

October 1900-June 1904

that she could see her mother a moment. They thought it might be good medicine. It proved so.

Yrs Ever

SLC

## 312. ROGERS TO CLEMENS (telegram)

New York

14 August 1902

Your letter of yesterday rec'd. I have been very anxious since your last letter. Mrs Rogers, who is with me, joins in earnest sympathy and we are both desirous of serving you if we can. Dont fail to command us because we are to be classed among your warmest friends

H H Rogers

## 313. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor

21 August 1902

Aug. 21 or 22.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

As soon as you had been gone 2 hours and I had sent off an urgent letter to Boston for an air bed, *then* somebody mentioned that you had air beds on the yacht!

It is just my luck. I believed Mrs. Clemens had lost a whole day by that accident. Up to now she has lost *several*. Of all the impossible places for the meeting of emergencies promptly and successfully, this is the impossiblest.

The illness drags along. Part of each day, now, we feel fine and

cheerful—the other part of it we feel discouraged. But the worst of all is, that Mrs. Clemens feels doubtful all the time. She was never like this before, in her life.

I strongly want to write Whitmore to get rid of the house—sell it for a song. So that I can tell Mrs. Clemens that that burden upon her spirits is gone. For she secretly reproaches herself for buying the new house before selling the old one. I *shall* write him substantially that, now.

Yrs Ever

SLC

314. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor

22 August 1902

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The air bed is on its way from Boston and will arrive to-morrow. And the same is good news.

Mrs. Clemens is doing so well that at last she was able to partially quit plasmon this morning and take to solid food. She slept well last night and is sleeping a good deal to-day.

Yours ever

SLC

315. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor

27 August 1902

Dear Mr. Rogers:

We are scheming on a most difficult problem: how to move Mrs. Clemens to Elmira—say a week from now or a few days later. It is

not expected that she will be strong enough by that time to sit up in a train, but the idea is to move her from Boston by Albany and Binghamton in a sleeping-stateroom.

The gap between here and Boston is not coverable by land, in any thinkable way. Could you cruise around to York Harbor about that time, do you think, and take us to Boston in the yacht? It was the doctor's idea, but Mrs. Clemens does not want me to put it before you. I said there could be no indelicacy in putting it before you, for the reason that you do not dodge around stumps, but are a frank man, and will say no, if the project would be inconvenient—as indeed it may, for you may be going away on a summer excursion.

She is tired of the bed, and longing to get away—go somewhere—anywhere, for a change—and there is but one place where she will be entirely at home, and that is at "Quarry Farm," our summer home in the early days, on the hill-top 1300 feet above sea-level. The doctor recognizes the wisdom—and maybe the necessity—of moving her.

She was getting along fairly well—so much so that during the past three days I have hardly been a sick-nurse at all,<sup>1</sup> but have written a story—8,000 words, which is more than 4 days' work.<sup>2</sup> But in the house, of course, and close at hand. Mrs. Crane occupies my study, in Mr. Sewall's house.<sup>3</sup> No work now for a while, I suppose. It looks that way. She had a bad night, and has lost ground a little. She will pick it up, though, I believe.

I am sending my love to Mrs. Rogers.

Yours ever

SLC

<sup>1</sup> On 25 August 1902 Clemens, however, had recorded (Notebook 35, TS p. 24): "Livy's illness hangs on, and on, from day to day, and there is never any great improvement; never anything to rouse us and make us jubilant."

<sup>2</sup> Among other things, Clemens was revising "Was it Heaven? Or Hell?"

<sup>3</sup> Millard Sewall was a neighbor; when things were difficult at home, Clemens sometimes spent the night at his house (see Notebook 35, TS p. 28).

316. CLEMENS TO ROGERS (telegram)

York Harbor  
28 August 1902

Thank you without limit will write you my later scheme <sup>1</sup>

Clemens

<sup>1</sup>On 3 September 1902 Clemens would set down a grateful entry (Notebook 35, TS p. 25): "Always Mr. Rogers keeps his yacht (Kanawha) in commission and ready to fly here and take us to Riverdale on telegraphic notice."

317. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor  
28-29 August 1902  
Aug. 28/02.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

To-day I've struck it!

I have found that I can get a special car, with a bed in it and various accommodations, which will take us aboard at York Harbor station and land us in Elmira without change.

It will travel over various roads, and it may be that

Aug. 29, 1 p.m.

But the doctors are not so confident about that scheme: too much rattle and clash, and wear and tear (and delay) of land-travel, and too long a stretch, too much tension. They say if she could sail to Hoboken and be carried into a stateroom on a daylight train it would cut the railroading down to 6 or 7 hours and deliver her in Elmira in much better condition. (I perceive that this is more

yachting than you've been called upon to consider—but that is all right, I would provide the cigars myself.)

This evening I am to get some of the time-and-distance details of the all-rail journey, and the rest of them to-morrow afternoon.

*Aug. 29 again—20 minutes later.*

Your generous letter of yesterday has just arrived—only 2 minutes after I had committed myself for the cigars; which is just some people's luck, you see. I showed Mrs. Clemens your telegram and it broke her all up. It will happen again when I show her your letter. I think the telegram is the only piece of writing she has been allowed to see during this sickness. She wanted to keep it, so I left it with her. She is improving—very slowly, but *actually*, I think, the past day or two. To-day she has sat up 10 minutes in a chair.

We shan't be able to move her until she can sit up one or two hours in a day. We can't tell when that will be, because she has had so many backsets that every prophecy we make scores a failure. But it will be days yet; then I will let you know as soon as we can safely guess a date.

I suppose this letter will not reach you before Sunday. I will put a hurry-stamp on it, so that the post-office will deliver it on the Sabbath.

With the kindest regards of us all to you all.

SLC

We only know for sure that it won't be next week that she can travel, but later.

### 318. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor

1 September 1902

Dear Mr. Rogers:

It is lovely of you. We could not have shown your telegram to Mrs. Clemens yesterday, but she can see it (this evening or to-mor-

row) before night, I think, for she shows much improvement to-day. It continues to be a case of down-and-up, up-and-down. Yesterday I thought her chances were bad, she was so weak and exhausted and discouraged; but to-day it is handsomely different. When she is "up" she thinks she is going to start in a week—always that. But if it isn't the double of that I shall be very much surprised indeed.

I will give lots of notice—of date, number of persons, etc—

If she were able to talk, I would try to persuade her to go to Riverdale and avoid *all* railroading. But I don't know that I should succeed.

There's 200 Union Pacific pf. left. It cost 88½ and is selling at 94¼. Wouldn't it be good commerce for Miss Harrison to put in an order to sell at 100—if it gets there? If it shouldn't get there—well, that's another matter.

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3 p.m. Mrs. Clemens has seen the telegram and sends her love and grateful thanks. In which joins

SLC

That \$2,230.48 raises the credit in Guaranty Trust to a good figure—for which, a thousand thanks. I think there's \$15,000 there now. Mrs. C. will be sure to begin building the addition at Tarrytown. I shan't oppose it any longer, if her heart is set on it.

### 319. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor

[3] September 1902

Sept. 3(?) 02.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Mrs. Clemens began to sit up yesterday once more, and did it twenty minutes. Therefore she was feeling better. Feeling better, she began to plan, of course. It was plain enough that she was not

likely to be strong enough to travel in any way for as much as ten days yet, even if her recovery gets no check. Then of course she was at once troubled about the yacht and in dread lest you might be delaying a cruise on her account. So she urged me to write and beg you not to think of such a thing, but to make your cruise and if you didn't get back by the time she was strong you must not curtail your holiday by a day but let her take to the rail.

I promised to write the letter last night but I got no chance, so I am writing it now and sponging off my conscience. She is perfectly right about it—head and heart both—and so even I join with her and endorse. But if you should get back in time, I'll be on the lookout and will set up a hail!

