Camp Columbia, Quemados, Cuba,

Sunday August 5th 1900

My dear Jennie:

 I received your letter of July 31st - yesterday and I am very sorry to hear that Annie is laid up. I sincerely hope she will be all right again soon. Tracey arrived here all right and brought the bicycle shoes which are very comfortable though they are not quite what a gentleman should wear. It is not necessary to send me the New York Herald on Sunday because I always get it on Thursday. It costs 10 cents and I get it for the sake of seeing what fiscy grandpa is doing. Last Sunday he surprised the boys by showing them how to spin a top. Dr Reed has lost his trunk- at any rate it cannot be found and he had to travel without it. He turned it over to the Marine Hospital service people for disinfection two days before he started. The boat was delayed as she was ordered to Matanzas before coming here. I did not see him off but I can imagine how excited he was. By the way I had a Spanish hair cut yesterday. It was comical the barber could not speak Spanish nor I English so I walked in, placed my hands through my hair and said “hair cut.” He bowed said ‘Si senor’ meaning ‘yes sir.” He then said something in Spanish which I did not understand and I said Yes, I want my hair cut. Then he said poco corto. I knew poco meant “little’ so I said “si poco” and motioned all over my head meaning that I wanted a little taken off all over. He understood and gave me a very good cut. First he took a puff ball and powdered my hair and then proceeded to cut it. As he cut he would blow the cut hair away and when he started in front of me it was a little disagreeable because his breath smelled like rotten india rubber, from a com-bination of garlic and cigarettes. Last Wednesday night while I was writing to you at half past ten before going to bed I heard four pistol shots not far away. Next morning I learned what they meant. A Cuban in the town of Quemados near by had become jealous of his wife and shot her. The sound of the shot attracted the policeman on duty and the men fired at him. Then the policeman proceeded to shoot and killed the fellow. The Cuban policemen are nasty looking fellows in panama hats and crash suits. They wear a small red white and blue cockade in their hats and carry a club, a revolver and often a machete the straight heavy sword or knife which is so common on the Island. They are quite military and always salute us. By the way the woman did not die, the ball glanced from a rib and passed around the body. Another Cuban was brought into the hospital last night stabbed in the armpit. It seems he had occasion to rise during the night and his farther mistook him for a burglar as robberies have become very frequent, and stabbed. He bled nearly to death and several Cuban doctors after working upon him for three hours were going to cut his arm off to stop the bleeding. He was almost bloodless when he was brought in but he is in first rate condition now and will be operated on tomorrow morning.

I ordered one carriage this afternoon and Dr. Lezear and I took Neali and drove to the Cuban Cemetery, the first Roman Catholic burying ground. It was a sight to see the funerals come in. The hearses were drawn by four or six fine horses carrying plumes on their heads; the hearse was a gorgeously painted affair in black and gold with imitation curtains painted on the glass sides and a gilded angel of large size surrounded by large golden balls or large plumes. The driver and his companion wore gorgeous coats of red & gold or black and gold knee pants and the fashioned arched hats of colonial times trimmed with gold. They looked very comical. They step inside the gate when the priest comes out, sprinkles some holy water, blesses the coffin and in two minutes they drive on to the grave. The poor people cannot afford a horse and the coffin is carried on the shoulders of four men all the way on from the city. They change from time to time with four others and come in looking very tired soaked with perspiration. A tiny coffin was carried by four men swinging in gilded ropes of which there were two the ends being held by four men, two on each side. They came in laughing and chatting and smoking and the women never accompany the body to the cemetery. The poorer people’s bodies remain in the graves just so long as an annual rent is paid. When this is neglected the coffin is dug up, a fire is made in the cemetery and it is burned after which the bones are gathered and thrown into a place set apart for them. The rich people have fine tombs of marble or granite and vaults connected with them. I am feeling splendidly. Although we perspire like everything when working we are always cool at night and sleep splendidly. I intend to make a trip to Guanajay 22 miles way, soon, where there are some cigar factories. I want to get a box of cigars send to grandpa. I have not sent the panama hat yet but will forward it in about a week. It has to be registered. These are said to be worth $8-10 at retail and they can be scrubbed and cleaned and wear forever.

With kisses and love for all

Your affect husband

James

Please send me Ida’s address