

**AN ACCOUNT OF SOME NOTEWORTHY EVENTS WHILE TRAVELING  
FROM GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, USA, TO ST. PHILIPSLAND, THE NETHERLANDS  
AND THE RETURN TRIP**

**by Joseph Noorthoek**

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Among the experiences of my life, the most noteworthy has been that at twenty-two years of age, with the approval of my parents, I planned to seek my fortune in America. Much as they dreaded to have me leave the parental home, they did agree with me that there was no future in the Netherlands for an ordinary workman nor even for the most skilled workman. There were only prospects for a meager livelihood. Indeed, when a person becomes the bread-winner for a family, poverty is, as it were, in the foreground. For this reason my parents gave me permission to go to America. It was somewhat of an encouragement for them that they received from my married sister, who had gone to America six years earlier, repeated favorable reports and a desire to have one of her brothers or sisters come, too. In fact, if I was satisfied there, they would follow me at a later date.

I left on the 12th of May, 1888, on the S.S. Leerdam and after a journey of 17 days I arrived at my sister's in Grand Rapids on May 31. She was very pleased to hear that if I was happy in America, Father and Mother would come, too. Therefore, when they notified me that they were prepared to come, efforts were put forth to arrange for their journey. We were sorely disappointed when they wrote that they had changed their minds and had decided to remain in the Netherlands.

My youngest brother died in 1897 at the age of 27; my parents lost a beloved son who meant a great deal to them but was also their sole support as a bread-winner. Three years later my father was to experience the sad loss of his wife when she was taken away by the cold hand of death. However, amid all his experiences the Lord blessed him with exceptionally good health and strength.

At times our correspondence was interrupted but frequently he expressed his longing to see me. This always gave rise to a desire for realization. But our family had grown in numbers and the resulting, inevitable circumstances necessitated my remaining at home, awaiting more favorable opportunities. Very unexpectedly that opportunity presented itself. On January 18, 1910 I received the news that my aged father had a disease which was so serious that we would not be able to see one another much longer. That brought on such an attack of homesickness and a desire to see my father once more in the land of the living, that my wife and I began to make plans for me to go to see him. The business in which I was engaged seemed to me to be the greatest stumbling-block but the Lord provided a way by inclining the heart of my business partner, who, as soon as I told him about my desire, became involved in the realization of my plans.

I immediately wrote to my father about my plan to leave on the steamer Noordam on the 1st of February, 1910. During the two days before my departure I was filled with sadness. The thought of having to leave my dear wife and children in a few hours became unbearable. I did not say anything about it. When my wife at times tugged at my heart-strings, I said as little as possible or was completely silent because it brought back memories of the time I said farewell to my parents. I recalled that sadness so vividly--the final handshake, the waving of the handkerchief, turning the last corner, everything disappearing--that I was unable to speak. I would remain silent because if I had revealed these emotions to my wife, we would unhesitatingly have decided to write to my father that the trip had definitely been cancelled. But in retrospect I cannot deny that the Lord in

his providence guided me. How my heart bled when my loved ones, even those who had busied themselves to prepare the necessities for my journey, one after another hid in some corner of the house or behind a door to cry when they saw me dress to leave! At such times one must believe that a supernatural hand is guiding a father, who is concerned about the welfare of his family and sees his weeping children all about him, to be separated from them. Indeed, I still do not understand how I was helped to endure it.

So I began the trip. My wife's unmarried sister accompanied me to her sister who lived at the same place to which I was going. The train left at seven o'clock in the evening. We rode through Michigan and part of Canada during the night. We arrived in Niagara Falls, Canada, about seven o'clock in the morning, where the train stopped for a few minutes so that the passengers could enjoy the sight. Soon we were crossing the Suspension Bridge which spans the Niagara River, stopping for about ten minutes so we could have a fine view in both directions of the Niagara River with its foaming waves and steep rocky shores. However, we could see nothing of the Falls.

