

My dear Mother:

December 11, 1904.

I suppose that getting another letter from me so soon will remind you of the boys who are always so regular in their attendance Sunday school and whose deportment is so good--just before Christmas, but I can assure you that nothing of the kind accutes me, because there is really not much that I want for Christmas this year. If you do n't send me anything more than an automobubble and a house and lot and a high-stepping trotting mare and a ticket for a trip round the world and a few more little things like that I shall be satisfied. I expected to go away east of the mountains to night, but as I do not have to go concluded to send you a letter anyway and may be it would remind Neice that the Merry Yule Tide is fast approaching and cause her not to forget her doting old nunkie, who was always so good to her.

I'm glad that some wise providence so arranged it that Xmas do n't come every six months--I think we'd all die at our house if it did. All the children but James work at it for about steen months before hand, and Anna just works early and late and sighs and sighs because she has n't more time and do n't go anywhere and you can't get her out of the house and its a fright. It do n't affect me so much because I wait till the last day before Xmas and the last hour the stores are closed and then go and by a pint of diamonds and such things and hand 'em round the next morning. A short horse is soon curried with me I am here to tell you.

"How are you all back there?" Alice found a letter the other day that Ruth wrote you a year ago and never sent. Those kids (pardon! children) will do anything but write letters and other things you want them to do, and when they write them they do n't mail them half the time. I never saw such an Ornary lot in my life. They remind me so much of Sarah.

I trust you are all well and happy and that this Christmas will find you all as Merry as merry can be. You are not affected by the calamity that falls upon our house this year---Christmas and New Year's come on Sunday and there is no school vacation. Its the general opinion of the youthful Eatons (of which I am no longer one) that that is a mighty poor arrangement. Still, children do n't dislike to go to school like they used to for some reason or so reason. Our children are never tardy and probably not once a term does any one of them stay out a half day. They are so well and we live so close to the schools that they do n't have much of a chance to invent an excuse for staying out or being tardy. The grade school is only two blocks from us and one the same street, while the High is about five minutes walk. They all come home to lunch which makes it nice---for them. I suppose you imagine them going through the woods long miles to school, chaed both ways by bears and Injuns, but 'taint so. The High, if you please, cost three-hundred-thousand-dollars (think of that) and has over seventeen-hundred pupils; it has an auditorium that seats over eleven-hundred (consider that), and while it was completed only a little over a year ago and was "built for the future" it is now over crowded and they will have to build another one. Poor old Oxford! How tiresome it must be to have to live in such a pokey place! A lot two or three blocks from us that I could have bought when I came over here from Tacoma for seven hundred dollars sold last week for thirty-six hundred, but of course I di n't buy it so it does n't make any difference, and if I had bought it you could n't get anybody now to take it and pay the taxes on it. Well, well, well; such is life in the far west.

I have not forgotten that fish, but to tell you the truth I'm mortally afeard I will. The weather has been so cold its hard to make 'em bite and I ain't had no luck at all lately. Then another thing, salmon wont bite.

much of anything at this season but fresh Injun meat and I ain't killed an Injun in over three weeks. But there are some that need killing and I hope this week to get both the Injun and the salmon. Would n't canned salmon do just as well?

Some gal telephoned the office the other day and said Della Penston wished her to come and hunt me up. I do n't know who she is as she has not been around yet, but I'll be glad to see her when she comes---if she's pretty, which she probably ain't. And speaking of that name: I wonder why I did n't name one of my children Penston. I think its a fine name and I never in all my wanderings (and I've been everywhere, too---Puyallup, Oxford, Skykomish, McDonough, Liplip, Greene, Big Toe, Noritch, as Sadie says, ~~and Puyallup, besides~~ other less important places) I never run across anybody of that name and never ran across anybody who had ever heard of anybody of that name. Its same with Ruth's name---her great grandmother's maiden name---Pabodie---never heard of anybody else with that name.

