

Monthly Letter April 2009

Everyday Reality: 'because we're doing the laundry tomorrow'



Not all of the *Sailing Letters* were sent from or to distant countries. If a ship was anchored in the Netherlands, family members and crew also communicated with each other by means of letters. These were often scribbled notes: written in a hurry, about practical matters that had to be taken care of. This is evident in the note written by Meimerigje Buyk-Kleynhens, who lived in Enkhuizen, to her husband Coenraad Buyk. Coenraad was a helmsman and on 26th June 1779 his ship 'de Hoogkarspel' was lying in the roads at Enkhuizen. Eventually the ship did not leave for Batavia until 24th August. Coenraad had already completed two journeys to Batavia before: in 1774-1776 as a gunner (responsible for the artillery and ammunition) and in 1776-1778 as a 'third navigator' (third in row to be responsible for the navigation).

The note offers us a peek at everyday reality. Did Coenraad have a toothache? Meimerigje hopes that her dear and much beloved husband will receive her letter in good health and that his mouth is better by now. She herself is – God be thanked – as healthy and dapper as a young girl: a remark that falls in to place if we consider that she was six months pregnant at the time. The note is accompanied by a spittoon, three knives and three forks intended for Jan Veen, one of the Hoogkarspel's sailors. These basic utensils are given to him by his uncle Klaas Veen, who at the same time gives Coenraad the kind regards of *ceetepitjen* (auntie Keete).

Meimerigje wishes her husband that he and his company may enjoy themselves. She wishes she could have enjoyed it as well, but for now he will have to drink to her health. She mentions that her dear brother will probably not come and ends her note very practically: *I ask you to send me your dirty clothes because because we're doing the laundry tomorrow (ik versoek dat gy my uw fuyl goed stur want want morgen wasse wy)*. (She writes *because* twice in the hurry). Meimerigje concludes her note rather formally: *regards from everyone, be greeted a thousand times by me, I remain your beloved wife with deference and respect (de groetenis van alle, syt duysenma[1] van my gegroet, blyven met agten en eerbiet ue liefhebbende vrouw)*. But she cannot refrain from adding an affectionate greeting: *g'night my dearest (nagt my liefe schiat)*.

Coenraad put his wife's note in his sea chest. On the journey back from Batavia on 21st July 1781 his ship was captured by English privateers at the Cape. After all the Fourth English War had broken out by that time. Our helmsman Buyk returned to Enkhuizen in 1783, much later than scheduled and with another ship. Without his documents and without the note written by Meimerigje that he had kept so carefully.

Bijlagen

Foto brief Meimerigje Buyk

en chuyt den 20 yunij 1773
waarde en seergaetede man
hoopen dat u dese ingesonhey mag ondangen
indat uw mond wat beter mag weesen ik ben
god dank vlieg als een jonge meyd & daasreom
verzoekt u vinnadlyk of u se rogaeo galdet
syn om tot knuspedoor en dese 3 messen en 3
norken aan syn neet yan veer te geeren en
seggen te hem als dat hy die van syn room
heedt en dat hy degroetenis moet hebben
u moet degroetenis hebben van ceetopitjen
dat mox ik niet vergeeten heedt syn geseijt
ik wens u van daag wed ~~de~~ mag verduereten
met uw geselschap ik wou dat ik daar ook
van sou porteteeren maar nu moet u myn
gesonheijt maar eens drinden daar sal ~~u~~
myn maar mee vergenoegen ik Denck niet
dat broer sad koomen ik verwek dat gy
my uw stuyd goed stur want want morgen
wasse wy degroetenis van alle syt duysema
van my geyroet blyven met agten en
eerbiet u die hebben de vrouw
M Buyk geblyfynkens
nagt my deede schet

Transcriptie brief Meijmerigje Buyk

Stuerman
Coenraat Buyk
op t'schip hoogcaspel
tans geankert op de reede
van enchuysen

enchuysen den 26 yuny 1779

waarde en seer geliefde man

hoopen dat ue dese in gesonhey mag onfangen
en dat uw mond wat beter mag weesen ik ben
god dank vlug als een yonge meyd klaas veen
versoekt ue vrindelyk of ue soo goed gelieft
syn om dit kwispedor en dese 3 messen en 3
vorken aan syn neef yan veen te geeven en
seggen te hem als dat hy die van syn oom
heeft en dat hy de groetenis moet hebben
ue moet de groetenis hebben van ceetepitjen
dat mos ik niet vergeeten heeft syn geseyt
ik wens ue van daag wel mag verdieverteren
met uw geselschap ik wou dat ik daar ook
van sou porfeteeren maar nu moet ue myn
gesonhey maar eens drinken daar sal ik
myn maar mee vergenoegen ik denk niet
dat broer sal koomen ik versoek dat gy
my uw fuyl goed stur want want morgen
wasse wy de groetenis van alle syt duysemaa[1]
van my gegroet blyven met agten en
eerbiet ue liefhebbende vrouw
M.C. Buyk geb[oren] kleynhens
nagt my liefe schat