

Impressions of South America

Vlparaiso, Chili, April 14, 1873

My dear Mother: We have been here now nearly two weeks doing almost nothing at all save going a shore and enjoying the pleasures of gay promonades, delightful drives pleasant visits, and invigorating strolls amon the lofty hills and grim peaks that lie beyond the city; yet in all the time I have written you but one letter. and a line to Reesy and another to Robbins--good natured old Hiram. I am ashamed! You have often told me not to commence a letter with excuses and as I generally try to be obedient I will not attempt any this time but offer simply a work of explanation. I have been looking every day eagerly for a letter from home; but have had only the one that greeted me on my arrival; but as we start again tomorrow upon our westward journey I find that if I am going to write at all I ought to begin at once and say what I can think of without the aid of the inspration afforded by a few words from my correspondent. The msils in this part of the world are a swindle: they come occasionally, but more frequently they go somewhere else or are lost altogether. If this return trip is no better I fear tha you will generally be in the dark as to my whereabouts and welfare.

However if present circumstances and prospects and circumstances are any criterion of the future, you can safely put it down that I will be robust, well-satisfied, and pecuniarily well-situated for many a day to come.

When you next write I would like to hear whether the allotment has commenced all right I understand through some of my mates that theirs have failed to make connection, owing possibly to some neglect or misunderstanding on the part of the paymaster at New York.

Also tell me whether you received the letter which I forwarded you from sea by an American barque via Montevideo. It was written, I think, about January 17, 1872 while we were off Rio de Janeiro and was only a line to assure you of my good health.

However, I did question the circumstance of finding among the officers of the ship, Dr. Streets, an intelligent and highly agreeable individual intimately connected with both the Reeses and Griffins of Delaware. He is whole-souled, jovial, young gentleman as well as an accomplished and scientific surgeon. A year older than myself and shperior looking. We claim to be cousins, and no doubt we are in some degree related., but when it comes to tracing the matter back we both get terribly muddled--neither having a very distinct knowledge of the roots and branches of our family tree. Streets

has written to his mother to find out all about it and I am doing the same. He also states that a certain John Rees, a rich layman, has made a pilgrimage to England and Wales expressly to trace up the fortune. He knew all about the unfortunate old Bible that was carried out to Ohio and that might have proved everything if it hadn't been lost. Well, I'm getting into a bewildering subject.

The cruise thus far has been very pleasant and promises the same in the future. After leaving New York we encountered one wild gale, and then we enjoyed delightful weather down through the tropics and until we arrived in the vicinity of Cape Horn after which we were visited by blows, rains, snows, and miserable demonstrations generally for about three weeks. By this time we had rounded the Horn and emerged once more into God's own sunlight. Our first port was Talechuanu where we remained a couple of weeks engaged the greater portion of the time in surveying the harbor. The city contained only a population of about two thousand and the inhabitants were mostly an inferior set; but at Concepcion--ten miles farther up--we found quite an enlightened community and every indication of an advancing spirit of refinement. Coming on to Valparaiso, all my old clouded ideas of South American ignorance and semi-barbarity quickly disappeared for I found myself in one of the pleasantest cities of its size that I remember visiting in quite awhile. The streets are clean and neatly paved; the buildings, public and private, handsome and pleasantly situated; and the people are sociable and refined. The American portion of the Community especially are particularly friendly and courteous to strangers. The many colored customers are a myth in this city; people here look as they do in any other enlightened land. They are, they look like Spaniards principally, with a large proportion of Americans and others, all dressing just like Camden people--only a great better.

Yours affectionately,

CP Rees