nor hurt them very much; not, however, because they have any consideration for the bulls, but because La Guayra is too small a place to support an arena where they kill bulls and horses. The arena is about 100 feet in diameter and circular, with seats like those in a circus, and behind the seats, little boxes. The seats are separated from the arena by a high wood and iron fence.

At intervals around the inside of the arena are little screens behind which a man can escape when too hard pressed by the bull.

Beneath the seats are the pens for the victims.

In this ring there were no horsemen and no matador - the man who finally kills the bull - only five footmen each dressed in gaudy and spangled clothes and carrying a red cloak over their arms. The bull is stirred up with a goad in the pen, and comes charging into the arena and then the fun commences. As soon as he sees one of the men he makes a dash for him. The man stands perfectly still with the cloak before him until the bulls horns touch the cloak, when he steps just far

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enough to one side to escape the bull's horns. Then the bull turns and trys it again, but is always unsuccessful. When the man gets tired or cornered against the fence he retires behind the screen, and the bull trys another one. After this has gone on for some time the chief banderillero takes two banderillas which are sticks of wood about 15 inches long having a small iron barb in one end and covered with colored tissue paper in the shape of rosettes and streamers.

The bull lowers his head and makes a charge for him. The banderillero leans forward, sticks the banderillas in the bull's shoulders and steps to one side. The bull only misses him by a few inches. As soon as he feels the banderillas he makes a vigorous effort to shake them out and not succeeding becomes very mad, and makes it generally lively for the footmen or banderilleros. Finally the bull became tired and was turned out, and a fresh one let in. Some of the bulls would not fight, and they were immediately sent out in disgrace and a new one brought in. If I were a bull I would not fight.

I bought a banderilla from a young urchin who snatched it from the bull's back as he passed through the little alley leading from the arena, and I have it now hanging up in my room.

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I think I have told you how I have tried to harpoon porpoises, I have often struck them but never got a good enough hold to get them on board.

Just before we got into Trinidad our chief boatswain's mate succeeded in harpooning one, and after a great deal of excitement they got him on board. It was about 6 feet long and weighed about 150 lbs.

Inside of half an hour after he landed on deck he was cut up into steaks and chops, and the sailors ate him. Our steward cooked a piece of the liver and it was very good. This was the first one I have ever seen caught.

I am very glad that you and father appreciate the kindness of the Thompson family towards me. They are very lovely people and they are good friends of mine, and I am very fond of them all. Did Lou. tell you that we met little Marjorie Ferguson with here# nurse on the street one day?

The little tot is very fond of me, and last summer she remembered me when she had not seen me for nearly a year.

I am glad Lou. says she had such a good time in Brooklyn. She will probably have a good time in Harrisburg, where I suppose she is now with Nancy and Florence Maxwell.

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You must write to me as soon as you receive this addressing Havana.

I will write to Lou. and the girls addressing to Harrisburg and hope the letters will find them there.

You must excuse me for not writing a longer letter, but I have a number to write and my newspaper letters take considerable time.

All our ship's company have been perfectly healthy, and I have never felt better in my life. The weather is really very pleasant, and for a thin man very comfortable.

Today (Sunday) the thermometer is 80° and there is a fresh breeze blowing, and it is simply perfect, - much better I think than 0°. The nights are always cool, and I sleep like a top in my little room, which though small is well ventilated. I keep my air port open nearly all the time at sea, at the risk of only a ducking, which, however, is very surprising in the night, for the first place the water lands is in my bunk.

Now I must close. Give my very best love to everybody at home.

Ever your loving son,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Santa Ana, Curacao,

Jan 12, 1885,

My dear Lou,

This is not going to be either a long or a descriptive letter, for it is only a little while since I wrote you a long one and besides I have a number of letters to write and am quite busy. You will be glad to hear that I have written a long (40 pages) letter to Alice Thompson from here, for, of course, you would not be jealous of her. Poor girl I hope she will get through her trouble in time. Mother said some very nice things about her, and about Mrs. Thompson in her last letter. I told Mother about Mrs. Thompson kissing me and that won her heart.

I think that by this time the affair of the ferry boat is all explained.

It was distance that stole enchantment from the view. I hope "Florie" was not as blue as I was when we left Sandy hook#, and I am inclined to think that I had lots of company. Lemme Wall told me about the row in the pantry. It is natural of course, that Florie should feel mortified that her guests were treated discourteously in her house, but she must not suppose for an instant that it will make any difference in our (I am sure I speak for all of us) treatment of her, and

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for this reason. Her brother's conduct towards us only indicates his own personal dislike (which I am sure must be unjust, as I think we have always treated him courteously), and cannot, for a moment be considered otherwise, when we remember the obligations we are under for the numerous pleasant courtesies and kindnesses, which we have received from every other member of the family without exception. I have heard all the fellows say that our late visit to Brooklyn would never have been the success it turned out to be (to us) if it had not been for the Maxwells. As for myself - Florie Maxwell has quite won my heart, and I shall always remember with gratitude the pleasure she has afforded you, and consequently me, during your visit. I learned also to like Miss Kate and would like to know her better, although I don't suppose the acquaintance of such an idle and ambitionless youth as your second brother would be inclined to make her think more favorably of our sex.

I received a letter from Mr. Banks about cigars, which I will get for him in Havana. I also got a letter from Florie, and a very nice and clever one at that, and will try and find time to answer it by this mail, but if I haven't time I will write from Cartagena or Aspinwall.

Florie tells me that she has not received the picture

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of the Steerage officers yet. It should have arrived by the time she wrote. I dont understand what is the matter, but hope it will arrive soon. I am glad you got my photos. I suppose you have sent them as I directed.

I am happy to say that "poor Mr. Jones' " foot was all right in a few days after we sailed.

As I told you in my last letter, all the fellows started beards, and in about a week or ten days they were tough looking citizens, and especially when suffering from mal de mer. I predicted that they were all too vain to go ashore in Trinidad with half grown beards, and I was right, they all shaved except Seymour and Lemme. The former is going to have a fine blond beard, but the latter, oh my! his beard is all colors, including white and red, and grows in irregular patches, but most luxuriantly in a little nubbin on his chin. He still wears it, and I must acknowledge that he has no vanity in his composition.

I have not shaved my beard off for reasons given in my last letter.

I am glad "Hallie and Allie" could visit you at Xmas.

I was the only absentee. We had been out eleven days when xmas came, on the "Swatara" and were out of

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fresh provisions and ice. By way of celebrating the event I "chucked" dice twice for beer in a party of seven and was "stuck" both times, so that I payed for 14 bottles and drank 2 bottles of ginger beer. Thus ended my dissipation. I was glad to hear that Mary had an opportunity to go to a german, she is getting quite giddy, a funeral and a german in the same week.

When you write you must tell me all about your visit to Harrisburg, write a little whenever you feel like it and send me a good letter. You wont miss the old Sail Loft as much as we do, for I suppose you have dancing enough while we have none.

There is a good chance of the Swatara going out of commission in Sept. or Oct. When you get your tennis shoes, ask Rosenthal to send you the bill, and you pay it, and I will refund it when I get north. He wont know where to address me and I cant well send money from here.

I think my room is going to look pretty brilliant when I get it done. It will be so full that it will look like a small store.

Your lamberquin affords me a great deal of pleasure especially the tassels. It would amuse you to see me lie in my bunk and look at them to rest my eyes after reading.

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I am sorry that I cant tell you where the "Al-
liance" is now except that she is cruising in the Wind-
ward islands. A much more pleasant cruise than ours,
in fact, we are making, as usual, the worst cruise of
any of them.

I am glad you keep up your acquaintance with Soph-
ie; when you write tell me what she has to say, and when
you write to her remember me to her.

Your tin type group was very successful, - you all
certainly looked very sad. Poor girls I hope you are
more cheerful by this time.

Before I forget it. - If this letter reaches you
in Harrisburg where I am going to address it, please
remember me to Helen Boas (if you get a chance), and
to Helen Markey. Also before I forget it let me tell
you that my health is absolutely perfect. I never
felt better in my life. The weather here, and especial-
ly today, is delightful. Thermometer about 80^o and a
good breeze. Uniform, White duck and helmets with low
shoes or pumps. Dont worry yourself about Panama, or
Aspinwall, for you must know that nobody ever goes ashore
from a man-of-war until the doctors have ascertained
that the place is perfectly healthy.

If it is not healthy, we dont go ashore.

You must also know that I am alway# abstemious,

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and take good care of my health. So dont worry yourself.

I am sorry but I did not notice that you wore no bangs in Brooklyn.

If anyone had asked me whether you wore them or not I should have said that I didn't know, but I thought you did. This is honest, and will serve to show you how little a man notices the details of a woman's "fix-ins." Now my dear I must close.

