

*“San Francisco  
Is No More”*

Tuesday April 24/66. Washington Street.

Yesterday afternoon Mr Meyer came to town & went to the house. We have arranged to make the Washington Street House as the office of Ant. Borel & Co. and meet every day. Reports say our vaults at the bank are safe - of course the building is in ruins. Last night Alfred & myself slept at Cellier's house. We had no food and waited in "line" for food at a Government's station. No fires are allowed in houses and everyone is cooking outside on the streets. We saw the Cottons, who are well - also John. Louisa; Mr. John Coleman, Mr. J. W. Hellman, who has great hopes for the new City - Our business will be done for the time being at the house. Clement was seen this afternoon and Alfred has asked him to stay at his house & cook outside in the street with us, because Alfred & myself expect to stay in town for a few days anyway. We can eat but 2 meals a day as food must be divided among thousands of people. There is no water yet in town. We go to a vegetable garden on Union Street and get it from a well. These are hard times in San Francisco - but everyone must stand together and make up our minds to go ahead as we can. No one has lost courage. Please write me, and give lots of love to all. Your loving Antonio.

v.v.  
Please send my letter to 1827 Vallejo St. (S.F.)

Alameda,  
April 20, 1906  
Friday

### Darling Papa & Mamma & Sisters

A terrible thing has happened. San Francisco is no more. There was a frightful shock on Wednesday morning at 5:13 — buildings fell right and left. Our house on Washington suffered a good deal<sup>1</sup>. The fence on Franklin Street was thrown on the street. Every chimney fell down, crushing the building in several places. Many persons killed downtown. Many boarding house totally destroyed. Market Street near the ferries sank many feet. Van Ness near Vallejo sank down over 4 feet. Portions of the City Hall were destroyed, but worst of all was the fire. The whole city is destroyed—from the Ferry Building to the Presidio and from the Beach to the Potrero. Every street went up in flames. The big mains of the Water Co. were broken by the shock, so there was no water down town<sup>2</sup>. The Palace, Grand, St. Francis, Mills, Crocker, Kohl — everything ruined by fire<sup>3</sup>. Alfred<sup>4</sup> and the children and myself—when we saw the fire eating all before it began to pack a few necessary things. When it drew near Van Ness I ran for a wagon and we packed our things upon it. Mrs. Davier & her sister went with us<sup>5</sup>. Margery<sup>6</sup> is away with some friends near Oregon. We do not know how she is. Wires are down. From the house we went to the wharf near the Presidio and engaged a gasoline to cross the bay to Alameda. We are now here — rented a cottage and trust to God. Gaston<sup>7</sup> with his mother are also in Alameda. Everybody left for the cities across the bay. We went to see Mr. Freuler<sup>8</sup> in Berkeley and we expect to go to see Mr. Meyer<sup>9</sup> at Menlo. The Nevada Bank was blown up by the soldiers, who came from all parts of the state. There was “martial law” in town and when we went to the bank they denied us

entrance<sup>10</sup>. We could not enter. The only buildings so far not known destroyed are the Mint, Post Office and some in the Park district. It is terrible. I was told San Mateo did not suffer much — no fire. The big dam is safe<sup>11</sup>. Of course I know nothing from there. We are now living over here and shall remain here until things are changed. Mr. Freuler suggested that we all meet and discuss matters. We are going to see Mr. Meyer if we can to day. I telegraphed twice to you that we were alive so at least you would receive one of them. Up to now I do not know if our house is gone or not, but I am afraid it is. No one can return to San Francisco for days. The heat is intense. The smoke is awful. Thank God that we are still alive. Much love and kisses to you all.

Your loving  
Antoine.

Monday, April 23/06.  
1882 Washington St.  
San Francisco

Darling Papa, Mama & Sisters.