Is Norval down in Los Angles (well, that I an't the way to spell it, but I guess you know what I mean) and what's he doing? I wanted to make a trip to California this winter, but its me to stay at home as usual.

This has been a bitterly cold day here. Even some little children had to put on light wraps when they go out door, and I put on my coat to come down town, instead of coming in my shirt sleeves as usual. I've got a new suit of clothes and they're paid for, too, which latter fact is even stranger than the former. Its a pretty swell suit and I guess Miss Niece Sarah would be pretty proud to be seen with me now. I suppose you are all frozen up back there. How dreadful it must be to have to live in such a place. I hope to steal some money from the State this winter and if I do we will all come back and make you a visit for about twenty-two years. Wish Sadie would break in another horse and get a six seated carriage so as to be ready for us. I did n't say anything about it when I was back there for fear of hurting her feelings, but really a span is quite the proper thing, you know. It was rather a come down for me to ride in just one rubber-tired buggy and if I keep on getting fat by the time I get back there again Niece will have to have two buggies if she wants to take me out riding, which of course she will.

I think I'll quit. Ain't you glad? I would n't try to ready all this nonsense at once---kind of take it in small doses. We are all usually well and Dorothy is still sweet. She has very dark eyes and very blonde hair, was I telling you about that? She is also pretty tolerably fat. Pip talks all the time about what he is going to do when he gets back east.

I hope we may here from you soon. Hope it wont shock you to get two letters from me in such quick succession. Probably I wont write again for a year, so it will be all right. We all send a great deal of love to all of you and hope you will have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Your loving son,

Orstan

Settale, Wn., Sept. 5, 1905.

My dear Mother:

I just this minute got a postal card from Sarah Eliza saying that my mother would be pleased to hear from me. That being so I will let no more time elapse than necessary before she does. Just the same my mother has heard from me since I heard anything from any of the folks back there.

I think of you every day and wonder how you are getting along. I know I should write oftener, of course, but I do not write any letters and its a hard matter for me to get started. I hoped so much that we could some of us get east this summer and make a visit, but there seemed no way of doing it. With the cost of living so high here and with such a large family it seems impossible to take on any additional expense such as a trip east would involve. If we could only go east as cheap as you can come west it would be different. I have always been so thankful I went two years ago. I never missed the money it cost and it did me a great deal of good in many ways. I have got the home paid for now except an interest that the children have in it and hope ~~things will come~~ will be little easier, but it is simply appalling to a poor man the amount of money I have to spend every month just to live.

But we are all right now; James has a job, his first job, too, mind you. He and another boy are janitors at the church--not a very high-toned job perhaps, but as I tell him its a whole lot better than starting off in life as porter in a saloon or something of that kind. Of course it does not interfere with his school or work, or if it should prove to do so he will have to give it up. I want all the children to have as good educations as they can reasonably expect and that's all they will get from me, and really if I am able to do that I will not regret much not being able to give them a wad of money to spend. They all start off to school this morning. James begins his second year in High School and the rest are in the grade schools. They are an interesting lot of yonkers and Little Dode is right in as one of the bunch. They all love her with all their hearts and she loves them and just simply adores "Sissy"--Alice. I do n't blame her for that because everybody does--she is just a lovely, sweet little woman. Anna was away for three days and was sick in bed for three days and Alice did all the cooking and we got along fine. She loves to cook and sew, but dislikes to wash dishes and clean up the house, while Ruth just loves to dust and "click up" and hates cooking and sewing. So you see that's a great combination.

We have been home all summer except for short trips. Alice was in Tacoma for two weeks, but did not see her Auntie. Its over five years now since Abigail has seen any of the children and while Alice visits every summer with Ab's friends in Tacoma she never sees her. Seems mighty funny to me. We have n't any of us been to the Fair in Portland and do n't know whether we will go or not. There have been immense crowds of eastern people through the country, but I have not seen anybody I knew back there. I guess they must be all stay-at-home people there or else do n't look me up. It has been a delightful summer so far as weather is concerned, but a very unsatisfactory one for us. I have n't had any vacation at all except being sick in bed one week, if you can call that a vacation. I do n't.