If this reaches you at Harrisburg, please remember me to Mr. and Mrs. Shunk, and, cela va sans dire, give my love to the girls, and say that my heart is in Harrisburg, and believe me

Ever your loving brother,

(Signed) Wm. S. Sims

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Cartagena, U. S. C.

Jan 17th., 85

My dear Lou.

I did not expect to write from this port, as we go from here to Aspinwall where the regular line of steamers run, but just now a Royal Mail Steamer came in and leaves in less than an hour for New Orleans.

I only have time to say that I am still enjoying perfect health.

All the fellows send their regards to the Misses S. and M. and yourself.

You can give them my best regards,

And believe me

Ever your loving brother

(Signed) Will

P. S. This letter will be carried to New Orleans & posted there

(Signed) Will

This is evidently misdated. The ship could not have been at Norfolk Jan'y 21/85, and at Cartagena on Jan'y 23/85.*

U. S. S. Swatara,
Navy Yard, Norfolk. Va.
Jan. 21st., 1885

My dear Mrs. Sims,

Your very agreeable letter of the 17th. ins't. arrived yesterday.

I think it would be a good scheme if Alf. could get tuition free at Penn. U., but, all the same I should not let it have much weight (if I were Alf.) against any advantages that Cornell may have over Penn.

I dont pretend to know of any advantage, but if there is, the matter of tuition ought not to count for much against it. Alf. says they expect you to know it all before you enter Penn., so I suppose the entrance examination is much more severe than Cornell. However, as I have said before, I do not intend to interfere in the matter. But I must say that I dont like this Paint (?) business.

If is only a matter of a few months before Alf. goes to College, and my advise# to Alf. would be and has been to devote the remainder of the time to preparation

* Added in pencil later by W. S. S. - ASF

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for the exam.

If, however, he keeps any position, it had better be the one at home, where his mind will only be occupied by routine duties that will only take his time away from him.

If the Penn. exam. is much harder than Cornell, and Alf. decides to go to the former, he certainly will not be justified in keeping any position, for he will have his hands full to prepare himself.

Besides there is no possible advantage in accepting the paint situation, for if he receives the same pay as at home, he can save no money by it, and somebody else can look after the business as well as he can.

I would strongly recommend that he does not take this position, and that he gives up everything to preparing for the exam. or if he is determined to keep either, let him keep the one at home.

It should be strongly impressed on Alf. that he cannot afford to risk a failure on the entrance examination. He is quite confident of being able to pass for Cornell if he remains at home. If, on the other hand, he accepts the sit. in the paint business, and decides to go to Penn. there are many difficulties in the way, and a decidedly dangerous risk of not being able to pass the exam. He can not afford to take this

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risk for the sake of any small advantage Penn. may have over Cornell. As for the free tuition, I would not consider it an instant.

He runs to# great a risk to make a few hundred dollars a consideration. Please talk this over with Father, and if my remarks seem just to you both, try and impress them on Alf. when he returns. He can pass for Cornell and get an excellent education there for sure.

You all know how willingly I have offered him this, and how bitterly I would be disappointed to have my schemes fail. It would not be right for him to run any risk, especially when all possible advantages will be included in a few hundred miserable dollars. Rather than have him take any risk, I would guarantee him double the amount of money he can reasonably expect to make or save by it.

Do see what you can do about it.

I am very glad to hear that Allie is so well received in Hunt'n and hope she will succeed in coaxing Hal out of his shell.

Now about this trip in the fall. It is unnecessary for me to say that nothing would delight me more than to go to Canada with the entire tribe, but I am afraid it is too early for me to make plans for Sept. for you know from past experience how uncertain my movements

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are likely to be. However, I am almost certain to be either in Norfolk, New York, or Boston, next Sept., and when the ship returns north in the spring we will talk about it. By the way, what would our Canadian relations think if they saw six healthy and hungry Americans threatening them with famine when winter is approaching? However, if they could stand it we would have a good time, and we might appease them by bringing some of them back with us.

Would you not be afraid to trust my very susceptible heart among all my pretty young cousins now growing up?

Probably not when you are at hand to keep a motherly eye on me.

Now I must close. I have not heard the sentence of my second client (?) yet.

Your loving son,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

At Sea between

Cartagena and Aspinwall

Jan. 23rd., 1885

My dear Mother,

Tomorrow we arrive in Aspinwall, and will remain there about a week. I expect to find letters there from home, and will, of course, close this by answering them. I will not have time to write much this time as I am very busy, and will be more so after we arrive there.

The only thing that bothers me in writing letters is the purely mechanical effort of writing. If I could only carry a few little scraps of paper about in my pocket, and whenever I felt in the humor, write a few paragraphs in a tiny hand with a hard pencil, I would enjoy it much more and succeed much better. But that would not be according to the conventional style and would not do; for, with most people, the general appearance of a letter counts quite as much as the substance.

For this time, as I am so busy you must excuse my careless writing, which, however I will endeavor to make legible.

We arrived at Cartagena one week ago yesterday, and yesterday forenoon we left there for Aspinwall. We only intended to remain there a day or so but managed to remain a week, on account of some little trouble they

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there, of the nature of a revolution.

There has been a revolution going on for about a year in the republic, and this time it was feared that the insurgents would make an attack on Cartagena, but it, of course, amounted to nothing.

I wrote a couple of hasty letters home from Cartagena, which I think will be mailed in New Orleans. We may get to Aspinwall tomorrow in time to catch the Pacific Mail Steamer leaving there for New York direct. If we get our mail on that steamer you will receive this about Feb 4., if not, then ten days later.

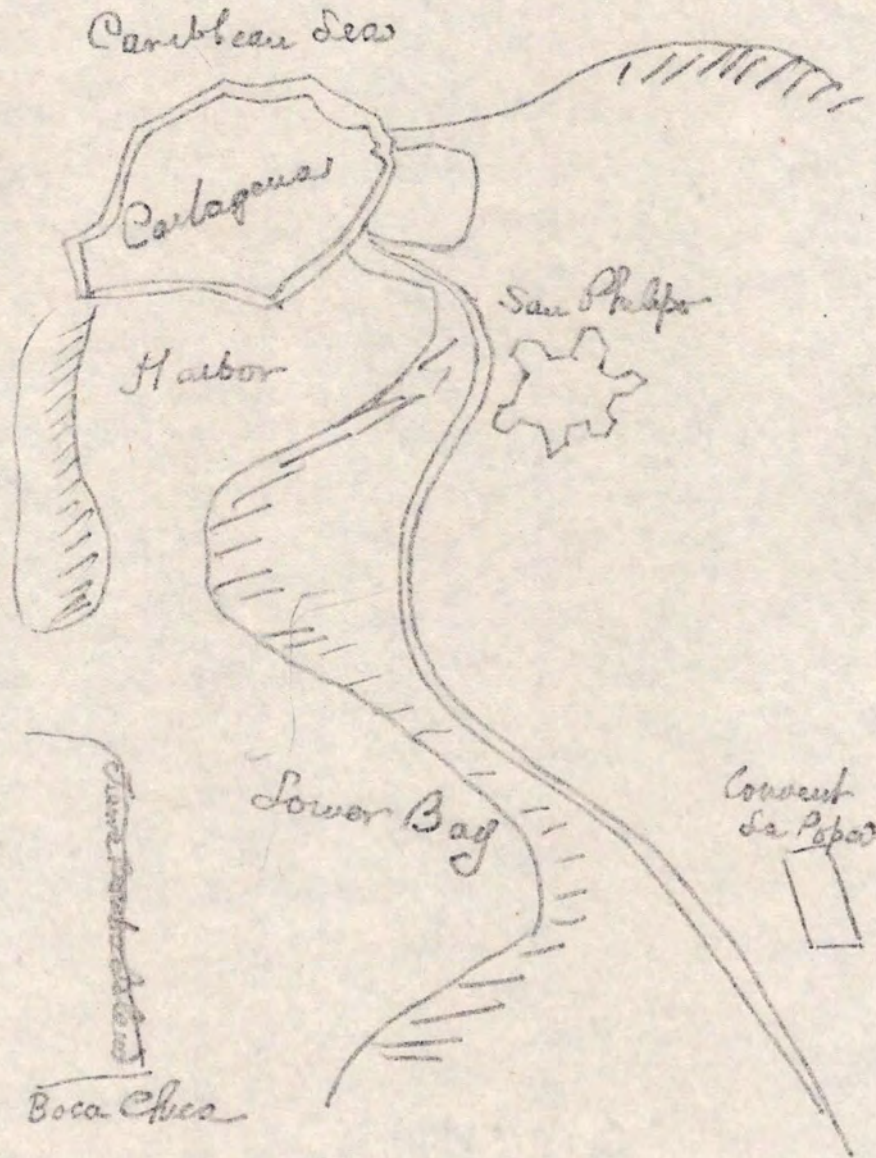
Cartagena is, historically considered, the most interesting port in the West I.

It is built entirely on a small peninsula, and completely surrounded by an immense wall and only connected with the mainland by a narrow causeway.