She has sat up another 20 minutes to-day, and is thin and has lost color—much more than I thought for—in fact I was astonished, for these things are not so apparent when she is in bed. But all the same she is improving immensely.

Now I'll start this straight to the post by the doctor.

Yours Ever

SLC

### 320. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor

11 September 1902

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Mrs. Clemens said this morning that the number to go in the yacht would be the family, the doctor, and a maid—6 persons.

Provided all are well. But if Jean should be on the sick list she will remain behind and go home with Katy<sup>1</sup> and the cook by rail when in condition.

That would make the number for the yacht, 5.

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Mrs. Clemens is almost counting on Wednesday Sept. 17—but! We don't discuss anything with her—she would get excited—but

we have doubts about that date. Whenever a date can be named I will at once telegraph you, as long a time in advance as possible—three or four days in advance, if possible.

Mrs. Clemens detests plasmon, yet she has to live on it, as far as keeping up her strength goes. She can take solid food, but not enough of it to nourish her.

She has had two bad turns in the last 48 hours, through experimenting with foods. One was an egg, and the other a half-teacupful of malted milk. They acted like poisons—numbed her arms and distributed pains over a large nerve-surface.

We can't oppose the patient, nor discuss any matter with her; otherwise we would say, *drop all idea of a railway journey*, and go to Riverdale. We are hoping she may see the wisdom of that herself, yet, and propose it.

Yours ever

SLC

<sup>1</sup> Katy Leary came to work as Livy's personal maid in 1880 and remained with the Clemens family until Clemens's death in 1910.

### 321. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor

18–19 September 1902

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Confound it, the doctors have reversed their opinion to-night, and decide that Mrs. Clemens must give up the idea of going by sea. And we had just got your kind telegram last night. The *doctor*, I mean—there is only one, now. I cannot help thinking it is a mistake, but I can't say anything, because I mustn't venture the responsibility. In the morning I will telegraph you. I am very grateful to you for being so generous and patient and keeping the yacht so long at our disposal. I would thank you to the full, if I knew how—but you will understand.

I wish I could have had old Kellgren here from Sweden when Mrs. Clemens was taken, the 12th of August. With his two hands he is worth fifty osteopaths and fifty million doctors.<sup>1</sup> He would have had the madam on her feet and as sound as a nut in three days. I wonder she is alive at all. It has been one continual guess, guess, guess, change, change, change, from one incompetent drug to another, and from one indigestible food to another. It seems a stupid idea to keep a student 4 years in a medical college to merely learn how to guess—and guess wrong. If ever I am deadly ill I hope you will stand by me and bar out the doctors and let me die a natural death.

We have had three doctors, and I implored them all to feed the madam solely on plasmon for three days; but only two-thirds of a day would they ever stand—then they got scared and went to guessing again and raised some more hell. At last, having tried everything else and failed, this one consented yesterday to a 24-hour trial; the time is up, now, and the results are so good that the madam is herself almost convinced, and is willing to chance another 24. The only strength she has she got from the plasmon that was mixed with the failures—as the doctor has to admit.

Yrs ever

SLC

P.S. 19th.

I was so counting upon the yacht, and now it is all spoiled.

<sup>1</sup> On 21 September 1902 Clemens would note: "Dr. Helmer was telegraphed for yesterday and came to-day and treated the patient." It was "a severe treatment" which "left Livy sore and lame and she slept but little, the night." When her physician suggested two days later that Dr. Helmer be telegraphed not to come again "for a few days," in order to "give the patient time to gather strength to bear the treatment," Clemens wrote, "It was his treatment that enabled her to take food." But, he continued, "I stand alone in this opinion. We are a drifting ship without a captain" (Notebook 35, TS pp. 27–28). Clemens's old suspicions of the medical profession emerged again as he prescribed for Livy the Plasmon diet and strenuous massage, and made plans for sending her (a poor sailor) home by sea. However inept his attempts to care for her were, they reveal something of the depth of his concern and angry desperation.

