

H.M.C.S. Niobe,
Halifax N.S.
Dec 7/17

Dear Dad.

I cannot realize
that yesterday we came
thru a living bombardment,
and now we are to
go thru a bombardment
from the sea.

It is after five
and ~~we~~ we are all
on the mess deck with all
bulk heads closed, as
we expect a ship to
drag into us or just clear
us so be prepared.

Now 9 and the ship
clears us by a long
shot but nearly

caught the 7th M.S. — anchored in mid stream.
I had just finished supper when I was told to
report to the Engineers Office immediately in fact
I had a little salmon or my plate & some bread
but I dropped all & reported immediately & was
sent to the engine room & to remain there as a
messenger. hours 6-8 - P.M.; 12-4 A.M. 8-12 A.M. The
first watch being which I had since I
have been aboard ship.

You can hear piles, pieces of timber hitting
the ship sides continually the harbor is
full of floating wreckage of roofs of sheds,
waves etc. This will give one an idea of what
war conditions are like. I sent a letter ashore
last night with one of the Leading Stokers, a C.P.O.
Crowle also sent a telegram this
morning so you know that I came
out unscratched except for a bruise or two where

fellows, talked a
rawled over me.

It is a miracle that
hundreds of us
were not killed, but
the shells its gone
the other way, why
it would have
been rather bad
for us.

I have not seen a
city paper for 2 days
so if I repeat
what you have
already read
you will understand.

The collision you have
already read about &
how the Friendship was
run into the dock at the
sugar refinery. how the
explosion occurred & the
results & the of.

About 9.05 or 10. we were
all stretched out on the
bunk beds awaiting another
coal barge when one of the
fellows ran down & said
"see the ship a fire up most
of rusted myself
included, right on
the top of the fore castle
of the ship. where we could

see everything.

The deck was crowded must have been a few hundred or it is in fact & the fellows were stretched out watching the sight everywhere some one of port holes, gun ports etc. One shot goes & there a big one & about nine the explosions you heard & up the flames shot higher & than the refining, a big ball of light yellow flames surrounded by a wreath of black smoke it was the oil burning, here is the...

Sunday Dec 9 5 P. M. one would not realize that it is so far we have been working all day on various jobs tomorrow 3 of us must bend a piece of steel so that it may be put round the funnel we have some got before us, guess we will be up it all morning if not all day."

... but one of them all up shot the flames. thru the four hundred feet, look out! bang, a terrible

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Out of our ship 15 were
killed & just as many
missing some were
blown on board & the
blacksmith had his head
blown off & for an hour
afterwards fellows were
being dead or carried to the
sick bay for hours after
wards the Dr. was kept
busy dressing wounds.

About five minutes before
the explosion the steam
pinnace went on with
Warrant Officer Matthews
in command & they were
just alongside the ship
when she went up & they
were all swept to their

death you cannot realize what it was like, I
could tell you some very sad things the papers
do not give you a least idea of what the
matter looks like, you want to see it yourself
& then you can see just how low we came
out with so few casualties. It was a
miracle & that was all.

Even after we got below the iron shutters,
iron was rattling on the plate & then came
the yellowish fumes which were not a less
suffocating but it only lasted a minute &
all was over. It all seemed like a dream.

Flames broke out in dozens of places caused
from heated shrapnel shells, or turned
stones & trip looked awful, the best part of
the fire department were killed & the lights
of the bridge & the fact that there was a lot of

vacant frigate saved
the flames from
reaching the city.

They were scared of
another explosion & part of
us were put at the fire station
No 4 Port. but it did not
come & lucky for us, for you
can imagine what would
have happened to the thousand
of us on the ship.

Imagine us all together
on the quarter deck awaiting orders
& giving our posts of duty
had the other one occurred,
hundreds of us would
have had a very poor chance.

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wind a concussion broke
up all down flat on
the deck, as we are
bombarded by pieces of
steel plates, shrapnel,
bolts etc. I cover my
head with my hands &
crawl for the door leading
below, what a mist &
scramble I crawled over
some others rest over me,
all the time pieces of
steel were flying about
us some were being
thrust & went down in
a pool of blood all the
roof fell in & some
were injured by the flying
ferret glass.

About 10.30 one of the
 Steamers got so close
 that all hands were
 ordered off ^{mess} decks on Main
 Deck but there were
 down in the Engine Rooms
 & told in case all hands were
 picked or decks were to
 remain there ~~was~~ that order
 would not affect us.

That is where the engine
 room crew & stokers get the
 slim chance of escape in
 case of any danger, trouble,
 or action for it is up to us
 to save the ship or keep her
 in action and we are
 battered down with no
 chance of escape unless
 doors are opened & we

are ordered in deck. Wind must have been blowing 60 miles or over.
If the steamer would have been paid as it would
have been on the other starboard side & we were
on the port. So there at our posts we waited
waited for the bump which did not come fortunately.
Just ate some of the van cake at ras fin & we are
Comat myself are having some chocolate.