From here to Buffalo the farmland looked fine, with its level surface and many orchards. There wasn't nearly as much snow as in Michigan. From Buffalo to Rochester the farms appeared rough and there was much uninhabited land; very hilly and apparently of no great value for agriculture. Further east we arrived in the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania at the Susquehanna River which, with its winding branches, flows through the high mountains. There, for hundreds of miles, the train follows the shores of this river with tree-covered high mountains on one side and beautiful

flowing water with some drifting ice on the other side. Twice we passed through tunnels under the mountains and then again followed the same river.

I have never seen as much coal as in the vicinity of Wilkesbarra, Pa. From there on the mountains became rocky crags which at times seemed to hang over our heads.

With two locomotives we wound our way over the tops of these rocks from which, at times, we had a beautiful view of the valleys in the distance. This ended when evening came and it was dark.

When we were still eighty miles from New York, peddlars who lived in New York came aboard at every station. At eight o'clock we arrived in New York and immediately an electric train took us under the Hudson River to Hoboken, New Jersey. Here the "Noordam" lay prepared to leave the following morning, the first of February, for Rotterdam. We lodged that night in a hotel and in the morning, after having made a few purchases, we went on the boat and took our baggage to the cabin. Everything on board looked neat and orderly and the services were adequate. As I went below there were two young ladies ahead of me. As soon as the music started they went below to dance but we were not far from shore when they already became seasick.

It was a beautiful morning. It had frozen a little during the night. The sun shown brightly on the horizon but before evening it became cloudy and the wind was so strong that the boat began to sway in an uncomfortable manner. As a result, the majority of the passengers, and even some of the sailors, showed evidences of seasickness. Soon after supper on Tuesday evening I vomited. I went to bed sick as a dog and remained there until the following day.

The weather was still the same. The ocean was quite rough. The ship was tossed about like an eggshell upon the water. Of the forty-one second-class passengers, there were only seven at the table; the rest were sick in bed.

The food was delicious at every meal and, if a person so desired, more was available between times.

The air still appears stormy; the wind is blowing hard, and this large vessel is being tossed up and down on the foaming waves by the unseen hand of the Lord as if it was a nut-shell.

At meal times there are six people to a table and twelve waiters. The food is tasty and agrees with me very well. This is also true of my sister-in-law; we are actually two of the privileged in this respect because most of the people are lying sick in bed.

Still the same weather on Friday and not much prospect of improvement. Between Tuesday morning and Wednesday at twelve o'clock noon the boat covered 322 miles; from Thursday to Friday afternoon 280 miles; from Friday to Saturday afternoon 361 miles.

The weather was much calmer this morning but by noon the wind began to blow again and it looks like rain. The noon-day meal is ready but I still do not see many guests to partake of it.

This noon there were twenty people at our table; I enjoyed a delicious meal: potatoes with red cabbage and meat, plus a dish of fresh salad and ox-tongue, canned pears and a beautiful apple; everything was equally delicious.

At this moment the wind is blowing so hard and the boat is rocking so much that I must stop writing.

**Monday morning, February 7, 1910**

According to the announcement we have covered 281 miles between Saturday noon and Sunday noon. It was Sunday yesterday but it did not seem to be different from any other day except that in the afternoon the musicians came and played very slowly as if they were playing a psalm but not like one of the 150 psalms. Except for that, the crew does its regular work. Even the rugs are beaten, which surely would not be necessary on that day.

On the first day I was assigned to a bedroom with two others; I slept above and directly below me was Mr. Van Asselt, a seventy-four year old man, who had visited his son in America. He was from Hilversum, Noord Holland. At the beginning of the week he had been careless and walked on deck without enough wraps. Because the first two days were cold and blustery along the American coast and also, according to some folk, the old man regularly drank more strong liquor than he should have, he developed a chest cold which became quite serious on Thursday. It became so bad on Friday that he could hardly breath. We reported it to the steward and at the same time requested a different cabin because we did not know what the illness might turn out to be. We were immediately assigned to another cabin. The old man's condition worsened and the medication brought not the slightest relief to his difficult breathing. Later on the doctor was again told about the man's condition. Two hours passed before he came. By that time there was a clammy sweat on the sufferer's face. I expressed my opinion about the old