## 322. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor  
20 September 1902

Dear Mr. Rogers:

It was pretty hard for Mrs. Clemens to give up the yacht, but she is not a good sailor, and the doctor says that if her stomach should refuse work for three or four hours she would be exhausted. Therefore Charley Langdon is going to attend to engaging a Pullman to take us through from York Harbor station to Riverdale without change, and I am writing Mr. Daniels of the N.Y.C.<sup>1</sup> to ask him to have us hitched to an Express from Boston by Albany and discharge us at Riverdale in the daytime; or detach us at Yonkers and snatch us down with dispatch behind a locomotive or a local train.

When, I don't know. Not for days yet—and maybe other days.

It is still a case of up and down, and down and up—has been, for 40 days. She had a bad time yesterday afternoon late. Then was better. Bad again this morning, with heavy sweating from weakness. This afternoon she is better again, and is sleeping.

Jean prospers here. It is 7½ weeks, now, since she has had a faint. It is the longest interval by a week and a half, in four years.

Yrs ever

SLC

<sup>1</sup>George H. Daniels was general passenger agent for the New York Central Railroad.

## 323. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor  
23 September 1902  
Sept 23—night.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

We have been profoundly alarmed about Mrs. Clemens for several days, and particularly to-day. But to-night we are easier, as we are assured that there is no immediate danger.

Sincerely

SLC

## 324. CLEMENS TO ROGERS

York Harbor  
24 September 1902<sup>1</sup>

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Your letter is infinitely touching, and I am grateful beyond any words. I wrote you a note last night which was gloomy, and there was cause. We believed that the end was very close at hand. Mrs. Clemens is only a shadow now, and she seemed past the rallying point. Nothing escapes her, even when there is apparently no light in her eyes, and she discovered our alarm and hunted it home, questioning the witnesses one at a time; and out of their tangle of lies extracting the truth, to the last detail. She saw that there was no one about her with any real courage left, except Katy. She lay and meditated long upon the situation—two or three hours—then her mind was made up, and she said "*I intend to get well,*" and dismissed the subject. Meantime I had been flying about York Harbor, and caught one New York physician of note and started him out, and telephoned Boston for another. The New York doctor

raised the chances and did good.<sup>2</sup> This morning the Boston one<sup>3</sup> said (I privately asked him to tell me the square truth and not spare me) "I at present see no reason at all that she should not build up and get as well as she was before."

I improved on this report a little, and the effect upon the patient was (imme) fine.

A professional nurse has arrived from Boston, and the impossible has happened: Mrs. Clemens has received her with favor.<sup>4</sup> We have been banished, and Mrs. Clemens accepts it.

Our difficulty has been, that Mrs. Clemens has remained what she always was: boss. Her long-headed intelligence and wisdom (and strong character) have kept the place for her in spite of her physical helplessness, and we weaklings have done as was our life-long habit—succumbed; we were never taught anything else. She has bossed the 4 doctors just the same, and made them do her way. But not the two new ones—the specialists: they have character, they have reputation, they require obedience, and she has promised it. She is able to recognize merit and masculinity when she sees them, and defer to their authority.

We shall be here weeks yet.

Yes, a considerable factor in this heart-attack and its allies, was worry. But when I found it was about the Tarrytown house I modified it a good deal, I think. I showed her an offer of \$50,000 for it, and told her I had replied that we preferred to keep the place and were not in the market. Fortunately she has not worried very much over the disastrous and unexpected detail that the Hartford house doesn't sell—no, I do *that* worrying myself. The Tarrytown place will hold its value—but the Hartford one doesn't seem to have any to hold.

I hope I can soon get permission to show Mrs. Clemens your letter—it should be good for heart disease, I think.

I will send this to New York and Miss Harrison will know whether to forward it or retain it.

Yours Ever

SLC