The house was saved from fire though the demon crept to Van Ness and acrossed over to the Claus Spreckels house — destroyed it — also swept out California Street — ruined Zeile house block<sup>12</sup>. The fire then returned back to Van Ness, jumped Cal. St. and moved over to the Pope house & Hotaling [house]<sup>13</sup>. Also the Boardman houses and then stopped and moved up the Clay St. Hill<sup>14</sup>. All Van Ness Avenue is totally destroyed on the East side, in fact from the ferry building to parts of Franklin and from Telegraph Hill to the Potrero — all gone!! It is a very sad sight, but with Yankee grip I think it will not take long to make a new San Francisco. All the Mission is no more. The big buildings on

Market Street still stand, but they are destroyed inside. The only [building] not badly burned is the Kohl building. Cellier's house is saved, in fact everything west of Franklin. Alfred, Gaston, Mr. Freuler & myself went by train to Menlo on Saturday to see Mr. Meyer. The trains of course are running, but very slowly. Thousands and thousands of people leaving for different parts of the state and for the East. It took us from Alameda to Menlo 12 hours. The Meyers had sent to Capt. Barneson<sup>15</sup> word if it was possible to go to town and find us. Mr. Meyer drove to San Mateo and from there the Barnesons with Mr. Rosenfeld<sup>16</sup> went to the City on Vallejo Street. Of course the Celliers and I had left already for across the bay, but the people across the street told them we had gone away and were unhurt. On Friday James and Paul came to town to see if I had returned to Vallejo St.<sup>17</sup> The day we were at Mr. Meyer James & Herman came and so we all talked<sup>18</sup>. San Mateo town is badly hit, but our house is slightly damaged by earthquake only. The stable is uninjured, also the people & animals. Palo Alto is badly hurt. All the fine University buildings are ruined — a sight of sorrow it is. Sunday morning at 10:30 we took the train to return to Alameda. In the afternoon we went to Gov. Pardee<sup>19</sup> who is in Oakland and received passes to cross the bay for no one without a "pass" is allowed to enter the ruined city. The Fairmount still stands, but Stanford, Hopkins, 2 Crockers, Sherwood, Whittell — all to the ground<sup>20</sup>. The Flood house is ruined inside. The four walls remain. John, Jacot, Mr. Berton had their houses burned to the ground<sup>21</sup>. Eugene is alright.<sup>22</sup> We have not seen him, but he called at Mr. Meyer at Menlo and is reported safe. He is on duty as a kind of messenger. Mr. Vignier is at Berkeley with Mr. Hopf<sup>23</sup>. Of course his house is destroyed — all that quarter is gone. The Latin quarter, Chinatown, Kearny, Montgomery Streets burned on both sides. The new Chronicle Building, Call, Palace, St. Francis are burned, but the walls remain. This morning Alfred & I crossed the bay and

went to our house. Not a window broken, which is wonderful, for all Van Ness (Eastward) was dynamited to prevent the fire from crossing Van Ness. All the water pipes were broken by the earthquake, so there was no water at all. A very sad affair. John called at our cottage in Alameda and is very kind — offers his services in more than one way. No one has any money hardly in their pockets. We are eating two meals a day and have beans and crackers. No fire is allowed in any house, either in Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, San Mateo, Menlo, San Jose, no place at all. All chimneys are down from the shock, so that is the reason why the order was given by the authorities.

Tuesday April 24/06    Washington Street.

Yesterday afternoon Mr. Meyer came to town & went to the house. We have arranged to make the Washington Street House as the office of Ant. Borel and Co. and meet every day. Reports say our vaults at the bank are safe. Of course the building is in ruins. Last night Alfred & myself slept at Cellier's house. We had no food and waited in "line" for food at a Government's station. No fires are allowed in houses and everyone is cooking outside on the streets. We saw the Cottons, who are well, also John, Louisa, Mr. John Coleman, Mr. I. W. Hellman who has great hopes for the new city<sup>24</sup>. Our business will be done for the time being at the house. Clement<sup>25</sup> was seen this afternoon and Alfred has asked him to stay at his house & cook outside in the street with us because Alfred & myself expect to stay in town for a few days anyway. We can eat but 2 meals a day as food must be divided among thousands of people. There is no water yet in town. We go to a vegetable garden on Union Street and get it from a well. These are hard times in San Francisco, but everyone must stand together and make up our minds to go

ahead the best we can. Please remember me, and give lots of love to all.

Your loving

Antoine

P.S.