Saturday morning finished boarding up the
windows in the afternoon went ashore & helped
Mr B lackie to move from his home to that of his
father, also while ashore boarded up two windows
for some man & he offered me one dollar but
I refused.

Three other fellows who were working
at Mr B lackie's slept at the Prince George.
I had a good bath, but were so tired when
we got aboard at 6.40 the streets were
flooded & raining a sea, such is a sailors
life.

Can you imagine me
boarding rather than putting
roofs over a window about
25 ft from the ground &
doing it all alone someone
was steadying the ladder.

Soon I will be able
to go to the masthead
but that does not
come in our duties so
that is good.

Today we put in & here
that is all I can say, as
it rained in the morning
but cleared up later on. I
own many a pair of
rubber boots so I can
keep my feet dry.

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All afternoon we were at
our station & during the
night slept comfortably dressed
outside the engineers office
ready for an emergency
call.

Fridg was a very dirty
day snowy & blowing a
hurricane. In the afternoon
we had to carry timber
board up windows to the
various warehouses.

Must peel spuds it so
will continue later, just
after & have my hammock
slung but will continue &
let wife Belle, but I have
no idea when they will
be posted.

I had I want you to ask Belle to the house & read this to her as I have not the time to write the same in her letter. This is a continuous account of just what occurred but there are things which it would be very unloyal to write so they will have to be a blank till peace is declared.

I wrote you last night & tried to get you on the phone 3 times but the wires ~~were~~ were so busy that I had to leave before I got you, no doubt you will receive it tomorrow. San Bern. Whyaatt & I were walking to the station, they could not use No. 10. I had to walk past Richmond.

Friday continued. Had just finished supper when Mr Taylor told McKay & myself to report outside the engineers office immediately & we had to act as messengers in case of a collision. My hours were 6-8, 12-4. The only sleep I got was about two hours that was sleeping on the iron grates on which

you walk around the
cylinder heads of the engine
were not very soft being
made of iron but you
get used to anything.

One of our cables broke
after the explosion, which caused
a wave about six feet &
broke on jib, etc.

Friday night it blew
a big hurricane & two
ships were dragging their
anchors & came down
dangerously near us.

All the water tight doors
were closed & it was
impossible to get from
one section of the ship
to the other without
going on deck.

Tuesday 8 P.M. Dec 11. 117

Indo me I have pleased to
receive your letter of the 7 on
Monday at 11.30 A.M., also your
letter of Sunday this afternoon
at 5 P.M., As yet I have not
read the weekly papers but
we must have patience. Also
read a letter from Belle yesterday
& today with the same days
as yours.

Thanks Dad for joy & telling
Belle for I know they
all worried a lot about
me & then Capt. Have not been
off ship since Sat. Will mail
this tomorrow.

Rec'd the parcel Wed. many
thanks. My room is being
used ~~up~~ by patients or a
nurse. The "d" has been
taken over and is now a
hospital.

There were more than 30 killed & many from the crew of the Niobe. Cook said he saw Mr & Mrs Lodge some hours after the explosion.

There is nothing here to be seen except the devastation caused by the explosion you could not believe that F M J could cause so much damage.

Capt Coburn will try to get home for a few days.

Dad I believe that we will hardly get home leave & if we do it will hardly be over 48 hours as that is the regular time & if the Capt wants to get any more days for the ships Co he must apply to Ottawa. I would not want to apply for anything under such conditions & will be pleased to get 48 hours. Now Dad I want you to get some fellow to help you in this store surely & we are somewhat at home, for we cannot afford to lose sales or a bit of stock or help. I wish you would try & get some one & if possible I will try to get home for home on New Year.

You hear all rumors now. That we are to go to go to Bermuda etc but it does not pay to listen to any of them for most of them are untrue. We must do our duty & that is all we can do.

Portway Dad and I
will turn home to you a
Perry officer. They have a
large depot ship here so
that report is with you than a
falsehood. The sailors make
up a lot of the yarns as sailors
do I never listen to them for
not one has been true.

(Dad you would be a local in the paper
that has been among the natives of the
island and of course not a native
not a local (you are not) you had better not
just say that local is wrong.
The rum is still burning. Read this letter
to all local people & that you would read it
that the stone readers.

I am more than thankful that
I escaped such an explosion &
hope to spend some time with you
not here Belle.

Love to all,

Your Loving

Will write again
Did they hear the explosion?

Please
Save
This
Letter
to the
Hospice
Cherish
Dad