Did you ever hear anything about that hearing machine I wrote you of? I have investigated it a little more since and think it might be all right. But it is rather expensive and it would n't be wise to buy one unless you had an opportunity to try it to see if you could use it. I was surprised not to hear anything from you in regard to it.

Oh, how I wish I could come home and see you. It seems to me I would be willing to die if I could. Its an awful thing to be poor when there is

something you want or something you want to do that money would get for you. But I suppose one should be thankful for the blessings one has and not long for things that one cannot have. I try to be thankful but it's hard work sometimes, and yet it's easier to be thankful than it is to be deserving. I have a great deal to be thankful for and ought to be happy and contented with what I have all the time, but I am not---guess I was n't born that way. When I think of your great patience and cheerfulness and serenity throughout an extraordinarily long life and in the face of greater sorrows than fall to the lot of most, it shames me that I cannot have more of the same spirit. But we each of us have to work out our little life and out little destiny in our own way, I suppose.

We all send you a great deal of love, dear mother, and hope that it is God's will that you may be spared to us for many years yet in comfort and happiness.

Your loving son,

*C. B. Blair*

432 Eleventh Avenue North,  
February 28, 1917.

Dear Ruth:

A joke is a joke, but it can be carried too far. Let up on this girl stuff, or maybe your idea is that you ain't going to raise your children to be soldiers.

Well, anyway, if she is as nice a girl as the other two its all right, but she sure can't be any nixer. I hope you and the new baby are getting along fine and will so continue. It was sure some bomb in this household---her arrival.

Very difficult matter to convince anybody that Clyde's telegram was genuine---most everybody thought it was a delayed message announcing the birth of Madaline. Perhaps that is what it is? No?

Well, a baby always brings good luck. If you just got to have 'em it always seemed to me well to have 'em and get it over with---but gee cly! THINK before Lorna is 3 years old!! Can't imagine how you are going to distinguish them. Lorna and sister is easy, but what about the other one---little sister, littlest sister or what? You tell Clyde to go and get his life insured for at least a million dollars, and he has got his coat cut for him---he needs to keep busy.

Am mighty glad Leo Bradner is dipping in over there, its a cinch he can't get out. Seems to me something good ought to come of that arrangement. If I had a bit of the trader in me I'd be back over there right now. There is lots of money to be made there in buying and selling and speculation---IF one knows how. I have been sweating for a month over a gas heater that I think would take well over there and that there would be big money in, but it takes quite a bunch of money to handle it and I am afraid to tackle it. It makes gas from kerosene at a cost of 30 cents per thousand and except for the lighting, which takes three minutes, its as good as your dollar sixty gas there in Yakima, and requires no special stove---just any old cook stove, range, heater or furnace. I'll send Clyde a circular and if any of those wollopers want to dig up about \$700 for about 60 days I'll go in with them on it. I have seen it work many times and she really does better than they claim for it. There is a big profit in them, \$20 50 out of the \$32 50 they sell for. Its not an oil burner, it burns gas generated by the burner from kerosene. Its also fool proof, can't get out of order and absolutely no danger.

Now I didn't intend to write that, but I'm so full of gas that I couldn't help it.

Give my love to Lorna Alice, Madaline Merguerette and Roberta Dorothy and a lot for yourself. Be very very careful of yourself, do, because its a tremendous strain to go through with what you have in the last two years and a week of most excellent care now may save you years of suffering in the future.

Lots of love to all from all. Dode and I were here alone when I got the telegram and when I handed it to her she came near expiring

right then and there. Do be careful and take splendid care of yourself till you are well and strong, because it looks like you are going to be pretty busy for the next 20, 50 years.

Yours loving old

Dad.