man's condition and he agreed with me that any minute might be his last. I immediately went to the deck to tell Jansen, my other companion, about the old man's condition. Together we went below. When the doctor opened the door for us he said, "You had been gone less than two minutes before the old gentleman breathed his last breath." To have this man torn from my side and to have his eternal destiny so irrevocably determined made such an impression on me that it was like a deep shock passing through me. This happened on Sunday afternoon in the middle of the ocean. Amid the turmoil of this wanton group the Lord came on this Sabbath with a clear and recognizable message: "Prepare your house, for you are going to die." But if the Spirit of the Lord is not called upon, the blessing will not follow. We are therefore without excuse, because if we did not hear the living voice of the proclamation of the Gospel, He did speak to us clearly when the life of this old man was suddenly ended.

It is now Monday afternoon. They are waiting to be informed by the family of the deceased whether they wish to have the body taken to Rotterdam or whether the waves of the ocean are to be his grave. Twelve hours have already passed since they sent a telegram to the mainland but they have had no answer.

Most of the passengers have recovered from their seasickness. Sara and I have not been effected by it. The ocean continues to roll. The ship is in continuous motion--sideways and up and down--so that it is difficult to write. We are hoping to be in Rotterdam in a little more than four days. The sun shone brightly for a few minutes this morning but it soon became cloudy it began to rain. I got up at six o'clock; I shaved and washed.



After I had been on deck for nearly half an hour, I heard the bell ring for breakfast. Sara was already sitting at the table waiting for me. We have breakfast at seven o'clock, dinner at twelve o'clock, and supper at seven o'clock. If a person wishes to have a cup of coffee, tea, or bouillon with a cookie with a cookie, or a glass of orange-juice between times, it is available and free of charge.

**Tuesday afternoon, February 8, 1910**

A cool wind is still blowing but the ocean is not very rough.

Our ship is 560 feet long, 62 feet wide and 43 1/2 feet high. There are thirty-four first class passengers on board, forty-one second class, and 113 third class; on the way a baby girl was added in the third class. There are fourteen individuals in the third class who came to New York but were sent back by the health authorities because of their age or because of eye problems. These the steamship company must take back at its own expense. These people are from Russia and Hungary. There is also a 61 year old woman on board, a resident of Amsterdam, who has a daughter in America. Six months ago she came to live with her but she could not get used to it. She has six more children in the Netherlands and she became so concerned about them that she could no longer remain in America. She is seasick every day and can not eat or if she does, she vomits at once.

Last night at twelve o'clock Van Asselt was given as a prey for the fish; I doubt whether an effort was made to take the body to Rotterdam. It involved considerable expense, estimated to be about three hundred gulden. The company is unwilling to pay this. There was no relative of the deceased

on board and he had practically no money with him. His daughter lives in Rotterdam and he lived with a housekeeper in Hilversum.

It is five o'clock, Tuesday evening. The musicians are about ready to play. Yesterday there was no music because there was a corpse on board. I have not seen a fish in the water nor a ship on the sea since we left the mainland. I read in the daily paper, which is printed here on the boat, that we may meet the "Potsdam" which left Rotterdam last Saturday, but it is already getting dark and we have not seen it, so if it passes us in the night we will not see it at all. The sea gulls have been with us from the time we left until now and will probably stay with us because we are nearing the English coast, which we expect to be able to see tomorrow (Wednesday) evening.

I had a conversation with an English minister today; he is also travelling second class with his wife and three children, but we could not agree. The discussion was about the resurrection of the dead, or more particularly, about the reunion of the soul and the body on resurrection day. He said he did not believe in it, in spite of the Scripture passages I quoted as evidence. This did not surprise me for as soon as I had learned that he was a minister, I took note at the table to see if he asked a blessing before he ate; he did not. In all of his activities he did not reveal the slightest sign of being a Christian, much less a minister of the Gospel. So I decided that as soon as I had an opportunity, I would have a conversation with him. I was not surprised at the result.