Just below the city is a very large, low fortification or water battery that in the old Spanish Colonial days 250 years ago protected it against it# numerous enemies.

In the days of the old buccaneers Cartagena was a very wealthy city and it suffered more severely from their rades# than almost any other city. The Spaniards were in such mortal terror of these buccaneers that they walled and fortified the city and entrances at an expense

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of about \$60,000,000. which was a lot of money those days, considering too the fact that they impressed the poor native indians to perform the less skilled part of the labor. The splendid entrance at Boca Granda they stopped up by sinking old vessels and stone barges in

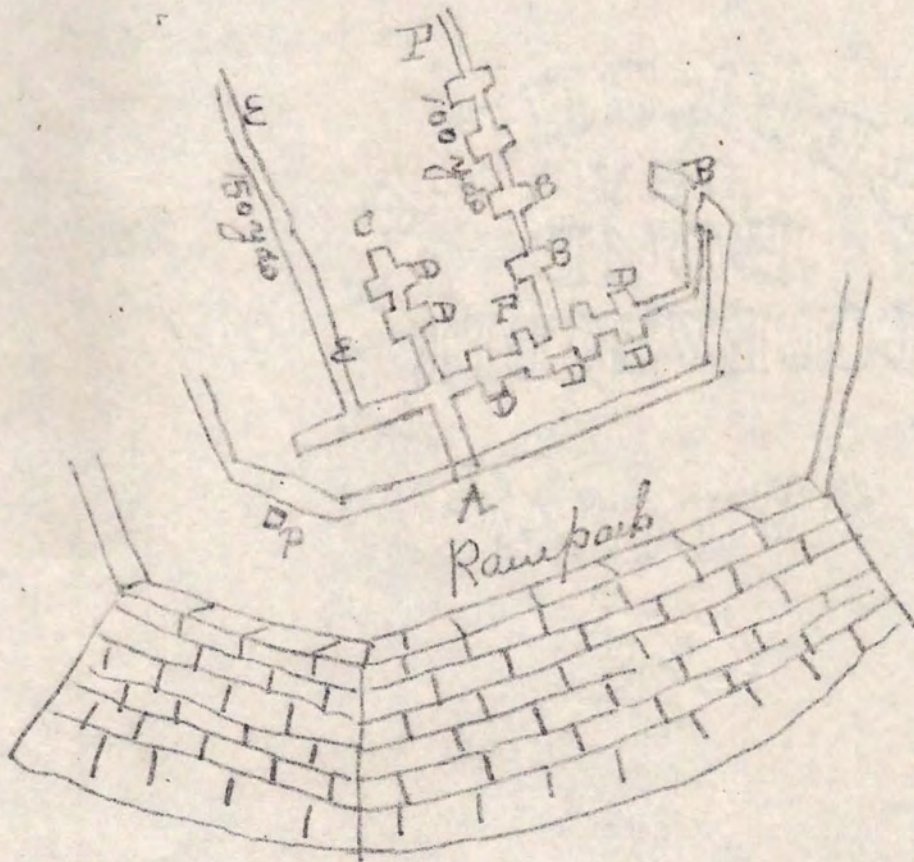
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the channel, and the entrance is now at the Boca Chica about 7 miles below the Boca Granda. The Boca Chica is fortified by two large fortifications that must have been very formidable in their day.

Just outside the city, on the plan I have drawn you will see the fortress of San Philipo. It is now so neglected and delapidated that small bushes fill all the courts and passages, the battlements have tumbled down, the walls are run with creepers, and vegetation starting from between all the crevices in the masonry.

There is a tradition among the common people that there are underground passages from the fort to the city, a distance of at least a mile; but they say they are full of snakes and reptiles, and no bribe would induce a native to enter them. They are so afraid that they earnestly warn strangers from attempting to enter. The place marked "Convent La Papa, is two or three miles from town, and built on the very edge of a bluff 570 feet high. The building is about 40 feet high and covers a large area. During the early Spanish days it was the scene of many tortures of the inquisition.

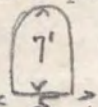
One day five of us including Jones H. P., Jones H. W., Shoemaker, Quigley (our Carpenter) and I determined to explore the passages under San Philipo.



Plan of passages under Fort San Philipo.

We set out provided with two good lanterns and with little difficulty found the entrance from the ramparts marked "A," lit our lanterns and made a start. Two or three natives followed us from town, and warned us many graves# shakes of the head not to go in. We followed

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the first passage in to "C," but found nothing but four dungeons or rather cells, without doors. The passages and cells are tunneled through a soft porous volcanic rock. They are about this shape  and size. The cells are about seven or eight feet square; and, at the back of each a small niche is cut in the wall, in which I presume the prisoners used to place a jug of water and piece of bread.

I also suppose the poor wretches were chained to the wall, although we searched for and couldn't find any iron rings or links in the wall. We next went down the passage marked E. It is inclined at an angle downward of about 30° and led directly toward the city. It was perfectly dry, and we did not see a living creature of any kind. We all had stout sticks and moved with extreme caution. The farther we went down the shallower the passage became. It seems that the dust and pebbles that crumble from the walls gradually slide down the steep decline and fill up the passage. We went down I suppose about 150 yards, when it became so shallow that we could not proceed further without crawling on our hands and knees, so we retreated and tried other passages. Feeling a draft in the passage to the right of A we followed out and found an exit at B. Along the passage we found many more cells and

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encountered an occasional bat. Then we went down the passage marked F which also inclined down at an angle of about 30° . On each side were numerous cells like those above described only somewhat smaller. On entering the first cell our breath was almost taken away by a whirlwind of small bats. The air was positively thick with them; every swipe of our sticks would bring down two or three. The farther we went down the thicker they became. On entering a cell the walls would be found perfectly black with them, but as soon as they saw the light they all let go and took to their wings. You can imagine that they gave the air a very mousey and suffocating smell. We followed this passage down past numerous cells until it gradually became too shallow to proceed further. We found nothing whatever except bats, and all the passages were perfectly dry, and of course, very hot. We noticed that many of the bats we frightened from their nests escaped by way of the entrance B. so two or three of us stationed ourselves there and made it exciting for the bats before they got out.

This old fortress is quite a curiosity, it is very large and very strongly built, and against the guns of 150 years ago must, when properly manned, have been almost inaccessible.

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From the fort we went to the Convent La Papa, arriving there after a very hot climb, which, however, was rewarded by the beautiful view of the sea, the city, the entrance, the fortifications and the harbor below us. The hill is 570 feet high and towards the harbor ends in a perpendicular bluff on the very edge of which the convent is built. We found it entirely vacant, but still kept in tolerable repair.

Close by the convent is a small signal station, such as you always see in these ports, from which vessels can be seen many miles at sea; and from which by a combination of discs hoisted on a flagpole, containing two yards, or cross pieces, the signal-man can inform all people in sight of the station that a two or three masted steamer of the Royal Mail Line or some other line is coming from such and such a direction towards the city.

The signalman at the Convent lived there with his family, a wife (an indian woman) and several small children. We explored the whole building, and on coming out on the side of the building next the bluff we found the little children playing about the very edge. At one place where there was only about 18 inches between the building and the edge of the precipice, I saw a little girl of about 5 or 6 years, standing with a

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little naked baby in her arms. She apparently had no fear of falling down. Beneath this bluff there are always hundreds of buzzards sailing about through the air, and the Convent is a capital place from which to watch them circle about time after time without apparently moving a wing. Also a good place from which to throw stones at them. We pelted them for some time but without success, as you could not judge the distance of the birds below you, and they would often complete half a circle before the stone arrived.

In South American cities buzzards can be seen in large numbers in the streets. They are protected by law, there being a heavy fine for killing one.

Before we had been at Cartagena two days we had about three dozen parrots and five monkeys on board. The parrots are the green variety and are not much use, most of them are cross, and none of them talk at all. Two of the monkeys are brown baby monkeys, that do nothing but cry and scream when you touch them. They are quite young but their little wrinkled faces look at least a hundred years old.

Two of them are black and shaggy, and one of them is so old that he is entirely bald. Last but not least is a little reddish monkey - about the color of a chipmunk - and about the size of an ordinary cat. He was brought to

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the ship by the bumboat man who asked \$2 1/2. for him, but, just as he was about to sell him, the monkey got away and fled up aloft, and the poor man was broken hearted (about the \$2 1/2.). I offered him \$1 1/2. for the monkey - at large - and he accepted it.

Then you should have seen the sailors try to catch him. The sailors had two hands to climb with, while the monkey had a tail and four hands, for they can hold on with their feet as well as with their hands. They could no more catch him than if he had been a bird.

When they got him cornered he would make a flying leap and catch another rope and away up aloft. Finally the little fellow slipped and fell through the awning and was slightly stunned and caught. He was very timid for a little while but is now getting quite tame. I have a boy take care of him and feed him condensed milk, bananas and bread.