Please send my letters to 1827 Vallejo St. (S.F.)

April 28/06

San Francisco.

Darling Papa:

We are alive, that is about all. The bank is burned but the vaults are reported safe. Of course the vaults cannot be opened until they cool off. That means about 20 or 30 days. Your house suffered from the earthquake—the chimneys all fell and did some damage. The plaster fell in some of the rooms. But that can all be arranged. San Mateo house had its chimneys down. The stable, Herman's house and the cottage did not suffer much<sup>26</sup>.

The Celliers and myself had to move away the next day after the earthquake because the fire was creeping up towards our house. The water mains were all broken, so not a bit of water for the city. The soldiers from the reservations dynamited the buildings ahead of the fire in hopes of checking the fire. It was at Van Ness Avenue that the frightful fire was stopped. Our house just escaped for the fire burned all Van Ness on the East side and crossed Van Ness on California St. The big Claus Spreckels [house] was destroyed and all that block. We moved across the bay to Alameda & then rented a cottage for the children & Alfred's mother-in-law. Margery is away with friends in Oregon but

is expected back any day. We went to see Mr. Freuler in Berkeley and next day went to Menlo to see Mr. Meyer. It was arranged to meet at your house every morning and be in touch with the other bankers. Gaston, & mother are also in Alameda<sup>27</sup>. We stayed three days in Alameda & then returned to Vallejo Street, that is Alfred and myself. We cannot cook inside the house — there is no water. We get water from a well near Fort Mason & bring it in buckets. There is no light or gas. Candles used and must be put out by ten o'clock. Alfred made a closet in his backyard & we use it as a water closet. Clement is cooking for us. Coulon, Peltier<sup>28</sup>, John, Jacot all safe. I sent 2 cables to you. We expect you in San Francisco any day. Mr. Meyer saw Mr. Hellman who has hopes that things will come out all right in time. Hoping to see you very soon and that you are well, I am your loving son

Ant.

May 6/06

Darling Papa dear:

We hope to see you at the end of this month in San Francisco. We meet every day at the house. Mr. Barth has offered us half of his office which Mr. Meyer accepted<sup>29</sup>. John Lewis also will give us one of his rooms on the 9th floor. Mr. Meyer suggested that I tell Herman to fix the chimneys of your San Mateo House. If you decide to stay at San Mateo during your stay in California it is better to have things in order. Also, Miller the carpenter is fixing and cleaning up things about the Washington Street home<sup>30</sup>. Nothing will be done as to the plaster inside the rooms. Neither will new chimneys be put up until your return.

I have met many gentlemen and they all ask for you and when you will be here. Everyone is very anxious to have



you here again to profit by your good advice. The Spring Valley Company has suffered a good deal. Their pipes broke in several places but the big dam stood the earthquake. It is a sad sight to see San Francisco now. I suppose it will take 4 or 5 years before it will look well again. It is too bad that your stay in Switzerland was cut into this way, but your good judgment and true friendship are needed now more than ever. Believe me darling father, your affectionate son

A. B. Jr.

N. Y. Dec 15/06

Darling Papa dear:

We had a rough trip across the ocean and arrived late in New York<sup>31</sup>. The weather here is very fine, sunshine, not a bit cold. At sea it was bitterly cold, ice hung from all the ropes. Mr. Whitelaw Ried was aboard the ship & we talked together daily<sup>32</sup>. He was exceedingly nice, & asked me about the different families in S. F. & what result the fire had upon them. He said the Parrotts acted very queer and their actions were uncalled for<sup>33</sup>. He said also he had been told that Henry T. Scott had lost very heavily, for after selling out his iron works had invested in real estate<sup>34</sup>. He said San Francisco had still a great future and was backed to a certain extent by immense wealth—the terminus of the western railways. He said he had heard your firm had not been injured. He asked much about you and talked about San Mateo (our place) and considers it most beautiful! Of course Mr. Schussler explained everything to him about the water breaks which interested him<sup>35</sup>.

He wanted us to visit President Roosevelt — he himself going there in a few days. We would have been well received and introduced to the Cabinet officers and to some

United States Senators but Mr. Schussler changed his mind (and once changed is changed) & decide to go directly home.