**Wednesday, February 9, 1910**

The musicians are back to playing in first class. After breakfast I gave my feet and legs a good washing in the bathroom. Just now I am in the waiting room with a few women. I do not like it as well in the men's lounge because there is so much smoking there. I am somewhat surprised that such a large group of people from various countries can conduct themselves so well. There are a few who drink too much beer and liquor, but they still conduct themselves decently.

The weather is fine this morning but no clear sky. The ocean is very calm. As yet I have not seen a single ship but I think there is a possibility that I will see some today because we are nearing the coast. We will soon get things together in preparation for leaving the ship. As far as I know Sara and I are the only Zeelanders on board.

The ship's crew numbers 220, including officers and sailors. According to the report in the daily paper we will be in communication with land this morning by way of the Marconi system. It is now one o'clock, Wednesday afternoon. A few hours ago it became very misty; the fog horns sound every five minutes and when it is very misty, every minute. Yesterday we covered 354 miles in twenty-four hours. Now the mist has cleared up. Later in the evening a ship passed us, but we could see only the lights.

**Thursday morning, 9 o'clock**

The lighthouse on the island Scilly is in sight. Beyond it the rocky surface of the island is visible. Here we already see a few steamships, a little further on we can see the lighthouse of Lizzard. We pass very near to it and can distinguish the houses on the island. Here we see many fishing-vessels. It is cloudy and a little rainy, but no mist. If we have

no accident, we will pass through the English Channel and enter the North Sea. Between Wednesday noon and Thursday noon the boat has covered a distance of 358 miles.

**Friday morning, 9 o'clock, February 11, 1910**

This morning we were out of bed by five o'clock. Last evening the boat could not reach the harbor of Bologne Sur Mer in time to allow the passengers for France to leave so through the night we quietly sailed on because the first boat left the port of Bologne at six o'clock in the morning. So we had to wait there for two hours this morning.

This is the best weather we have had during the entire trip. The sky is clear and the sun is shining brightly. We are beginning to lose sight of the coast of France and will soon be able to see Dover. That is the last view we will have of England on this trip. We will probably be in Rotterdam by six o'clock this evening. By this noon the boat will have covered 360 miles in 24 hours.

**Friday evening, 4:30**

We are now at the corner of Holland. The officials are coming aboard to inspect the baggage. The view on both sides of the New Waterway is interesting. When I looked at everything around about me, I felt that I still had Dutch blood in my veins.

After having passed through the New Waterway for two hours, being towed part of the way, we finally arrived in Rotterdam at seven o'clock. As soon as we were in the harbor we saw Uncle Koo Verstrate and a few other relatives from Rotterdam. From out of the crowd welcoming us I heard a voice, which I recognized at once as that of my brother Paul, calling my

name. He was accompanied by my brother Gerard who had made a trip from St. Philipsland to get me from Rotterdam. After a few minutes we were permitted to leave the boat and able to shake hands. After having been informed about the welfare of the relatives, we went with our friend Abraham Van Oeveren, who was also at the harbor, to his car and lodged there for that night. At seven-thirty the following morning we left by trolley car for Numansdorp and from there by boat to Zijpe. By 12:30 we arrived in St. Philipsland where we were met by a group of friends and relatives. I can still hear the echoing sound of the wooden-shoes of little boys and girls who accompanied me from the trolley-car to the house. I had not forgotten the friends of my age and older. My father had remained quietly in his little corner, where I did wish to meet him first. That was a joy for both of us, as well as the meeting with brothers and sister.

During the five weeks I spent in my old fatherland, I visited my sister in the Hague and other relatives in Rotterdam from February 22 to 26 and my niece in Dinteloord from March first to the third. While in St. Philipsland I visited the cemetery where those who were dear to me were buried since I left my parental home. Gerrit Den Braber showed me the place where my dear mother is buried, which made me feel as sad as if I were attending her funeral. He was not able to show me the grave of my dear brother Pieter but he did point out those of other residents of the village who had passed away after I had left.