I don't know what I am going to do with him when I get him north, but if you want him I will send him to you.

Jany. 24th.

We have just anchored in the harbor of Aspinwall.

The Pacific Mail Steamer has not yet left for New York, but she has the "Blue Peter" flag flying,

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which means that she will sail in a few hours. We have just sent a boat ashore for our mail and to find out when the steamer sails. I will keep this letter open until I read the letters I expect to get from home - if I can - that is if I have time.

But for fear I wont have time I will close here by saying that I am enjoying perfect health, and all are well on board.

Give my very best love to all at home, and believe me ever your loving son

(Signed) Will

P. S. If Lou is away from home please send this letter to her. And I wish her to send it to Hal. for I will be too busy to repeat letters.

(Signed) Wm. S. Sims

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Key West, Fla.,

Feb. 15, 1885

My dear Mother,

We arrived here yesterday evening from Havana, and today (Sunday) are coaling ship. As soon as we arrived a steamer left for New York, by which I sent a letter to Father that was dated Havana, 13th., I brought it to Key West, because the steamer for NY. from H. did not leave for two or three days.

Day after tomorrow Tuesday we expect to start for New Orleans, and will probably be on our way there when you receive this letter, as we dont expect to arrive until Friday or Saturday. We will be late for the mardi-gras which ends when lent begins which I believe is on the 18th.

I dont know how this letter is going, but probably by rail, I donly know that a mail is to leave in an hour or so. I am on duty today besides, so that I have not time to write much of a letter.

My last letter from you was written Jan. 22, and received in Havana.

I wrote several letter home from there but I cant remember whether I wrote to you or father. I think, however, that it was to father.

I wrote to Jno. Sims from Havana sympathizing with

Feby. 15, 1885 - page 2

him for the loss of his little son. I was very sorry indeed to hear of his death. John must be terribly cut up, for he and Grace were very fond of him. You might have thought it was their first baby.

Tell Lou. that I will answer her letters when I get a little more time.

My health is, as usual perfect. I am a little thin, but never felt better. We have hardly had any sickness since we left N. Y.

Give my best love to all at home.

Your loving son

(Signed) Will

P. S.

My monkey is doing very nicely. One of our apprentice boys takes care of him. Part of the time he lets him go about the ship where he wants to. One day while aloft he made a clear jump of about 30 feet, from the top of the smoke stack to the main rigging.

Ask Alf if he would like me to send him home when we come north?

(Probably early
in 1885
see letter of Mar. 1, 1885)
(Undated)

My dear Lou,

I have not time to write you a letter, now but will write from Key West.

This is only to give you the dimensions of the tables as follows.

Steerage Card table --(2 ft. 7 in. in diameter

" table on

starboard side -----(2 ft. 6 in. wide, and

(6 feet long

Round table in (3 ft. 4 in. in diameter

Wardroom (

You and Florie are very amiable indeed to make these, and I know they will be thoroughly appreciated.

Your loving brother,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara, "

March 1st., 1885

New Orleans.

My dear Mother
and Sisters,

I# you could see my little room now you would be rewarded for the trouble you have taken to decorate it. It is beyond comparison the prettiest room in the ward-room. When I last wrote I had not received the box from Mr. Capps.

I got it the next day. I opened it out in the Steerage and gave Wall, Hill & Jones their presents, and they were all delighted. I have now everything in place in my room, and it looks lovely, and bright. The curtains are all up; Florie's looking glass leans against my mirror, with all the little maidens "standing in the snow and sleet," the hand painted bolatting# (blotting?) pads, pen wipers, bureau cover, pin cushion etc. about it. On each side of the bureau are the little german silver candlesticks, and the brass reflecting candlestick, all brightly burnished. The german favors are hung about the mirror and the picture frames tacked against the bulkhead, and nothing is wanting.

I dont know how to thank you for all the trouble you have been to for me, except by telling you that you are all sweet amiable women, and I love you all very

March 1st., 1885 - page 2

much. I am now just as comfortable as I could want to be.

The table cover (poker cloth) is admired by everyone.

Whenever any visitors are going to visit the ship, we always have it on the table, and it excites the admiration of all the men and the envy of all the women. I intend to get one of my friends to put in# on exhibition at the exposition, or rather she wants to put it there, but I first want to find out whether I can get it out when I want to, or when I go away. I will let you know if I put it in.

Everybody in the fleet knows about my table cloth and ask to see it when they come on board.

I would have written before, but I have been very busy, as father's letter will tell you. For example yesterday I wrote 10 hours, went to bed at 1. a.m. got up at daylight and wrote until 3 P. M. today when I finished my work. But I guess you know I wouldnt neglect you without cause.

Thanking you all again for your kindness, I remain,

Your loving son and brother,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

New Orleans, La.,

March 1st., 1885

12.30 a.m.

My dear Father,

My first letter on arriving here was very brief as I was then engaged in revising our report, or rather rewriting it. Since that time this is positively the first leisure I have had. Lieut. McLean the senior member of the board left his signature with us and went on to Washington. From there the Prest. of his Retiring Board telegraphed for the report and we have been working like dogs to finish it.

It has been a big job I can tell you, and, we are glad enough to have it finished. It contains about 75 pages of official paper (about 6 newspaper cols.), and is the result of all the brains and information we could bring to bear on it.

We divided it into sections as follows, - 1. General Plan. 2. Difficulties to be overcome. 3. Preparation, Material and Organization. 4. Work on Sections, in detail. 5. Financial condition of the company. 6. Conclusions.

If you have seen my letter on the canal in the New York Times, you will have a good general idea of our report, for, although the letter was written before I

March 1st., 1885 - (2) - page 2

had given the subject much thought, it arrives at about the same conclusions.

The letter is in the regular edition of the Times for Monday Feby. 23rd. You have never said in any of your letters whether you see the Times or not, so I suppose you dont. I would enclose you a copy now if I had one, but I havnt, excepting one that dosnt belong to me. I expect to get a few copies soon, one of which I will send you together with a copy of our treatment of the company's financial condition.

I wrote two letters for the Times, the other one on Venezuela, which, as far as I know, has not been published, but then I seldom see the paper.

For the Canal letter I will get \$20., \$10. per column, and the same for the other if published.

Lieut. McLean will, of course, get most of the credit for our report, unless some one on his board is sharp enough to find out that he didnt write it, which could easily be done, for he has not seen the report as it now stands, and, as it differs considerably from his effort, a few questions would settle the business. However, we (Rider and I) have gained much experience that may be valuable to us in the future.

I have, of course, not been ashore yet, but am going tomorrow to take dinner with some of my old friends.

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I will send your cigars in a few days, as there is no trouble in getting them ashore.

We are now enjoying delightful weather after our cold and rainy "spell," and my monkey is doing very nicely thank you.

It is amusing to read the letters from home about the little chap.

Addie and Alf. evidently want him, while Mother and you are obviously opposed to him.

From Mother's letter I should imagine that she imagines him to be about 4 ft. high, strong as an ox and with long sharp fangs not to mention a treachorous # and disposition.

He weighs about two pounds. His head is about as large as a medium sized apple, and his little wrinkled old looking face wouldn't frighten a mouse. His hand according to Mother's ideas about like this,



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but in reality is about like this



I have one of the boys take care of him and he carries him about on his shoulder and can do anything with him, I usually keep him tied up with a string and a little strap about his waist. He eats anything, milk, bread, and molasses, rice, apples, sweet potatoes, oat meal etc. etc. but of course not very much of each for he couldnt hold more than a few spoon fulls.

Now about sending him home. Of course, I wont send him if you dont want him, and of course, I would not send home an animal that would harm anyone. But I thought it would afford the children endless amusement without annoying anyone else.

However, you can settle it among yourselves, and you will have plenty of time to fight it out, as we will not be north for some months.

Now I must close as I have more letters to write.

I have written one letter since I left Key West, and that was to you when we arrived.

With love to all at home, Your loving son

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

New Orleans, La.,

March 3rd., 1885

My dear Lou.

Please send me by mail the photos. you got for me in Brooklyn.

Today is Tuesday, and on Sunday last I went ashore for the first time this trip, and took dinner with a lovely family that I used to know here in '81. Yesterday I went out to the exposition, but was not much interested except by the processes of handling cotton, and weaving silk.

But I dont intend to write you a letter this time, as I have a number to write, and among others one to Florie.

With love to all at home,

Your loving brother,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

At sea making

passage from

Livingston, Guatemala

to New Orleans, La.

March 22nd. '85

My dear Father,

As you are always more or less displeased with bad penmanship, let me explain that I am now writing while the ship is under steam.

Just before we were hurried away from New Orleans I mailed a short note to inform you of our departure, and when we reach New Orleans, again, I expect to find letters from home which I will acknowledge at the end of this letter.