422 July 27 17

Dear Ruth:

Phil just got his notice to report for active service at Fort Lawton within three days, so I guess now he will be happy. On inquiry he learned the company is full so James can't get in, much to the disappointment of said James, no doot. Am mighty glad that he didn't get drafted, can see no reason why Clyde and Howard should not go. My opinion is that they both will have to go before we get through with this thing. I am not much in favor of sending troops to France, but it has been decreed and we must submit. Before they ~~so~~ they could be made very useful in shooting up a few or good many food speculators and these patriots who are using the war as a pretext or means of robbing the plain people, of which I am one. The terrible I W W, nothing is too bad for him or for the working man who is trying to get a little more for the only thing he has to sell, his labor, but don't do anything to prevent the robbery of everybody who has to eat or live as that interferes with business.

I certainly hate to have Phil go and especially in the service he has chosen as that is about the most dangerous service there is. Still, I suppose its just as much up to him to go as to anybody. With the training he has had he should have been able to get a commission of some kind, and would have had one if we had not assumed there was no politics in it and did not try to get any pull for him. The fellows who made application for commissions in the Marines and followed it up by enlisting the good offices of Jones, Poindexter, Miller et al all got commissions. As a matter of fact, all he could have hoped to get was 2d lieutenant and they are the boys that get it first, so I was not very anxious for him to have that job. But in the service he is in, they will probably go across right away, they are always under fire, there is no chance for promotion or glory or anything else that I can see, except to get killed, and they don't even carry a gun, so they can't shoot any Germans or even shoot back when shot at. Then it seems to me that all those fellows should be big huskies, and here is Phil weighing 123 pounds with his clothes on. He has to take another examination out at Ft. Lawton and I don't see how he can get by, but he says there is no question about that, which is cheerful. He has been crippled with his sore feet for a month so he can hardly hobble round, but I don't suppose that makes any difference, he can easily ride over there and get blown up by a sub on the way or get riddled as soon as he gets there.

Of course when he enlisted it took him out of the draft and as he don't know what his number would have been he don't know whether he would have been drafted or not. The Coast Art. etc are out now and soldiers soldiers soldiers everywhere. "Join the Guard and eat at Boldt's." Fat Taylor has about 250 between him and going.

Jack Smith got a job and I understand a very good one. He is with the Hofius steel outfit and is getting up a cost system for them. He got a letter to somebody down there, went down in the morning, stayed with 'em all the forenoon, came home to lunch and went to work in the afternoon. I get all me info from the Robbins and Huffines with whom we went to A ki yesterday and they say that said

Jack is sure some hustler. I guess the yobs are here is you chase 'em hard enough to get 'em.

We are sure having a fine time with the different labor trouble-  
ists, but nobody seems to care a hang rap. Two avenue is the finest  
street y'ever saw with no st. cars on it. I guess everybody gets  
along all right without them. Our service is better than it ever  
was, we can get a jit any time and get down town in five minutes.  
I wish they's never start the old cars agin.

If Phil gets gone I think I'll get out of here and come over  
and see you and go up to Alice's, maybe. I see it was warmer here  
yesterday then it was in Yak, so I suppose you are better satisfied  
now. I judge from what Jim said in his letter to Dode his bug is  
being fixed up and we are kinder looking for him over here most any  
day. We haven't seen or heard from Marian. Too bad Clyde couldn't  
have gone on with the nozzles and got rich quick. Can he hang onto  
it till next year? But what would be the use, he would be like the  
hawse that starved to death while the grass was growing that he was  
going to get fat on. He better steal a Ford and come over here and  
run a jit. Its nothing at all to ride with eight others in a Ford.  
We came from Alki to the ferry last night in a bus that carried 53  
and they have another one that carries 80. No street cars need ap-  
ply.

Well, here it is almost winter again and I haven't done any-  
thing, had any fun nor nuthin. Understand Mrs. Hendron sold her 10  
acres on Nob Hill for \$6500. I could have bought it any time up to  
the 1st of July for about \$3500. It positively makes me sick to  
think of it.

Guess I'll go down town, but why I dunno. We are all always  
might glad to get your letters. I sure want to see those babies  
and hope to be able to before long.