On March 8 we made a short trip to South Beijerland where we visited cousin R. De Bruijne. The rest of the five weeks I spent in the place of my birth. I greatly enjoyed the hospitality of my relatives as well as my

wife's. The interest of many friends has made a deep impression upon me but everywhere time was too short. They all wished to have me stay another day, or at least an evening longer but I cut my time short in most places in order to spend most of my time with my father. Everything has its appointed time. It was a joy for me to come to the place of my birth. To leave was a time of sadness but I wished to return to my dear wife and children. Once again it was necessary to leave relatives and friends.

My feelings were quite different when I left my birthplace the first time because then I was leaving home for a strange country. Now I was going from my nearest relatives to my own home and hearth for which I yearned so deeply, and they for me. My relatives and aged father took this into account. Although the parting was heart-rending, the anticipation of meeting my family in good health was so great that I began my trip eagerly on March 18, 1910.

While I was in Rotterdam I stayed with Mr. J. Van Teylingen, 21 Oranjeboom St. He had come to meet me upon my arrival in Rotterdam. The warm hospitality of these folks and especially of their friends and their aged mother, whom I had visited in Hoogvliet, made me feel at home. The old woman had come to Rotterdam the evening before my departure to bid me farewell and not only that, but to give me a present of fresh eggs to eat on the ship.

Much to our delight, my wife's only sister and her son Leendert, as well as our cousin Elizabeth, accompanied us to Rotterdam. Together we and many other friends went aboard the beautiful vessel which was to take us to America. That night cousin Leendert slept on my bed and I slept on another

bed on the same boat. On Saturday morning my sister-in-law Sara, her sister, and other relatives came to bid us a final farewell on the "New Amsterdam" before its scheduled departure at 7:30 in the morning. We brought all of the friends on board for the last time until all those who were not crew members or passengers were told to leave the boat. Then we said farewell to our sister and cousins before they stepped ashore. Soon the ropes were cast off and the ship began to leave the shore. The group of friends and relatives on shore continued to wave their handkerchiefs as a final farewell and the same was done from the ship in return. All the passengers were served breakfast soon after departure.

In a few hours we were on the North Sea, which was quite calm, but a few people were already effected by the common sea problem: seasickness. By quarter to six we were already in Boulogne Sur Mer where we took on fifty-seven passengers from France. We did not leave this place until 7:45 because the boat from Boulogne was not in a hurry to take its passengers on board. The English Channel was calm and the trip through it was very pleasant. Although it was Sunday, I counted twenty-seven ships on one side of the ship and seven on the other. The water was without waves and since the rocky spurs and tops of the island of Scilly are visible above the quiet waters, it was very interesting for the passengers. Almost everyone was on deck.

On Monday morning a strong cold wind was blowing from the northwest and the sky was cloudy. Many people are seasick. On the rear deck the people are lying in every direction just as if it were a battlefield with dead bodies. Some mothers lie in the laps of their children who are not yet two years

old, instead of the children in the laps of their mothers. The children, as a rule, are not seasick at all.

On the horizon, far to the southwest, a ship was visible this morning; now it is evening and we have just caught up with it. Its course is a bit more southerly than ours but it does appear to be a passenger ship headed for America.

Tuesday morning. West wind. Clear weather this morning. Janes is still quite seasick. We just passed a freighter with four masts. Although it is going in the same direction, it will soon be out of sight.

By Saturday noon the ship had covered thirty-six miles; by Sunday noon three hundred sixty-six, by Monday noon three hundred eighty-two, and by Tuesday forenoon four hundred eighty-nine miles.

**Wednesday morning, March 23.**

It is 7 o'clock. We congratulate our sister Suzanna on her birthday. The wind is southwest; it is cloudy and rainy and looks rather stormy. Last evening I spent an enjoyable hour on deck talking with James Verwijs. Most of the people who came on deck this morning pulled a face and went back below. I am also beginning to feel like having breakfast. If all goes well we will be at the half-way point of our trip by tonight. This morning all we could see was a rough sea and a stormy sky all around us. Yesterday a sailing-vessel was sighted but it soon disappeared. Between Tuesday noon and Wednesday noon the ship covered 393 miles.