At our mess table on Feby. 25th. one of the officers (the Paymaster) produced a New York Times of Monday the 23rd. containing a double column article on the Panama Canal and an editorial notice of the article. Strange at# it may seem, I was unable to obtain any copies of the paper, until on the 5th. the day we sailed, I got one at a news stand ashore.

If your letters from home do not say that you have seen it, I will send you my copy. Up to the time of our departure I had not heard from the Times, but the editor was probably waiting until the other letter

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(on Venezuela) was published.

In reading the letter you must remember that it was written very hurriedly and, of course, everything is stated briefly. The report that Rider and I wrote afterwards cost us a week's heavy brainwork and consultation and was three or four times **as** long.

I should not be surprised if the report were published some day, in which case I will send you a copy.

Now I must tell you what we have been doing down here.

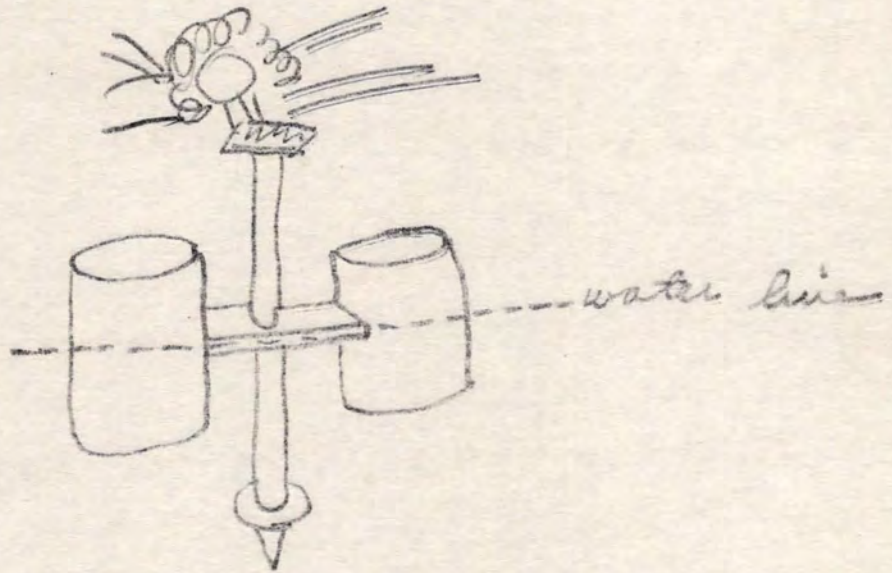
We were sent to bring back a number of destitute American workmen who have been employed in building a railroad from Port Barrios to Guatemala City. We started out without knowing where Livingston or Port Barrios were, for they are not down on any of our charts. We left our anchorage in the river on the afternoon of the 5th. We did not get up anchor, for the anchor was fast in the mud, so we "hove" round on the capstan until we broke the chain, losing the anchor and 90 feet of chain.

In turning around in the river the ship was manouev-ered in an extremely awkward manner, so much so that we narrowly escaped running into all three of our ves-sels anchored below us, besides a small sailing yacht. Finally we got pointed down the river.

Our poor fool of a Captain insisted on running on

March 22nd. '85 - page 3

down the river after dark, and I can tell you he made a fist of it. Our first accident which, however, was nobody's fault, was the startling occurrence of "man overboard." We were going 12 or 13 knots down the river when the leadsman fell overboard. I was in my room at the time, but managed to get on deck and scramble into the lifeboat and take charge of her. The light on the life buoy was burning brightly and the man, being a good swimmer, had reached the buoy, and consequently was easily picked up.



The above is a sketch of a life buoy. It consists of two copper tanks connected by a short beam, which supports a verticle spindle having a rim at the lower end for the man's feet to rest on, and a small tray on top containing a Roman-candle-like arrangement that is

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set burning when the buoy falls, by a friction primer,
The light will last 15 or 20 minutes.

The man was not at all hurt, only pretty badly
scared and thoroughly chilled by the cold water.

Having hoisted the boat we started on down the riv-
er and in less than half an hour we ran aground on the
left bank. The bank was pretty steep, and we struck
it a glancing blow, but, as we were going full speed we
heeled over to starboard so far that the air ports on
that side were buried, and all the officers who had their
ports open (of one of whom I was which) received about
a ton of water in their rooms. We backed off in a few
minutes and no damage was done, and I proceeded to bail
the water out of my bunk with a basin, and empty it out
of the drawers under my bunk.

- I am now writing at New Orleans, March 26th. 1. a.m. -

No damage was done me beyond wetting most of my
white clos. One of the Lieutenants was turned in at
the time, and received a six inch stream of very cold
water on his stomach.

I was in the wardroom at the time and saw him bound
out of his room with his night shirt clinging to his
body. He said he didnt come out of his room but was
washed out.

Lemme Wall was also turned in, and as he sleeps

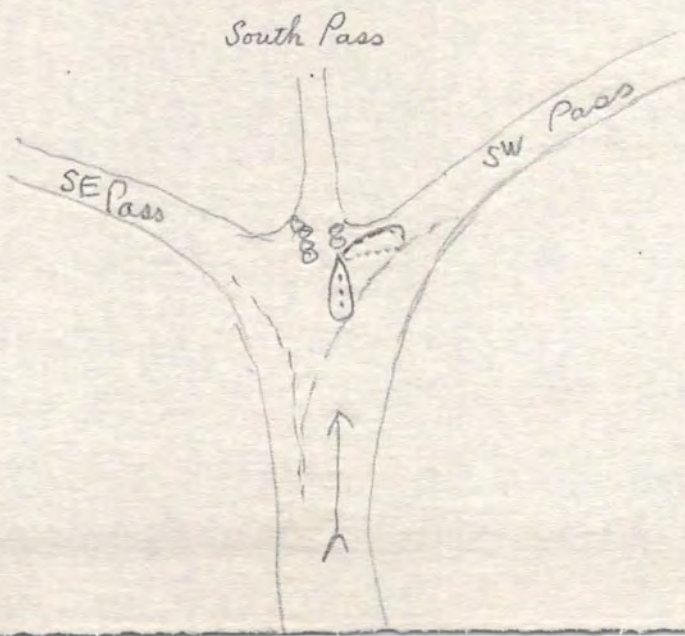
March 22nd. '85 - page 5

on a transom with a high bunk board, and just under an air port, he woke up to find himself floating in about a foot of water.

After backing off the shore we started down the river again and in less time than 20 minutes ran ashore again right in somebody's front yard. Our bowsprit and head booms went right over the top of his house, which fortunately was only one story high, and some of our rigging caught in the trees and "carried away" which is a nautical expression for "broke." This was on the right bank. No damage was done, and we backed off and a few minutes later kerplunk we went into the shore on the left bank again, and again backed off with no damage done. Then old Capt. Idiot concluded to anchor for the night.

The next morning we got under way and stood down the river for the south pass, which is the pass Capt. Eads has succeeded in rendering navigable by means of the jetties.

In attempting to enter the South Pass we struck the mattress of the jetties bows on,



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when we were swung around by the current and steamed up the river and took a pilot and passed out to sea. We were not damaged any by our last bump, although I would not have thought it possible for a ship to be stopped so suddenly without losing all her masts.

Once fairly outside we had a fair wind on our course SSE (S $22\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ E), and in six days, having enjoyed the most delightful weather sailing over the most beautiful seas in the world, we found ourselves in the Bay of Honduras, where we were to hunt for our port.

The Atlantic coast line of Guatemala is only about 30 miles long so we could not have much difficulty. We first anchored off the mouth of the Sarstoon (?) R., the boundary between Guatemala and Belize, or British Honduras, and from there went to the mouth of the Dulce R., the outlet of the gulf of Dulce, just at the bottom of the Bay of Honduras. Here we found our town of Livingston. About 10 miles further east is Port Barrios the eastern terminus of the railroad that is now building to Guatemala city. 6 or 7 miles have only been built so far. We were sent there, as you have probably seen by the papers to bring back a number of destitute Americans, who had gone there from New Orleans to work on the railroad. I dont know whether they had been unjustly treated or not by the American contractors building

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the road, but probably they had been, at all events they were destitute, and unfit to work, being sick or debilitated from sickness. We took 78 of them on board. Several were carried on board, others could just walk, and the remainder looked more like corpses than men.

About 15 we found in what they called a hospital. It was a bamboo house with a banana leaf thatch. Around the sides were benches on which the sick men were stretched without mattresses or bedding. All the benches being occupied one man was lying unconscious on a carpenter's bench outside, while a carpenter was working at the other end of the bench. As soon as they were brought on board they were all scrubbed and all their old clothes thrown overboard. Each man was then provided with a suit of sailors flannel underclothes and wollen# sox, a suit of sailors clothes, a pair of shoes, and a blanket.

