

U.S.S. Ohio

Chefoo, China.

Sept 8, 1905

My dead Grandfather:-

I found your letter and enclosed clippings of Bennington disaster here on our arrival here Sept 6 and I was very glad to hear from you. Was glad to hear that Hugo Henke was improving and that all the rest are well. Tomorrow morning at daylight we will sail for Taku which 183 miles from here, across the Bay of Pechili. We will be there about a week so that all hands will have a chance to see Pekin if they want to go. As the bottom is now falling out of the barometer, we will very likely have a rough trip. I am certainly glad that we are out of that Manila climate and at the same time that we are away from that ~~smallpox~~ cholera. The last few days in Manila, no one was permitted to leave the ship except on duty and no one was allowed to go over the side for swimming. All vegetables and fruit recently purchased was condemned and not a bit of water from over the side

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was allowed on the deck for cleaning purposes. I think that the doctors have the cholera cases well in hand now and the death rate is not as bad as it was.

Here the weather is delightful and the swimming is fine. I go in every morning and every afternoon. The Kaiserin Elizabeth of the Austrian Navy; the German "Hansa" and several Chinese cruisers are the men of war in port besides our ships. The Cincinnatti [sic] goes to Yokahoma [Yokohama], where we have a naval hospital, tomorrow with all the sick of the fleet. Yesterday afternoon a mail orderly from the Oregon went ashore and cashed a check for a thousand Mexican dollars (Mexican money is used on China coast exclusively). He was seen by some Chinamen and that night he was told that a sick man from one of the ships wanted to see him at the dock. He followed the Chinaman out and soon walked into a crowd of eight of them and he didn't have a revolver or anything. He knew how to handle stones however and at the end of the little tussle there was one Chinaman stone dead; another with a split skull and

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another with a broken arm and then the others dug out with this orderly after them. They got away and all the orderly got was a scratch over his eye. The orders are now for all mail orderlies to carry revolvers, so I don't suppose there will be any more trouble. This one Marine certainly fixed that gang of robbers, didn't he? It is a good plan to carry revolvers here if one goes ashore after dark.

I see by the Service paper that the Missouri is ordered out here to take the Oregon's place. The Missouri is our sister ship and Church is stationed on her so you see we will all three get together out here after all. She's expected out here about Oct 15. I sent you a copy of the "Buckeye" which is published monthly aboard this ship. This is the opening copy. Every large ship publishes a little paper of some sort, has its minstrel troupe and dramatic club, etc. You will find some interesting parts in it, and I shall send a copy home every month.

Taku, China Sept 12 '05

~~I am going up to Peking tomorrow and stop for a~~

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At anchor off Taku, Sept 11, 05

We are anchored so far out that we cannot see land and the only way to get ashore is by a torpedo boat or by tug. It is so shallow here that even the destroyers must wait until favorable time for crossing the bar, which is eight miles from Taku and which is marked by a light ship. From where we are lying we can barely see the light ship. For a week we will be here just like in midocean.

Taku China, Sept 12 05

I am going to Tientsin tomorrow and then the next day to Peking, coming back here Friday morning. The fleet returns to Chefoo Friday night or Saturday morning. The Logan came in yesterday, bring General Corbin and Alice Roosevelt, and party to visit Peking. She also brought a company of Marines to relieve the "Co. B" of 9th US Infantry, which has been the legation guard ever since the Boxer troubles around Tientsin. Just think how glad those fellows will be to get away from Peking and how good a homeward bound steamer must look to them.

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I guess it will be that way with all of us after we've been over here for four or five years. I have just read in the Army + Navy Journal of the disappearance of Mid. R.A. Jackson of our class. He was on the Missouri and according to the article he had been missing from some time.

Also saw where [???] and Greenlee of our class were married and also Neilson. I hope that Jackson will be found or if anything has happened to him, that it will turn out all right, because he is a very nice fellow in every way. Stewart came aboard this afternoon for a short visit and he told me that Church and most of the midshipmen on the Missouri had been detached so that they won't get out here at all. That is too bad because we surely expected them.

The other day one of my torpedoes took a notion to dive while on a practice shot, and it buried its nose several feet in soft mud and stuck there. We located it very easily from the big air bubbles coming up and sent down a diver

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who found it in a short while. We made a line fast to it and pulled her up, found out what the trouble was and consequently, I've learned another thing from experience. I'm certainly lucky in that respect, all my accidents happen at just the right time so that I can allways [sic] mend affairs before it is too late. Now this torpedo wasn't injured one particle and as it proved to be an unavoidable accident, my mind was easy. Ordinarily I wouldn't feel very comfortable if I thought that I was responsible for \$3000 worth of gov't property lying on the bottom in 40 feet of water. I have six torpedoes under my charge and all of their accessories. Well, I am learning all these things from the very best teacher – Experience.

