



[William Crosfield Letters](#)

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Philadelphia

Monday Sept 19. 1859

My dearest Maria,

What have you done to the Persia? There is Monday and no news. I could not believe that the good ship would so disgrace herself as to let Friday pass without showing her bowsprit somewhere inside "the Hook," and so on Saturday I made up my mind that it was the Arabia sent in her place. News today is that she sailed; where is she? Mr. Rind came in her last trip but one - what must his thoughts be when he thinks of his brother in 1854. But patience will tell us all in time - How thankful I am that I came her last trip not this one. But perhaps you are keeping her on your side, and are anxious only for our sakes.

I have been spending Saturday and yesterday very pleasantly with the Gannatts. They have treated me most kindly. Mrs. G. is an exceedingly nice woman not in any way like what I should have expected from hearsay on the other side. But all this in the

proper place. First my journal and then remarks.

On Monday morning I made an ineffectual attempt to get through Stuart's Sugar House. Oh shade of Magic why follow me here!! Oh by of bigots why persuade both worlds would not one suffice? But many it would not do. Then went to Batten's and dined in the city with him and then took cars for Fort Rensselaire, just opposite the Palisades. He very kindly took me for a drive intending to show me the Croton Aqueduct but the road was under repairs and the other was too long so I was obliged to content myself with the beauties of a country drive up out any engineering wonders. Most things struck me as remarkable for instance large fields of cucumbers here it is a great crop. The American fondness for pickles makes it a great article of consumption - cantiflowers they grow under glass, in very small quantities. At Fort Rensselaire saw the most magnificent cockercombs that I have seen even here, In England I should

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remember the flower though the name is very familiar, he has a plant of love lies bleeding with flowers two feet long and long and of course the plant is high in proportion. He went in very early next morning and at ten o'clock I called on Mr Booth. But before I forget let me speak of an institution the Fifth Avenue Hotel is at the corner of 23 street, about 2 1/2 miles from the railway depot; at 51st where the cars enter the city proper they hitch four horses to each car and drive in, so in the passport I dropped at 23rd and found my way home without going into the city. Mr Booth had taken a good deal of trouble to get me a pass to several of the city institutions, on Blackwell's Island the Insane Asylum, where a warden received us with some civility; the Workhouse for criminals who are in for drunkenness or small crimes; the Almshouses for men and women unwilling or unable to keep themselves more often the latter than would be the case in our Workhouses which are the counterparts of Almshouses out here

On the Island there was also a small Hospital but we passed that by Mr. B. small extent of these buildings, in the Penitentiary (there are 400 men and 200 women) which impressed me with a great notion of the superiority of New York over some towns that I know in England but my praise was stopped by the hint that it is rather from the reluctance of the police than from any want of crime that this arises. The police system of N.Y. is (or should say) a curiosity, now the Police as strangers received from the official superintendent is trying to make them on the island, who owe their position entirely to political influence for politics and the mass is up in arms ever that influence may be applied against him and his backed by some looking upon this as the reward for the services rendered on past occasions. Crossing over to the foot of 61st we went by car to 116th street. They take care to do as little and say they call them all streets but up here themselves as much as possible they are not graded and we found going the city possesses a great advantage down 116th meant crossing a field in this island for having a strong again we were ferried across and tide all round no one could galloped on Randall's Island where the land without difficulty and there is a very substantial brick therefore there is an amount of free building faced with the peculiar which does not at all coincide with warm brown stone, occupied now our ideas of compulsory imprisonment by both boys and girls but when a building now nearly finished is ready

the girls are to remove and the boys will not have the hallowing influence of female society under the same roof. Here what a change! We must surely be a hundred miles from Blackwell Island for here under the management of a Board of benevolent ladies and gentlemen all in Hindustan and attention we were introduced to one of the teachers and asked to see some of the institution his answer of "nothing, with pleasure" was hopeful and fully borne out by the exhibits of the place from end to end. The civility of Mr Glauke was great even without the contrast of what we had left. I was glad to find the proportion of one third girls maintains itself tho' I cannot quote figures I feel sure that in England the number are very nearly equal or more nearly than here. All the rooms are lofty, particularly the dormitories, but commence in the centre under the dome, where the chapel is situated, a small gallery for the girls is so placed that tho' they see the platform and all that goes on there they cannot see the boys who occupy the ground floor. The boys wing is on the left. The chapel a large hall on the first floor contains the cells or dormitories

