

Letter from Arthur Meredith to his Mother in Bowling Green, Kentucky

FROM MATANZAS.

AN INTERESTING LETTER WRITTEN BY A BOWLING GREEN BOY.

ARTHUR MEREDITH GRAPHICALLY DESCRIBES THE TOWN AND ITS INHABITANTS.

ON GENERAL WILSONS STAFF.

Matanzas, Cuba, January 14th

1898

From the temperature it seems only a few feet to Hades.

Dear Mama; - Have been sick down here already, but am better today. I will give you a little history since my last letter. We left Macon Friday last, I think it was, and arrived in Savannah Saturday morning without incident. I went up and had a walk around the city - pretty nice place. The transport "Obdam" was waiting for us and it took all day to load, so we didn't leave till about midnight. The boat was 350 long and thirty wide and five stories deep. You could go down about twenty five or thirty feet under the water.

There were 600 men on the boat besides the General and his staff, so you see it was a pretty big boat. In the morning when I woke up I began to get sick and was sick for a couple of days. Never was as sick on earth, and thought I was going to die.

We passed the Florida Keys and saw flying fish and all kinds of sea animals. We got in sight of Cuba just at daylight on Tuesday morning and dropped the anchor in Matanzas bay about six o'clock. It is a big harbor but not very deep, so we had to unload on lighters or small flat boats, which took a couple of days. I went on shore with my horse and took him to the stable and then went up town. It was then about six o'clock at night. The people would hallo and shake your hand and they can't do enough for the "Americanos" as they call them. One of the Cuban soldiers gave me some buttons, cartridges and a machet that he had killed four men with.

Matanzas is a very old town, with about 40,000 people. The streets are from ten to twenty feet wide; the houses are built right on the streets, and together like the business houses in Bowling Green, with a court room in the center. There are some of the prettiest women here I ever saw; white and fair as a lily, and then there are some awful black ones, and they vary in colors, also. The women use a great deal of paint and powder. They wear light, full clothes and almost altogether white; men and all. I also see a great many of them with no clothes at all - perfectly naked. We are in a three story building with marble steps going up and a court in the center with a shower bath and water closet in it.

Every time any of the girls go out the old lady goes along too.

It is awfully hot down here - 85 to 90 in the shade.

The oranges are just like sugar - four and five for five cents.

I went up town with an American dollar and they gave me \$ 1.30 for it.

Everything, except something to drink, is awful high. Can get on a fine drunk for ten cents, but cant get but six envelopes for five cents; a white handkerchief costs sixty cents - awful high. Board from \$10 to \$20 per week.

The General is going out riding this evening so I will have to close this time. Will write again soon, when I get time. Write me a long letter telling me the news.

Yours,

Arthur.