Sept 16, 1905 Taku, China

I returned yesterday from a three days trip inland – Carter, Lawton and myself

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forming the party. We left the ship Wednesday morning at 11 o'clock and went by tug as far as Tongku on the Peiho River. On way up we passed Taku which is an ordinary dirty Chinese town with its mud plastered houses and narrow winding little streets. At Tongku we took train for Peking. It took about four hours to make trip which was through low flat country all cultivated and for the most part, flooded with water. There was an Englishman on the train who had been out here for twenty years and he was very pleasant to us. He gave us all the information about historic places etc. and helped us to secure lodgings in Peking. We passed thro [sic] Tientsin which is the largest and most important city in northern China, next to Peking. In all of these places the foreigners

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live in separate concessions from the Chinese and nearly every country except ours have garrisons at various points inland. We have a legation guard of 100 men at Peking and that is all. We got to Peking about 7pm Wed. afternoon and managed to secure a place to sleep in the Hotel de Wagon Lits [???] where all of the Taft Party was quartered. That night and all the next day we went to temples, kowtowed to Buddhas, etc. and did everything according to sightseers regulations. I can't give a complete description of affairs there because it would take too much time and paper. We went to the American Legation and called on the officers of the guard whom we knew well, Dr. Taylor, the surgeon, having been a shipmate of ours on the Ohio. We were shown the immense walls

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and towers assaulted by the Allied force in 1900 – saw all the legations of other countries. Each legation is walled in with great thick high walls with loop holes etc. for defense sentries on guard all the time. They keep wide awake and don't intend to be caught napping, with small guards, as they were once before. While at the US legation we heard of the terrible accident on Admiral Togo's flagship. So you see the U.S. is not the only country to have bad luck in the line of warship accidents.

The smallest Chinese coin is called a "cash" and it is worth 1/20 of one cent in the U.S. currency. I provided myself with about \$1.00 US worth of cash and had a rickshaw to carry it in. Every place we went we had a big crowd of beggars bothering us and that was the only way to get rid of them. And it was fun to sling a big handful of cash in a crowd of Chinese coolies.

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In going thro [sic] the temples we had to make offerings to all the idols etc. and this cash was the proper stuff to do it with. This is a fine country for cheap living. A man with a moderate salary, say \$100 per month can live like a prince – have an army of servants, carriages, etc. Thursday morning the Empress Dowager granted an audience to members of the Taft Party, General Corbin and staff, Admiral Train and staff and a lot of senators and Representatives were in the party. I should have liked that but as we were not staff officers – there was nothing doing.

We saw everything about Peking but the "Forbidden City" where all of the Chinese nobility live and where foreigners are kept out. It is located in the heart of the Tartar City of Peking and is surrounded by walls

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and moats so that it is impossible to get a glimpse of it all. I will try to get hold of a map of Pekin and send it to you.

We came back to the ship dead tired and glad to be away from the ever present odor of Chinese towns. The Ohio will take several senators and representatives and ladies including Miss Roosevelt) aboard for a trip to Chemulpo. They will be aboard for several days and after Chemulpo we may visit Port Arthur. The rest of the fleet are going to Chefoo tonight. While at Chemulpo I intend going to Seoul, the capital of Corea [sic]. I've made up my mind to visit every place we go to because there is no telling when we will ever get there again. We have heard rumors of a trip to Australia

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this winter but that's still a long ways off and we can't see very far ahead in that one respect. At any rate, I'm sure that we will never have to lie very long at one port when it is permissible to cruise around.

Chemulpo, Korea Sept 1

We left Taku on Monday morning with the following passengers aboard – Alice Roosevelt, Senator and Mrs. Newlands, Miss Boardman, and Miss McWillem. Thus a US war vessel was for two whole days converted into a passenger boat. Well the trip was a very pleasant one and all the officers tried to make things pleasant for our visitors. By the way, I forgot to mention Congressman Longworth of Ohio as one of the passengers. There were several teas and dances aboard.

The passage into Chemulpo is a very narrow one and is not very well

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marked out by such aids to navigation as lighthouses and buoys etc. However we got there safely, although we barely escaped running into a sunken junk. We missed it about one hundred feet – a mighty close call for us. I don't think it would have injured us very much more than straining a few plates. We found a small German gunboat in port beside a lot of other shipping. The Korean and Japanese officials called immediately, and were introduced to "Princess" Alice. We got rid of the entire party this afternoon. They are going to Seoul and from there will go to Nagasaki on some other steamer, probably the "General Alava" one of our small gunboats.

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From where we are anchored we can just see the sunken (now raised) Variag [Varyag], the Russian cruiser which was put out of commission by the Japs on Feby, 1904. She was a fine new cruiser, built at Cramps Philadelphia. The Koritz [Korietz], a small Russian gunboat is also sunk around here somewhere but we cannot see from our anchorage. If I have an opportunity of getting closer to the Variag I'll take a picture and send one. Tomorrow a bunch of us are going to Seoul, the capital, to spend the day and look around. There is a railroad line connecting Seoul with Chemulpo. The rise and fall of the tide here is the largest I've ever seen. It rises and falls 32 feet. So you see at high tide a ship like this (drawing 26 feet)

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could go, where she would high and dry at low tide.

A description of Chemulpo and Seoul will come in my next letter, as I must mail this now in order to get it to Japan in time for the mail steamer. I hope that all hands are well.

My best love to all,

Your grandson,

[signed]

Chester W Nimitz

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