

Engine Room USS Massachusetts

New London, Conn

Aug 11, 1904

Dear Father:-

I suppose that you will be surprised to get this kind of letter from me, but just now, I have a chance to write and there is no other kind of paper handy. I am standing on engine room watch and as we are at anchor it is very dull and the time is hard to pass away. Yesterday I was standing my watch down here and I nearly went to sleep while standing at the throttle valve. When underway the midshipmen on watch in the engine rooms have to take the throttle valve and reversing levers of the main engines. During any maneuvers, backing, etc. one has his hands full but otherwise the heat and steady thumping of the machinery puts one right to

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sleep. Sleep is my worst enemy when it comes to standing watches of any kind. It is a most serious offense to sleep on a watch and the few midshipmen who have been caught at it have suffered – some to the extent of losing their Sept. leave. The average temp. down here is about one hundred degrees and about one hundred twenty in the firerooms. In making very fast time it grows much warmer.

Tomorrow evening at six a.m. we start for Boston and we will get there about ten o'clock Saturday morning. We will stay there until about the 18th, when we will start for the Capes, about the 20th, near the mouth of the Potomac, the first classmen will be transferred to the monitors

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for their trips to the Ordnance factory and to the Proving Ground at Indian Head. We will spend a day or so at each place and then proceed to Annapolis where we hope to arrive about Aug 28, and I sincerely hope that we get there either before or on time because I want to start on leave early. I am to go to the Florida when we change. We are going to have our exams Monday and Tuesday and from then on we have nothing to do but wait for the end. Only 20 more days at the most at the time I am writing. I am going to stay one day in Annapolis and Washington to see that I have enough clothes etc. and then go to St. Louis; after a day or so there, I will come home. I don't know what the date will be and you needn't expect me until you see me coming in the back gate. I am going to get

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my fill of sleep while I am there, and if Mr. Mason still has his shotgun, I am going to keep that warm. You don't know how much one appreciates one month of running around free in the woods with a gun or pole after being cooped up for a year. True, we've been ashore here but unless we were at some out of the way place, there would be no forest land etc. to go to, and although we were senior classmen at the Academy last year with no work to do, we were all boys on the lookout for the Supt., for fear that he would catch us neglecting our duty in regards to some petty little thing. I like strict military discipline but at the same time I like to have a little rest after the drills

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etc. are over. Last year was a hard year for us, both on account of the Supt. and our studies. It was considered a most serious offense to have the Supt. see you in charge of a squad marching through the yard and allowing them to exchange a few words. Why, he would give you at least twenty-five demerits and a month on the Santee. By the way, I just acquired 25 demerits the other day in about one third as many minutes. I had been sleeping all one Sunday afternoon trying to catch up and to pass away the time. Four of my classmates were playing whist in the same compartment and one of them left and asked me to take his hand for a minute or two. I had just sat down when the officer of the deck happened along (a most unusual time for him to come to that place but just my luck) and he had to report the whole bunch of us. We got

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25 demerits apiece. He caught another party of first classmen at the same time, one of them being the Pres. of the Y.M.C.A. at the Academy and the others all solemn, sober, old midshipmen who would never dream of breaking a regulation. That was hard luck but it doesn't worry me at all because that number of demerits can not hurt me because I don't get many d. during a year. I am going to ask one of the Mid'n, Thomas from Austin to come down and spend a week or so in Kerrville. If he comes, won't it be possible for us to spend a few days up the river? Couldn't you fix it so that you could come along? I don't believe that you ever went on a hunting or fishing trip with me. This Thomas is a third classman now and a nicer little fellow you never saw. I am not sure that

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he can. He is on the Hartford now. When does the Kerrville Fair come off? I have been looking out for it in the Mountain Sun but it has not mentioned any dates at all. Anyhow, by the time the paper reaches me on the ship, it is nearly two weeks old and I am lucky if it comes at all. Have you ever noticed that nearly every article on the front page is something about some horrible murder or accident or wreck? Well, I hadn't noticed it until one of my classmates called my attention to it and remarked that it must be a bloodthirsty country out there. I am going to bring a set of boxing gloves for the children and see if I can't teach Otto a little something about handling himself. It will be a good training to keep one's temper.

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Is everyone well at home? Is Mama well? I won't come in all of a sudden and surprise her like I did last year, but I am coming in on the sly; just watch and see. Are all of Aunt Augusta's family well? And the children, are they all well? Is Dora still out at Uncle Otto's?

Well, I guess this will be about the last letter you will receive before we reach Annapolis; so my best love to Mama, the children, to all of Aunt Augusta's family and to yourself.

Your loving son,

[signed]

Chester W Nimitz

I have managed to keep awake during this watch.

All of the 1st classmen have been invited to the theater to see "The Isle of Spice" at Boston. That was real nice of the theater management, wasn't it.