Lots of love to all.

Yours,

dad.

303 Boston Building,

May 28, 1918.

My dear Ruth:

You're a mighty fine girl, I'll say so. Those photos you send are things of beauty and joys forever. I think that one of Sis with Jiddens is about the swellest I ever saw. Keep up the good work, we certainly all enjoy them and so does everybody who comes in. I don't see why you didn't take one of Charles before he hied away to his mountain home.

I saw in the paper that the Gov was to shut down on the Tieton, but was not just sure it was the Rimrock work. That makes me pretty sore because I always held that chance of a job in the hole as something to get out on. Anyhow I'm glad it will not keep you out of your trip and you must surely go, because I can't imagine anything more ideal for the Kidders than that lovely mountain air in the hot weather. This Government can carry on and win the war, but its too much to ask or expect that it can keep a job going with both Finley Bryan and Howard Doolittle on it. Howard can easily get a job here, I guess, as they say anybody can that wants to work and even those fellows are to have jobs now that don't want 'em. But it seems too bad that they have to move around and give up what they have in up there. It seems a rather unbusinesslike move, to shut down that work when they have spent so much money in preparing for it and the loss will certainly be tremendous. But understand I'm not questioning the wisdom of the Government. They are sending men to prison for long terms every day for doing that.

Absolutely nothing new under the sun here. Phil was over Sunday and talked quite a bit about going over in the Valley for a visit. He is not a top sergeant, but sergeant first class which is a better job. But he has put in his application (agin my advice and almost command) for a transfer to the Field Artillery. That would mean that he would lose his rank of course, but would get to go to France right away and get into the fighting. The truth is that he doesn't like the idea of the service in the Medics it being a non-fighting arm of the service. But it seems to me that it is a time when one shouldn't try to force things, do yer duty and as you are told and let it go at that. Of course he must be a valuable man where he is or he wouldn't have risen four points in ten months, and perhaps he had better let it go at that, especially as he has a fine place and is getting \$56 a month, is with the very best lot of fellows in the arm, and if he transfers he has to drop back to private and is with a lot of bohunks. But he wants to see action and get to France, so that's all there is about it. He thinks the 91st will leave in about two weeks, within six anyway, and if he gets his transfer he thought he might not be able to get over again. I told him he couldn't go till he had been over to see you-all, but you know the way they have of sending them, so we don't know what will happen. Of course they may not transfer him, in which case he thinks he will be at the lake for a year. I think I understand how he feels about it,

but I'm afraid if it was me I would stay right where I was, lots of liberty and all that sort of thing. If I could get to France I'd go, but that's different again.

We've had three days of nice weather, the first this spring, and we don't know how to act, hardly. It has certainly been cold and I have been ill for two weeks with a cold and bronchitis and things.

Well, as I say, there is nothing new here. Take care of yourself and the babies and have as good a time as you can. You are right about Clyde, 'e certainly is a blighty rotter. I'm so afraid he will have to go to work under the new order, because he certainly wont fight. It worries me about that Jiddens. He should have something done for him and I don't suppose he is taking care of himself or anything else. How about that dental work? YOU GO AND HAVE IT DONE UTTERLY REGARDLESS OF ANY OTHER CONSIDERATION ON THIS EARTH. YOU GOTTA DO IT. DO IT NOW. THINK ABOUT IT AND PLAN ABOUT IT AFTERWARDS.

Lots of love to all and especially to yourself. Write just whenever you can.

Dad.

Seattle,

Nov. 8, 1920.

My dear Ruth;

I ain't too busy to write these days---you tell her, warehouse, you're full of hops. I could write to you now, if'n I wanted to, fourteen hours a day. I just can't make myself go to work agin, and don't know as I ever will.

If that picture Shermy gave you is the one I think it is you sure have a treasure. I think that's the one that your mother liked so well, because she said it made her believe, when she looked at it, that the story told in the Bible about the chap that did such deadly execution with the jaw bone of an ass, was true, because when she looked at that picture she could realize what a deadly weapon a jaw bone might be. Anyway, I'll destroy it when I get hold of it. Phil is crazy mad because you write so much about our close resemblance to one another, and so'm I.