**Thursday afternoon, March 24.** We are having another beautiful day. Although there is a strong cold wind, the boat is rocking very little.



**Friday, March 25, 1910.** Between Thursday noon and Friday noon the ship covered a distance of 385 miles. The passengers are becoming very active; they are beginning to make preparations to have their baggage ready when we arrive in New York. That will probably not be before Monday afternoon.

We are both in good health, but we will be glad when the trip is ended. Even at its best it is not home.

There are many passengers in second class who conduct themselves very badly; the Friesians in particular. Some of them are so ill-mannered that one would think they had grown up in the wild. We have met several discouraged farmers who are going to America to seek their fortune. It is amusing to learn what a mistaken opinion some people have of American farming.

Sara has a travelling companion in her cabin who is leaving with a man who is deserting his wife and four small children in Friesland. It is rumored that he will be arrested in New York.

**Saturday afternoon, 2 o'clock.** Between Friday noon and Saturday the ship covered a distance of 339 miles. We have had a contrary wind yesterday and last night. During most of the trip the wind was favorable or a little to one side. The water dashes on deck from both sides so that there is no opportunity to walk around. The sky has now cleared somewhat. I have kept a record of the weather and the wind. [Not included in this translation. Nor the tabulation of miles covered each day.]

**Monday morning, March 28.** Yesterday was Easter Sunday. But the day of the resurrection of the Son of God made little impression on the bustling crowd. In the forenoon a small group gathered in the smoking-room, mostly Friesians

and Groningers who began to sing psalms. My attention was drawn to one of them who sang along lustily with the group and was writing a letter at the same time. In the same room four people were sitting playing cards. So there was not the least inspiration even in the singing of the psalms. I also noticed among them some who every evening played comedian.

I left my cabin this morning at 4:30. The mainland of America and several lighthouses became visible at the break of dawn. Most of the passengers were on deck early. It is a beautiful morning, nice quiet weather, and bright sunshine. The doctors and officials came aboard at seven o'clock. The beautiful buildings on the islands we passed were interesting to the passengers. The hundreds of steam-vessels we passed along the coast of America presented an interesting scene. As we enter we are next to a Greek boat which is swarming with people.

Here, near the coast, third class is visited first. We learn that about seventy third class passengers have contagious diseases. A large number are taken by boat to an isolated island to be fumigated.

It is now 11 o'clock. The doctors are in the dining-room where all passengers who are American citizens are visited first. I have just been handed a letter from F.D. McKay, the agent from whom I bought my ticket, with the information that I can get my railroad-ticket at the main office in New York. I had lost my ticket on the way to the Netherlands and had immediately notified the agent and also the main office.

We left the boat at twelve noon and were glad to step ashore. Here Sara and I felt at home while the crowd of fellow-passengers stood looking around as strangers. While the passengers of the boat were put ashore the

crew was busy unloading the baggage, which was immediately taken to the baggage room for inspection. Every passenger had to be there with open trunks and suitcases, ready for the officials to search every possible hiding place for smuggled goods that required payment of duty. In some cases there was not a close inspection but the official who went through my baggage did not leave anything in its place. Each passenger is permitted to take \$100 worth of presents and one hundred cigars without paying duty but these presents may not be for some one else because then a duty must be paid. I answered with a clear conscience that this and that package was for other friends. All these boxes and packages were opened, inspected and the value stated. Then I could decide whether I wished to pay the duty and take the presents for my friends with me or leave them in the possession of the officials. Small items worth 40 cents were valued by the official at 80 cents or a dollar. In vain I protested to the official in regard to the exaggerated value. I invited him to go with me to the main office and he agreed. I stated my objection to the duty and everything was carefully inspected. After some discussion I was excused from paying the duty, except for a box of cigars on which I was required to pay \$3.50. In the Netherlands these cigars had cost forty-eight American cents; I told them I would prefer to keep the \$3.50 in my pocket and they could smoke the cigars. That was the end of the matter. The trunks were repacked and transported to the station to which we sent them. Immediately after this official inspection, we went to a hotel. We left our traveling bags in the building where we had landed because we had not decided on which railroad we wished to leave. We then boarded the train and rode again under that same Hudson

River on which we had sailed a few minutes earlier in the large steamboat. We arrived on the other side of New York. Here we received our tickets without any trouble.