It took several days to get them filled up with food. The sick men were given eggs, beef tea, canned meats etc. We remained there about a week and the heat was simply terrific. Livingston is only a small place, and as there had not been a man-of-war there for 40 years you can imagine it caused no little excitement. There were a number of young Americans there, employed as engineers etc. on the new railroad, and they whooped

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it up with our fellows. They gave a dinner that lasted from 7 P. M. until 6 A. M. and it goes without saying that everybody was drunk long before morning. I did not go ashore at all, consequently was not drunk at the dinner.

We arrived at the jetties last Tuesday morning, after making the passage under steam. Tuesday night we anchored at the quarantine station, and came up to the city Wednesday anchoring at 4.30 P. M. and now we understand that we are to be sent back to some place or other in Central America in about a week. The Tennessee leaves next Sunday for Cartagena, and Aspinwall. They say, however, that all the fleet will be in Hampton Roads in May.

I forgot to say that we buried one of our passengers at sea just before we reached the jetties. It was the poor fellow who was found on the carpenter's bench.

I received a letter from Lieut. McLean, the senior member of our Canal board and he tells me that our Canal Report takes the cake at the Department over all the others. The Chief of Bureau of Navigation addressed us a letter of which I enclose a copy. McLean says he is going to pass his exam. all right.

Tomorrow the Tennessee gives a farewell ball, which I will take in.

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On my arrival here I received letters from Mr. Banks and Jno. Sims ack.'g cigars sent them. Apropos of cigars if you will send a check to Wm. H. Bellis, Annapolis, Md., for \$29 00/100. I will call it square about the cigars I sent you.

I also received the following letters, two from Addie, two from Lou, one from Mother, and one from Alf, all of which I will answer as soon as I get time. Tell Alf, and Addie, and Mary and Lou. that my little monkey is quite well and as lively at# a cricket. He puts on a very wry face over the cold weather, and I can tell by the expression of his face that he dosent understand its being red hot one week and cold the next. I am afraid he is terribly ignorant of geography and the influence of a change of latitude on the temperature. When we are in the tropics he gets scrubbed twice or thrice a week, and looks quite respectable and handsome, but in the cold weather his keeper dont think it best to scrub him, and consequently he gets several coats of bread and molasses on his mug, and then to get warm he loaf's about the fireroom hatch and gets coal dust and ashes mixed in with it, until he looks like a little old coal miner about 1000 years old. It is funny to see the little chap when the weather is cold snug up to one of the big black monkeys to keep warm. One of our black monkeys

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is probably the ugliest monkey in the world, but she is so gentle and good natured that everybody likes her, which illustrates the fact that good looks are only useful in creating first impressions. But now I have been talking about monkeys when I should have been telling you of something else. About tomorrow I will think of dozens of things I want to tell you about. I had of course heard of the burning of Mr. Kings house in Phila. but I didnt know until I got mother's letter that the Inghams lived next door, and had also suffered from the fire. I think I will close for this time.

Give my best love to all at home, and tell them I will answer their letters,

Your loving son,

(Signed) Will

Copy enclosed in letter of March 22nd. '85

Navy Department,
Bureau of Navigation,
Wash. March 19, 1885

Sir:

I have the honor to ack. the receipt of you most valuable report on the Panama Canal.

The report reflects great credit upon its Authors. Please inform the Bureau from what source the figures showing the financial status were obtained.

The information contained will be utalized by the Dept.

Your communication has been placed on file in the Office of Naval Intelligence, where you can have access to it.

Very respectfully

S'g'd. J. E. Walker

Chief of Bureau

To Lt. R. H. McLean

Ensign Wm. S. Sims

Asst. Engr. F. C. Rider

U. S. Navy

1885*

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Steaming up the Miss. R.

25 miles below N. O.

March 25th,

My dear Father,

I have already a letter partly written which I will mail as soon as I receive the letters from home, which will be some time after we anchor as we have to go through the quarantine red tape.

I will send this ashore as soon as we anchor just to let you know that we have returned safe and sound.

The letter following this will contain all the news of our cruise to Guatemala.

I am enjoying perfect health.

With love to all at home,

Your loving son,

(Signed) Will

P. S. We are now steaming over 10 knots, an unusually high speed for us, hence this jerky scrawl.

(Signed) Wm. S. S.

* Added in pencil later by W. S. S. - ASF

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

New Orleans, La.,

March 29th., 1885

My dear Father,

This morning an order came from the flagship directing us to take in coal and be ready to go to sea by Tuesday morning (today is Sunday).

We dont know as yet where we are going and I fancy it is not known on the Tennessee, as the order probably originated at the Department. On dit that the Tennessee and Swatara are going some place in company. We will probably leave here on Wednesday morning. I will drop you a line before we sail to let you know where to address letters. All on board are well, including of course, myself.

Give my love to all at home,

Your loving son,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

New Orleans, La.,

March 31st, 85

My dear Father,

We will probably leave here tomorrow or the next day for Key West; but where we go from there we dont know. I should not be surprised if we went to Aspinwall. At all events you can address one letter to Key West,, and from there I will tell you where to write.

I will drop you a line before we sail, or perhaps, if I have an opportunity, will send a telegram.

With love to all at home,

Your loving son,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

New Orleans, La.,

April 1st., 1885

My dear Father,

I believe it is decided that we leave from here direct for Aspinwall in company with the Tennessee. We expect to leave this afternoon or tomorrow morning. It will take us about 8 or 9 days to reach there.

I think you had better address our mail to Aspinwall, and when I reach there I will write whether we are likely to remain any length of time or if not what our next address will be.

I saw in this morning's paper some yarn about the Galmas not affording assistance to distressed Americans, which I dont believe, and even if it is a fact you may rest assured there is good reason for it, for Capt. Cane, her Commander is a thorough officer.

I will probably have time to write again before we sail, but have not time just now as I am writing this on the morning watch (4 to 8 a.m.).

With love to all at home,

Your loving son,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Aspinwall, U. S. C.,

April 12, 1885

My dear Father,

We arrived here on Thursday, the 9th., and found the "Galena" and "Alliance," already here. The following day the "Tennessee" arrived. We found Aspinwall almost entirely burned, and Panama in possession of the insurgents.

The Tennessee brought a vast amount of stores, and landing parties were immediately organized. Colon is under martial law and strongly guarded. Capt. Cane of the Galena did splendidly; the reports in the newspaper were all entirely wrong.

Yesterday morning the "City of Para" arrived with 250 marines on board, and they were landed with our men and proceeded to Panama. We sent all our field pieces and Gattling guns.

The train was heavily armed. There were two iron-clad cars, one next to the engine and one in rear. These cars were gondolas with $\frac{1}{2}$ inch plates breast high around them. At one end a gattling gun, at the other a revolving hotchkiss cannon and a brass howitzer, or field piece in the middle, all armed by 25 sailors with cutlass and pistol. A light wooden roof was put over to protect them from the sun and rain. I am in command

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of one car, with two naval cadets under me.

We are now running with these "new iron clads" on the regular passenger trains that leave Panama and Aspinwall at 11.30 a.m. and pass at half way station. Yesterday I went to Panama with the Marines and remained there all night and returned today. The other car is in P. Tomorrow I start for Panama to remain all night and return next day, and so on until further orders. There is the greatest activity everywhere . As you have seen in the papers there are 280 more marines, and several hundred sailors on the way down on the "Acapulco."

What does all this mean? We dont need all these men to protect American interests. We can put enough men on shore to thrash the insurgents and government forces combined from the ships alone, about 1000 sailors and marines.

Everything is quiet now but a row is expected in Panama when the government forces attempt to take the city.

We will, of course, take no part unless American property is molested, unless, as we suspect, there is something behind all this.

You must excuse me for writing such a short letter but, I am on the go all day long, and am now very tired and must get rested for tomorrow. I will, of course

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give you a full account of everything when I get a little time. Your last letter to me, was written before you received mine informing you that we were off for here, but I expect to receive your answers on the Aca-pulco which is expected to arrive tomorrow.

You may be sure of a letter on every steamer leaving here for the U. S. and you must write to me without attempting to keep track of the steamers as they are not running on time. The weather here is very good; hot, of course, but no rain, and pleasant at night. There has been no sickness whatever among our men.

As for me I am in bloom'in health. My appetite is simply startling, and I get hungry right away again.

You can trust me to take every care of my health. A sound constitution, no rum, and five grains of quinine every day will keep any man all right.

Now I must close.

Give my best love to all at home,

Ever your loving son,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Tennessee" (Temporarily)*

Aspinwall, U. S. C.,

April 18, 1885

My dear Father,

A few days ago I wrote you a letter intending to send it by this steamer, but my ship has gone away with it on board. It may, however have been mailed before she left.