I show the pictures of your girls around so much that people cross the street when they see me coming.

I have been reading your mother's letters and have been wondering and puzzling over them without the light of understanding dawning on me till this morning. Last evening I was at the office all alone and read a great many of them; then walked home, and on the way and most of the night I was thinking of her and of the letters.

You will note there is not one of them, scarcely, that does not mention her great longing for Shermy Ab, how tired she is, and so very, very little of a pleasant nature---about her home and amusements and that sort of thing. I couldn't understand that, because she was always cheerful, contented, and apparently happy. Of course she had too much to do, and those were rather depressing times for us all, but she never complained of anything or she might have had more.

This morning the reason of it all, as it seems to me, occurred to me; I had not considered who she was writing to, and Ab's jealous, envious nature, which she took into consideration, and knew if she wrote cheerfully and happily and told of the bright things in our lives she would only arouse some of the meanness in Ab, which is very plain to me she was sedulously avoiding.

Two things shortened her life, although I do not believe she could have lived long under any condition. The first was her trip West with you kids in 1896; as she says in one of her letters, she never felt right after that; the second was Jim's very serious illness a few months before she died.

I could never get the straight of her coming back when she did on that trip. I had no thought of her coming, and we were trying to arrange to have someone (not Shermy) come with her and anyway for me to meet her part way, when one morning I had a telegram from up in Idaho that she would be there the next morning. She knew I had not made arrangements for her, that the house was rented etc. and I never could understand why she came as she did.

I am convinced of one thing, have always been, that she was always absolutely homesick for her mother and family back there. You will note in these letters that two-thirds of every one is taken up with things there, not here. She was not happy when Shermy was here, and did not want her here, and I have always felt that Shermy caused more unhappiness in her life than all other causes combined. She dearly loved her mother, and certainly had reason to, but her love for her brothers and sisters was, I believe, founded on pity and a sense of duty---anyway, I always felt that way about it---because there was little else, it seemed to me, that could have inspired it.

I am sure she would thoroughly disapprove of all this, but I think you ought to know the facts as I think they are, and interpret the letters in that light.

I never realized what her real physical condition was, and deeply regret that I did not. She was the most courageous little woman that ever lived, complained the least and never found fault. She was absolutely unselfish and self sacrificing, loved me and worshipped her children, and a grander wife and mother never lived.

I am in two minds as to whether I am glad you had these letters or sorry, because, while it gives you some insight into your mother's character and what she was, on the whole they create a very wrong impression. She was always witty and full of fun and cheer; she never had while we were married but one serious illness, or any at all for that matter, and that was the one that resulted in her death. From these letters one would get the impression that she was tired and ill all the time, that the work and care of you children rather irked her than gave her pleasure, whereas the contrary is exactly the

fact. Of course she was busy--as she used to say, her very words, "I've been a busy little feller today"---and you children were a care, but it was a labor of love and she enjoyed it.

Its a surprising thing how nicely she speaks of you whenever you are mentioned in the letters! But she has each one of you sized up absolutely right. It seems rather apparent that she cared a bit for Phil, don't you think? He was a amusin' little cuss, as Artemus Ward said of his kangaroo.

I don't know whether you get me or not; what I mean, these letters seem to breathe a spirit of depression and unhappiness. I account for that by the fact they were written to, or to be read by, Ab, and believe me, one always made a mistake in mentioning joy, contentment or happiness around her, she would take it as a personal affront and would not be slow in resenting it. Y'understand, I'm not writing this to knock Ol' Shermy, but because I want you to understand if you can.

You all suffered a terrible and irreparable loss when she died. I have wished a million times that I had been taken and she spared, just on account of you children. I never could see the wisdom of its being as it was. The only thing I can see for you to do is to find out as much as you can about her, think of her, and try to be the men and women she would want you to be--.