When I called at Messrs. Iselin<sup>36</sup> there was a message asking me to call and see Mr. D. O. Mills<sup>37</sup> at his Wall Street office next morning. I did so and he was very charming. Said he knew you well and talked about the re-building of San Francisco. Mr. Reid told him Mr. Schussler & I were on board the steamer & said some good things about us, and so he desired to see me. Mr. Schussler called the day before & said the way to find me was by telephoning to Iselin. When I called Mr. Iselin (Senior) was absent but I saw Mr. Houghton<sup>38</sup> and Mr. Iselin Jr. Also talked with Mr. Schussler upon Mr. Laidlaw<sup>39</sup> and saw him. Mr. D. O. Mills asked me to wait until his son Ogden came & I did so. He and his father said the Mills building in S.F. would be rebuilt & they said their confidence was not shaken as their building was. The fire did all the mischief!!

I want to wish you a very happy birthday and a merry Christmas. Happy New Year my darling Papa dear, who has always been so good towards me. I leave today for S.F. Mr. Schussler went ahead to Harrisburg last evening & will join me this afternoon. He gets on my train & we proceed together. With much love darling papa, I remain your affectionate son.

P.S.

We are at this hotel — very nice. & near the Penn. R.R. which we are to take for Chicago<sup>40</sup>. The Schusslers go to their hotel (not far from 5th Ave.) Could not find any celluloid Faber pens as you desired. Went to 8 stores. At last I went to the American Agency of the Faber Company & saw the manager who said no more such pens are imported to the U.S. No sale — the reason you can write to A. W. Faber, Frederickstrasse 79W. Berlin.

San Francisco,  
Dec. 21st. 1906

Darling Papa dear and Mamma dear:

Here I am back again in San Francisco, which is growing up again nicely. On almost every street some new houses are being built. Between 7000 and 8000 houses have been put up since the fire. Great many of them are real nice and are there to stay. Quite a number on Hyde St., Polk, but few on Sutter. It is the impression of everyone that the Van Ness stores will return to their old places. The Mission looks the same way it did before the fire. Many houses of all sorts. Telegraph Hill and its vicinity are covered with buildings. Chinatown is being reconstructed by brick buildings — a few here and there. Van Ness is ablaze with lights and nice stores and crowds promenade up and down.

Our trip across the states went off nicely. Snow was deep on the plains and on the Sierra Nevadas! Our car was warm and comfortable. John met us at Oakland and I then drove to the club, & afterwards to my room, which is the second house from the corner of Franklin and Washington East side. I am not pleased at all. There is no washstand except one in the hall which is used by other people. No bathroom, except one down the hall, and no fireplace or heater in the room. The cost is \$45 per month, which is too high. The meals at the [Pacific Union] Club are fixed—no more a la carte. Fifty cents for a lunch and one dollar for dinner. At least it will be 45 dollars a month for eating, too much—out of the question. Besides my expenses for extras, laundry, etc. would run the total up to over a hundred dollars a month! Now, I am willing to pay all my expenses, with a little of your aid, but I think I can do better some other place. I am going to look about town for another room and shall let you know if I am successful. Living in town now is very expensive. When the San Mateo Hayward Hotel is open, I would like to go there.

I found Mr. Meyer and the others at the office real well and with good faith for the future. The Messrs. Coleman are well again, & the Edward Coleman house is fixed again<sup>41</sup>. Mr. Berton does not know if he will build on the same lot. Jacot thinks he will build on his lot. The Pacific Union Club is considering to buy the Flood place on Nob Hill. I do not think Nob Hill will ever be a residence quarter again. The Club is taking very good care of the house, and all the members keep telling me how fortunate they are to have it at their disposal. All the money you kindly gave me, (and all my own) was spent in Germany. At New York I took \$300 but spent \$190 (railway, hotel, Tiffany cup, etc.) so I returned \$110. Everybody wants to be remembered to you all, and often speak about you. I shall go to work in a day or two. I am going to San Mateo to get my clothes, etc. on Sunday. Believe me, darling Papa & Mamma, your always affectionate son,

Ant.