Now I will commence at the beginning and tell you how I happen to be on a strange ship; but I must be brief as I have only a few sheets of borrowed paper to write on. We arrived here on the 9th. and found the "Alliance" and "Galena" here. The "Tennessee" arrived the next day. Aspinwall as you have seen in the papers was almost entirely burned. The city was placed under martial law by the "Galena," and surrounded by sentries. The people were disarmed, those resisting were shot; and the sick and wounded and prisoners were cared for. The latter - mostly insurgents - were turned over to the government troops to be shot. Even when we arrived 10 days after the fire there were charred bodies lying about the streets.

All the telegrams that first were published in the papers were entirely wrong. Capt Kane did splendidly.

* Added in pencil later by W. S. S. - ASF

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The city was already primed with coal-oil and dynamite, and when the rebels saw themselves about to be defeated, they fired the city in dozens of places. The Galena's force, which had been watching the fight - and which they had no right to interfere with - did all in their power to prevent the burning of the city. They blew the brains out of a number of men caught firing buildings; they saved the Pacific Mail wharves and docks entire, and much of the railroad property, and saved the few buildings that were not burned, by tearing down a block of buildings to stop the fire. When we all arrived we took complete possession of everything. The "City of Para," Pacific Mail Line, arrived on the 11th. with 250 marines with their officers and all their supplies. They were immediately sent to Panama. The Supt. of the P. R. R., Mr. Burt, had two gondola cars rigged as iron-clads, by bolting half inch boiler iron plait# breast high around the edges. Each car was armed with one revolving cannon, firing $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch percussion shell, one brass cannon $3\frac{1}{2}$ inch firing shell schrapnel or cannister, and one gattling gun firing 1000 rifle balls per. minute. I had command of one of these iron-clads, (which I named the "Atlanta") and went over with the marines (250) to Panama. We arrived just at dark and were put into an immense freight store house belonging

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to the Canal Co. In an hour's time all the stores were unloaded, boxes were ripped open, provisions served out, sentries stationed, and, in short, the camp established. Many of us (sailors) had not many conveniences with us, but we managed to make out. I had a good wash in a tin bucket of water to get the coal dust out of my hair and beard. For supper I had a tin cup of coffee, some boiled rice, and hard tack, and a tremendous appetite. The next morning at 11.30 I started back with my car (which I had had roofed over with pine and tarred paper) on the end of the train.

I had 17 men in the car and 8 in the baggage car, armed with rifles, and about 20 marines distributed through the train. For 3 days after the fire, and on certain trains after that time people were allowed to ride free, partly to let them get away from the burned city and partly because the R. R. could not collect the fare. Nobody would trust valuable freight on the trains. On this train however there was no trouble. When a passenger would not pay his fare, the train was promptly stopped and the passenger fired from the platform plum into the ditch. I think we must have fired at least 20, and sometimes we only slowed the train up a little. My car travelled on the regular 11.30 a.m. train, one night I remained in camp at Panama, and the

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next night slept on board ship. The other car always passed me at the half way station.

After we had been running one day order was completely restored, and everybody pays their fare. The Colombians are beginning to find out that the American soldiers and sailors cant be trifled with. These guarded trains are now considered perfectly safe. The last time I cam over from Panama I brought \$140,000. in silver in the baggage car.

The other day when I arrived in Aspinwall I found that the "Swatara" was gone. She had sailed for Cartagena under orders to search for Prestan the leader of the insurgents at Aspinwall, and the man who burned the city. Prestan is supposed to have sailed for Cartagena by way of Porto Bello. I have been on the Tennessee ever since. On the morning of the 16th. the Acapulco of the P. M. Line, came in with 250 more marines on board and 180 sailors, with their full complement of officers etc. They came in charge of a Commander to take charge of affairs on the isthmus, so that the fleet would not be crippled. In consequence of this new relay we (the fleet people) have been relieved from our duty on shore, and I am now waiting with 40 of our men for the Swatara to come in. I have three changes of underclo's'. two flannel over shirt#, and one suit of

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clos so I dont care when the Swatara comes in, as I have no duty to perform on board this vessel.

We have had excellent weather so far. Very hot of course, but no rain. I dont mind the heat at all. I wear a flannel blouse and trousers, and white flannel shirt with rolling collar. A pair of heavy high shoes and white duck leggins; and on top of all a helmet. My health has been and is excellent. I have an immense appetite and my system is perfectly regular. There has been no sickness, whatever among the troops on shore. One man fell down while drunk and broke some of his ribs, and a Lieutenant was shot in the arm by a Colombian soldier. I think the fleet will probably remain here some time. The condition of affairs is thusly: Aspinwall, or what is left of it, is in possession of the government, while Panama is held by the insurgents. The government declares itself able to take Panama from the rebels shortly, and when the attempt is made the rebels may burn Panama, or would if it were not for the American troops, stationed there. We have now about 700 men on shore and of course there will be no trouble. I only wonder that so many were sent here. I wonder if there is anything back of all this?

Now let me talk a little business. But first let me acknowledge the receipt of my last letters.

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After I had started this letter a small steamer came in from New Orleans and brought us some letters. I received one from you enclosing one from mother dated March 31st., also one from Lou. They seem to have been written before you received my letter telling you of our departure for this place. We left N. O. on April 2nd., and on March 31st or April 1, I wrote to you telling you of my departure. I hardly expected to hear from you on the "Acapulco" as she left on the 7th. but expect to get a letter by a steamer that leaves on the 11th. I am sorry to hear that you have been troubled with a lack of servants, but I suppose you are all right now. I am glad you like the cigars. Our officers say they are splendid. I also received by way of N. O. a letter from the New York Times enclosing me a check for \$21.00 in payment of one of my letters, and telling me that on the 5th. of March last he sent me a check for my first letter on Venezuela, and asking me to enquire for it in the N.O . P. O., and telling me that, when in due course of time, it came back through the mail he would send it to any address.

I have acknowledged the receipt of the check, and asked the Times (E. A. Bradford) to send the first check to you when it is returned.

I enclose you the first check. I have made rather

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a fist of countersigning it. I signed it Wm instead of W., then erased the "Wm.S. Sims," and signed it "W. S. Sims," then, beneath "Wm. S. Sims" "Ensign, U. S. N." Then some smartey, who noticed that I hadn't countersigned it as faced made the W. on the face into Wm. and I eraced# it, so that on the whole the cheque has been pretty roughly handled. If you think it is necessary I suppose it can be sent to the Times and be renewed and sent back to you when he sends you the first cheque that was mailed to me March 5th. When the cheque is cashed, place the amt. to my credit and when I come north I can send for it if I need it.

I am glad that you were pleased with my Panama letter; of course, our report was much more elaborate. You know I bargained with the Times for \$10. per. col. hence I only got \$21. for my Panama letter, but, entre nous, I think the letter was worth more.

I was rather surprised to hear that my Venezuela letter had been published, for I never say a copy of it. I have asked the Times, if not too much trouble to send you a copy of it, and if he does, please keep it for me.

Now I think I will close. I will write by every steamer and answer Mother's and Lou's. letters. You (all) must writē often, and dont try to catch the steamers,

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as they are not on time.

Give my best love to all at home,

Ever your loving son,

(Signed) Will

U. S. S. "Swatara,"

Aspinwall, U. S. C.

April 29, 1885

My dear Alf,

I think I have written letters to everyone at home since I have been down here except you, and I am quite sure I owe you a letter.

The steamer leaves tomorrow for New York, and a day or so later we expect the "Colon" in with our mail.

I wrote all the news up to the time the steamer sailed in various letters home. Since that time there has been very busy times.

Our troops entered Panama and took possession of the city, but were immediately ordered by our government to evacuate it again, which they promptly did, but we all think it a great pity for now the insurgents can set fire to it in a minute and burn it and all American property in it before we can prevent, as our troops are at present in barracks on the outskirts, and about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the city proper. However, if the city is burned or Americans & their property molested, we (the Navy) cant be blamed. When we entered the city I think, however, that we took unnecessarily high-handed measures, for we arrested Genl. Aizpurn and his staff, took possession of their barracades, stationed sentries in all the principal streets, and closed

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up all the rum shops.

The Colombian citizens were very much excited and a mob gathered in the square and shouting "Long live Colombia" and "Down with the 'grengos' " (foreigners) and flourishing pistols and machettes (long knives like the one I gave you). A Gattling gun was pointed over their heads and the crank turned a couple of times and in 30 seconds you could not see them for dust. I believe there was nobody hurt during the whole affair.

The government troops have now arrived before the city and they demand the unconditional surrender of Aizpurn and his forces.

Aizpurn, (who is very popular since we moved out of the city,) has issued a proclamation signifying his willingness to give up his claim to the presidency of Panama in favor of anyone whom the people will elect, knowing very well that they will elect him.

Our forces will not allow the government forces to go into the city to fight Aizpurn. In this country all battles are fought in cities. The Admiral (who, by the way, is, in my opinion, a very energetic and able man) has gone to Panama to hold a conference with the generals, together, I think, with the Consular Corps of Panama, to see if some amicable arrangement cannot be made.