James Verwijs and Borsters from Nieuw Vosmer were with us all of that time. They stood in astonishment, rooted to the ground as it were, as they looked up at the sky-scrapers. We stayed in the city of New York and Brooklyn until about seven-thirty the following evening. By that time we had been at all of the important places we could reach. We travelled most of the way by train, trolley-car, or automobile because our time was too limited to walk. We rode through the most important part of the city for about an hour and a half for a mere ten cents. For one dollar the four of us had an hour's ride through huge, magnificent Central Park in a beautiful coach.

Our traveling companions were deeply impressed by the freedom in this country that allowed all travelers and interested persons admittance into the buildings. We were in one building which had four floors underground and forty-eight above; we took the elevator up to the forty-second floor. If we wished to go to the forty-eighth floor we would have to pay fifty cents apiece but our companions did not care to do that. Imagine a building sixty rods high, that is quite a height. Buildings with thirty to forty floors are not unusual for New York. Many of them are being built. All of the cross-beams are of steel. There are also several subways in the city and we have made use of them, too. For example, when your go down a stairway into the ground you come to the largest and most beautiful station I have ever seen. There the trains cross in every direction at an unusually high

speed. Imagine, as I said, that you would get on such an underground train in the village and fifteen minutes later you were at the station at Steenbergen or Bergen op Zoom or Stavenisse where you could go up a stairway to the ground level!

This is difficult to comprehend but it is true. Naturally, the ground is rocky, otherwise these underground railways could not be built. People in Chicago would be glad to do the same thing but there the ground is swampy so such construction is out of the question.

On Tuesday evening at seven-thirty, after two pleasant and enjoyable days in New York, we boarded a train. Because it was dark and therefore we could not see anything outside, we soon were resting. Because the seats are so soft and comfortable they serve very well as a bed for a couple of nights. At about eight o'clock in the morning we arrived at the great Niagara Falls. The weather was fine, but not clear. I was sorry about that, especially for our company, because the waterfall is the most beautiful in bright sunshine. However, our travelling companions were very well satisfied.

We had to transfer in Detroit where we waited approximately four hours. I had a few business transactions to take care of there and I also telephoned my son in his office in Grand Rapids to say that we hoped to be home that evening about eleven o'clock. Marinus had boarded the train when it was still quite a distance from Grand Rapids, and he brought us the good news that the entire family was well and were eagerly awaiting our arrival. When we reached our destination my other two sons, Adriaan and Joseph, were waiting for me, as well as cousin Abraham and other friends. We soon

started for home where indeed our joy reached its height for both adults and children. It was exactly two months ago that we had parted and now the Lord granted us the privilege of being back together in the best of health.

"Well, well," they said, "how long those two months were," but when I was in St. Philipsland, they said, "How quickly the time of your visit has flown."

I personally have had a pleasant trip. I was royally entertained by relatives, friends and acquaintances. The fact that I could meet my aged father face to face is worth more to me than the expense of the entire trip. Besides, I have seen all of my brothers and sisters who are still living, and their children. In addition, following personal acquaintance, many of my relatives with whom I have marital connections now have a place in my heart. They showed me the respect of brother-in-law and cousin above expectation and this I also hope to do as long as I am in the land of the living, even though it may only be by way of correspondence.

I extend my hearty thanks to all friends who gave evidence of their good will toward me. May the Lord reward you all for the kindness shown to me!

Joseph Noorthoek