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a stack of brickwork stands in the centre of the room containing three tiers of cells the space round gives a great deal of room for the air to circulate admitted by large windows running from floor to roof. The bath room ^{for boys} contains 2 cast iron cisterns with pipes running around the top, thro' which the water is delivered by small jets each boy appropriating one, and thus tho' often smallpox and other diseases show themselves it is only in individual cases and has never spread. The class rooms are very well arranged for complete control of the boys each of whom has a separate table and chair fixed to the floor and being made of light iron work any movement is easily seen. The girls sit in pairs and are taught by two very young young ladies of a very superior class to such with us. Felt as if I should like to learn myself from such teachers. They have such eyes that whether looking at girls or visitors look straight and seem to "divine" their looks "home"; there is no mistake in the determination and command

from them must be obeyed. This
kind of authority is much needed
for frequently even the girls are very
"ugly" one teacher was very badly bit
by one of her young charges. Whilst
the boys think very little of putting
a knife into a master. There were 18
girls of this class shut up with these
girls to teach them and in singing
they made one false note one clap of
the teachers hand brought them to a
stand still in an instant. We next
visited the girls bath room a facsimile
of the other then across the yard to
the kitchen and workshops first the
shoeshop where they make 300 pairs
of shoes per day under a master who
contracts for their work, here not a
boy was sitting, all standing to
his bench and iron knees like a saw
vice, and of course the trade is so much
more healthy from the entire absence
of chest contracting, consumption
growing positions. Next came the
wire shop where they are taught the
mysteries of the mousetrap and grow
iron trade up to the higher branches
where in an upper room upwards

of thirty weavers make wire gauze of
all shapes and dimensions. Their
punishments are mostly to stand
against the playground wall for
various periods from one to six months.
Each criminal with his head down
and his hands behind him and not
allowed to speak, whilst the next
rough stands six yards off there
were six of these when I was there, the
most common crime is trying to
run away and almost always
by boys that they trust to go into
the city occasionally. This is the
reverse of the Birmingham experience
I think. Wednesday and Thursday
I was waiting for my letters as I
thought and also wishing to see
Richard Groot coming out by the
Persia, some distant relatives of Mr
Garnall's are there too. And as I was
waiting I used to walk round or
"circulate" through New York and
enlarge my experience of externals.
On Friday as she still did not come
I threw Dick Groot overboard and
bid "un revoir" to friends to come
on here in pouring rain, which

fell without intermission all
Saturday with "quite a blow" as a
Gambier observed; in fact I had the full
experience of the equinox at Mr
Forest home "the forest primeval"
At four on Saturday afternoon our
talk was broken by a gunshot. I then
close to the front door investigation
proved that a splendid pine, true
to the core, had fallen right across
the drive, snapped straight off
about 4 feet from the ground. This
I had an instance of the "common
every day danger" of Mrs W. Gambier
home as Mr Gambier said; to report
at home. Please send our letters
receiving this to New Orleans Post
Office. ~~Two~~ ^{One} to Kingstown Post Office
and then New York. Believe I shall
come back up the country from
Mobile, and not straight to N Y,
seeing more of the Slave states and
Washington in Congress time; the
directions will be sure tho' perhaps
slow. Cuba too I must visit twice and
deliver letters the second time, which I
hope to find at Kingstown Jamaica
My best love to all my relations and
friends doubles to home and
believe me your very affectionate
son
W. Grosfield