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The conference is now going on, and what the result will be I cant say but will let you know if we hear from it before the steamer sails.

The other day the "Alliance" captured a brigantinee (which is a vessel rigged with square sails on one mast and fore-and-aft sail on the other) and sent her in here in charge of a Lieutenant with a prize crew.

When captured she had on board about 100 rebels and 100 tons of coal, supposed to be for the use of two small steamers that are blockading the port of Cartagena. She had no papers and flew no recognized flag so she was "run in." Everything else on the isthmus is about as described in my last letters. I have not been ashore again since I came back the first time, and dont want to go any more as it is much more comfortable on board ship. I am, however, very busy, as we are very short of officers, and besides there are two General Courts Martial in session. We have four watch officers, and one is at Panama and the other three on the courts.

I am on the court all day and have to stand one night watch every night, so you can imagine I dont have much time for writing letters. Our court has just adjourned until tomorrow and tonight I have watch from 4 to 8 a.m. so I wont feel much like sitting up late to write.

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However there is really no more news to tell, for it is only a few days since I sent a mail to the U. S. I am sorry to have to send this just before the steamer arrives with, I suppose, some letter from home for me.

Last Sunday the Cable Co. invited any of the officers to send Cablegrams free on that day, so I thought I would send you a message. I at first thought you (all) might be alarmed at receiving a message from me, but I decided that if I worded it as I did you would all understand that I had only taken advantage of the Cable's being free to send you a message. The message as I sent it was as follows, viz., "Officers cablegrams free today. Am well. Sent letters by "Acapulco." "

Let me know whether it was received all right or not.

Now I will close but keep the letter open in case I may have time to add a P. S. tomorrow.

Tell Addie that the little monkey is doing very well, but as we have just finished coaling ship he is very sooty today, and will have to be scrubbed tomorrow morning. This climate just suits him.

Give my love to all at home, and tell them I hope they are all well.

Your loving brother,

(Signed) Will

P. S. 30th. 4.30 a.m.

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There is no more news today except that we have heard from Panama that a sailor and marine were shot while attempting to leave the camp at night. I suppose they were trying to get out in the city for a spree. They were mortally wounded and have both died. Previous to this two other men were shot but only slightly wounded. There are about 30 men awaiting trial now for various military offenses, but principally drunkenness. The sailors make very good soldiers after they have been ashore a few days, but they will get drunk occasionally. There are about 30 cases to be tried before the courts, and we try about one every day. I pity some of the men for they are good sailors and we are always rather lenient with drunkenness in the Navy, and I don't think they quite understand the gravity of their offense from a military stand point. However that is not the business of a court; the revising authorities (the Admiral and Secretary) having the power only, to show mercy.

Then, again, severe sentences are necessary for the sake of the example. The shooting of the two men at Panama will be remembered for years. But, as M. Goulden says (in a book I once read,

La guerre c'est une chose terrible (gett Addie to translate)

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30th. 3 P.M.

Our court adjourned early today so I have time to add a little more. We have just heard from Panama that the conference that I mentioned yesterday has succeeded in settling everything amicably between the contending parties. We have not heard what the details of the agreement are but we understand that a Dr. (Somebody) has been chosen president. We are all in high spirits over the news first, because it will reflect considerable credit on the Navy, and second because it gives us some hope of getting home this summer.

I have no doubt, however that we will remain here with the forces for a month at least until we are sure that everything is quiet.

I would not trust a "Dago" (A Spanish American) for an instant. It would be just like them to lie only in order to get us to move away so that they can fight.

Some of our forces will probably remain until the money subscribed for the revolution has been exhausted, then they will be safe for a while.

I hope we will come north soon, for I want to get home and see all those whom I love and who love me. Sometimes you can imagine I get a little homesick but just now I have hardly time. On the whole, however, I am quite contented, for I get along with everybody

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except Old "Gill" (the skipper) who is a liar, (and a small mean liar at that), besides being a beast. He is totally unworthy of any man's respect. He is the most indefatigable bore in the world if you will let him talk to you.

I have him completely bulldozed. He really dreads the sight of me. For several months he has not come out of his cabin while I have the deck.

But I must stop this gossiping and close. I# my letter will be left.

Give my best love to all at home, and believe me,

Ever Your loving brother

(Signed) Will

P. S. I suppose all my long letters are still sent to Hal.

U. S. S. "Swatara,"
Aspinwall, U. S. C.,
April 31st., 1885

My dear Father,

On the 19th. inst. I mailed you a letter by the "City of Para." On the morning of the 20th. the "Crescent City" came in and brought me Addie's letter with your note at the head, which, by the way, was all the letter I received. You will see by the heading that I am now on board the Swatara again. She came in yesterday.

I was surprised to hear you say that you did not know where to address Addie's letter, for I wrote from New Orleans telling you to address to Key West, then the next day another letter telling you to address to Aspinwall. But I think that the latter mail went astray for quite a number of us have noticed the irregularity.

However it will be all right now. My last letter to you was partly a duplicate of one I had written before the Swatara went away and left me. I find that as I expected, my first letter was mailed before she left, consequently you will receive them both by the same steamer. You can imagine I am glad to get back home again where I can get my regular warm bath every morning and wear a boiled shirt. I am very comfortable and well satisfied on this ship. My little room that my amiable sisters and friends fixed up for me looked very bright and

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cozy when I returned after a red hot absence of ten days. Everything is the same as when I last wrote day before yesterday, and affairs are quiet on the isthmus.

I was very much surprised to hear that you had received a Chicago Times with my letter in it, for the letter was mailed to the Times last January from Curacao, and as I have never heard from the editor I concluded that it had been rejected. Perhaps it got lost in the mails as my first cheque from the New York Times did.

I have written to the editor by this mail stating the circumstances and asking him to send you the amount due me for the letter. I dont know how much it will be for I made no bargain with him, but I guess the same as my Haytian letters i.e., \$10.00/100. However, that is something.

I was quite surprised to hear that the letter was published for I had never before attempted anything but a plain narative# of facts and events, and I was very diffident about attempting anything of an imaginative and pathetic description, and after I had completed and sent the letter I was rather ashamed of it. However, I did not consider my labor lost, for you have probably noticed that I utilized the substance of the letter in writing some of my letters home (and elsewhere.)

Please be careful to preserve the letter for me.

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You have never mentioned having received a copy of the New York Times containing a letter on Venezuela so I suppose you never received it. I # writing to the editor of the N. Y. T. by the last mail I requested him to send you a copy of the paper containing it, and if he does so, please keep it for me also.

Tell everybody to write to me soon and often, and when you receive all the tin for my three letters please let me know. Also send me Belles' (?) receipt when you get it. I mean the receipt for the \$29. I asked you to send him.

There is positively no telling how soon we will leave here. Most of the vessels will probably remain until a responsible government is established in the state of Panama, and even then one vessel will probably remain to watch affairs. But that one vessel will not be the Swatara for the Admiral would not trust such a
— — — — — fool as Wiltse with such a responsibility. I am glad I escaped the humiliations of our last trip to Cartagena. It was simply disgraceful. When the Swatara arrived off Porto Bello, she fired a blank charge across a schooner's bow and "hove her to" to ask her business in those waters, and while the schooner was "hove to" (in which position a sailing vessel is helpless for the time being), Wiltse ran the

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Swatara into her and carried away some of her spars and ripped her mainsail out of her and then, notwithstanding the entreaties of his officers, he steamed away without giving her any assistance. Shortly afterwards in attempting to approach Cartagena he ran the ship hard onto a coral reef, but fortunately was not going very fast, and no damage was done except probably ripping off part of the keel, and a good deal of copper. Then in coming out of the harbor of Cartagena she ran aground again.

What provokes me very much is that the Executive Officer Lieut. Comdr. Strong has not the "guts" ("sand") to report the idiot for incompetency. It is needless to say that nothing was accomplished by the trip. I should not be surprised if the officers took the matter in hand soon and reported him to the department.

Now I must close as I have some more letters to write. We continue to have excellent weather and on board ship it is very comfortable. The health of the Squadron and land forces remains excellent. As for me I was never better in my life.

Give my love to all at home. Tell Hen. I am very sorry to hear he has been so sick and I hope this letter will find him completely restored.

Ever your loving son,

(Signed) Will

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P. S. I have sent mail without postage as there is no P. O. here. The steamer takes our mail bag to N. Y. and they are forwarded from there and I think you have to pay double postage.

P. S. You will find enclosed a communication from the Line Committee which may interest you.

I am going to invest \$5. this year, as I am interested in getting my pay equalized.

I cant send money from here so I must ask you to send \$5. for me to

Lieut. S. M. Ackley, U. S. N.

Navy Department

Washington D. C.

I have written to him telling him that you will send it, and asking him to send you a receipt.

(Signed) Will

P. S. (2).

If Mary is not at home when her letter arrives you had better open it as it contains the latest idems# of isthmian news.

(Signed) Will