Tuesday, January l,’84 – It is now more than two years since my last attempt at keeping a diary. The year of ’82 (Aug. 10th) brought us another baby boy, and the year ’83 (Sept. 25th) took from us our darling Bennie, our first born, given, or rather lent to us Oct. 5th5th, 1880 in Hong Kong, and taken from us in the same place, on our third voyage to that port; within two days of his third birthday, it is useless to attempt to describe in words the bitterness of our grief – God alone knows it. He alone can help us.

My room was finished today, recess painted and carpet put down one room after another is being varnished and put in order—the three after cabin staterooms are done, also the bathroom and after vestibule. We are bound to New York with cargo of fire crackers, cassia, matting, etc. from Hong Kong and if our darling boy were only with us, this homeward passage would be a very happy one. At 12 noon, latitude by observation 830’-29’ S. longitude 37-26’E

Wednesday Jan. 2nd, ’84 – Fine all day, until towards evening when heavy banks of clouds rising up brought a strong wind – calm, with heavy swell, all the afternoon. The pantry is being thoroughly cleaned today and will be painted and varnished throughout. Captain has worked very hard today in the cabin and on deck; he does all the varnishing in the cabin, and oversees the work generally. Tom paints and steward and cabin boy do the scrubbing. We are not making very rapid progress toward our destined port having had head winds and calms for several days past. We are nearing the cape of Good Hope very slowly – hope the wind will not last much longer in this direction, as am anxious to get home – though why. I can hardly tell, as I can never be happy or contented there or elsewhere without my darling boy. When God took him, he took all earthly happiness from me at the same time. I shall never see another happy day as long as I live and I feel sometimes that I do not want to live any longer – still I know that I am not ready to die. Well, if I cannot be happy myself, I can endeavor to make others happy, and must and will try, to live a good life – one that shall be acceptable in the sight of God – so that when this earthly life is done, I may be reunited to my angel boy in that world where sorrow and partings are unknown and where “God shall wipe away all tears.”

Little Ralph is growing very fast, and is a dear little boy, but he can never take little Bennie’s place in my heart. When we ask him where little Bennie is, he points to the two pictures in his papa’s room, and likes to stand up in the berth and kiss them. The last time the two little boys were together was the Saturday before little Bennie left us, when they sat upon the floor together, playing with Papa’s cane, which dear Bennie thought was very handsome, and was the last thing he asked for on the morning of his death; his papa carried him from the stateroom to the sofa in my room and the little darling said “Cane, Papa” and it was given him a short time afterwards – not quite four hours - he had left us; and we had felt so confident of his recovery the night before – he seemed so much better - but the sudden change came about seven the following morning, and at 10:45 His dear sweet spirit returned to God who gave it. The little darling’s cane has lain on the sofa, where he left it, ever since he went from us and if we live, the sofa will be carried

home, and the cane always be kept upon it, in memory of our darling. Dear sweet little boy – though gone from our sight, yet living in our hearts forever. At noon today, lat. by observation 30-39 S., longitude 36-18 E.

Sunday, Jan 6 – Fine weather – moderate breeze. Expect to make Cape Good Hope very soon, probably tomorrow. Lat. At noon 34-20 S. longitude 29-27-45 E. Fifteen weeks ago today was the last Sunday our darling Bennie spent with us – his throat was getting better, and I felt confident that he would be well in a few days. About three or four o’clock in the afternoon I was telling him the story of Jesus – and I told him that some day, he might go to live with Him, and I ASKED HIM IF HE WANTED TO GO AND HE SAID “No”, then I said “Do you want to stay with Papa and Mamma?” And he said “yes, I want to stay with Papa and Mamma.” Darling little Bennie if he could only have lived to get home, this would not have seemed quite so hard, I can never become reconciled to the loss of my darling – never – if I were to live a hundred years. My life for the future is only a weary journey toward the grave, where I may rest beside my dear boy. I almost despair at times of ever getting beyond it, the road to Heaven is not an easy one.

Friday Jan. 18 – Seventeen weeks ago this morning we took our darling Bennie to the doctors and only the Sunday eve before that he was on shore with his papa and me, and when we started to go to Peddar’s Wharf to go aboard ship - he ran on ahead of us the whole length of Queen’s road from Aping’s looking so cunning in his little white dress and little straw hat on the back of his head; his papa remarked at the time “It was a blessed day when he was given to us”--and the very next Sunday night was his last upon earth. It is a blow from which we shall never recover – dear little Bennie to be snatched away from us so suddenly almost without warning. Lat. at noon 27-30 S. Longitude 7-20-15 E.

Tuesday Jan. 22 – Fine weather – wind very light – we are crawling along toward home very, very slowly. Lat at noon 24-16 S Lon. 1-17 E. Forward cabin stateroom finished today; has been cleaned and painted – berth boards planed, all dark wood cleaned and varnished, floor oiled etc. and looks quite new. Darling little Bennie left us seventeen weeks ago today – dear, sweet little boy.

*[Transcriber: Delphine Budreau, 2019]*