

WSS ? , Spezia, Oct. 10.1871  
rec'd. Nov. 14

Dear Bro. Willard,

No doubt you will be greatly surprised at receiving a letter from this quarter of the world, quite so much as I would be to become the recipient of one bearing the Butteville postmark--but no matter, I will hope that your surprise may be tinged with a slight degree of pleasure at hearing directly from a brother whose name you barely know--whose face you have never seen.

It strikes me that I did risk writing to you once before while away at the Naval Academy, but this may be only a dream, a sort of fancy growing up out of many good intentions which I know I have formed in days gone by. It is said that habit and story tellers frequently get to believe the oft repeated creations of their own imagination. Perhaps my own uncertainty may originate in a similar manner and in course of time I might come to say I know I wrote to that far distant brother whose very existence seems but a dream.

I might do all this you know but at present I will limit my knowledge to the proposition that whether I wrote or not I know you never answered.

I came down from watch only a few minutes ago, and finding the steerage vacant--the fellows having mostly gone for a stroll in the town I was for a little while at a loss how to occupy my leisure between the and bed time, but soon the happy idea came of writing a letter but with it the thought "to where?" - "Mother?" - "It has been only two or three days." "Decatur"? Two letters to him within three weeks. "Jacob?" - Owe me a letter. Sweetheart? "haven't none" But I recollected that mother (who I believe thinks more of her children than any other person living) had suggested in her last that your address was Butteville and that you might perhaps be glad to hear from me. Write a little note as an experiment--to see if he cares enough to answer and if he does then bore him with a longer one. There's the plan!

Possibly you may know that your humble servant is an humble officer in Uncle Sam's humble Navy--if not, I will inform that much ~~information~~ by way of introduction. Also that I originally left home when rather young and became a soldier--rather of the Capt. Jinks order, that after my brilliant (?) career in that line had culminated and I returned to my ~~work~~ ~~work~~ ~~work~~

and ended I returned to my worthless existence gravitating about Camden, That eventually after my finances had commenced falling to an alarming ebb, I was suddenly transplanted into a different orbit, rather a circumscribed one, within the walls of the US Naval Academy, when I emerged after four years of study, with "honor" of course (Don't everybody graduate with honor?) and entered upon my present duties. Our craft had the bad luck to run aground a couple of months ago since which time we have been in this little city undergoing repairs, and as soon as they are completed our purpose steering for the US in order to give our eccentric Captain the benefit of a general court martial so that when you write--say a couple of weeks after receiving this scrawl, direct to your affectionate Bro officially known as

M<sup>d</sup>. C. P. Rees  
Navy Dept.  
Washington, D. C.