



[William Crosfield Letters](#)

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Philadelphia

September 19. 1859

My dearest Maggie,

You have already
been illused and before procrastination again stealing my time robs
you of a letter I will make sure of
one for the next mail. I like to fill
up the interstices so that any
mischance to a letter will not leave
you entirely uninformed. Last
Thursday evening I was sitting
about 7 o'clock in the gentleman's drawing
room and thinking that having no
friends I was wasting my time and
would write to you I jumped up for
that purpose when Mr Morilla
friend of mine of Boston just
looked in and as his sisters were
mentioned as in the house I tomorrow
ed your letter and there it rests
till now. I did see his sisters, not
the two I spoke of before but the
pleasantest of them and another
younger & nicer, they had another
girl with them and as Mr M
suddenly found that he had to

"make a call" he left us in one of the reception rooms and we had "quite a good time"; and when we went to walk in the park we found them, to our astonishment extinguishing some of the lights. It was past eleven o'clock. They told me that I had not seen Boston which I rather doubt and that I know nothing of America till I have spent a week skating with them; on this subject the arguments were forcible and there may be some truth in what they say.

Who do you think I met on Sat. at Mr. Barnall's? I think I may call him my earliest American acquaintance - Charles Alderson, "our (boy) cousin in Ohio", he is a man just what you would expect that boy to be; he has evidently followed his early education; very much admired the cool ease and grace with which he handled an ape. In the evening a flying squirrel found its way into the room and whilst we were trying to take it (like catching a mouse) with our hands, he told us stories of them at school and explained their peculiarities. Happily the Persia is up and I shall have my letter, the news came from New York just after I posted my letter to Mamma this morning. People were beginning to be very anxious and one man regretted that "Mr. Barney Williams would be lost to the stage and the world a sad calamity!"

I must give you some account of the "Fifth Avenue Hotel." I have been in many larger it seems to me; certainly the U.S. at Stratoga is larger and I should say the International at Niagara Falls. The ground floor is devoted, on the Broadway front, to magnificent shops, the entrance hall paved with marble, as is all the ground floor. A little strip alongside the hall is soaped and easy chained for gentlemen to sit and smoke and see who passes and show themselves with their

feet generally up in the air in the
most easy fashion by the by.
Then there is the office a most
necessary & useful institution
(as far above our "bar" as the hills
is above stage coaches) where they
tell you everything always truth.
You have noticed no doubt that
the word institution is like the
Greek *dogos* if ever you are at a
for a word stick it in and it is sure
to fit. Behind are two large rooms
lofty and pillared equal in size
one on the left has a book stall &
country newspapers all round in
one corner is a universal establish-
ment in all the large hotels an office
containing a telegraph machine
and a boy to match. A room on the
other side the middle passage is
the bar, the weather has been cool
and not much business doing.
The Astor House makes its rent out
of the bar, but this is too far up
town. Below are cellars which
from all I hear ~~they~~ reach to the
infernal regions or there away.

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a very large billiard room with
twelve tables is on the first floor
going down. Ascending from
the office the first landing is very
broad and long, carpeted with a
rich pine-wood pattern and an ornate
border. I think I mentioned the
reception rooms to Bertha. The
two largest are thrown together
divided only by curtains of very
bright crimson silk & damask
lined with white silk. The carpets
are the softest pile all border and
made for the room; the upholstery
would for a private house be very
gaudy but here it does not seem
in bad taste, in fact the peculiarity
is that tho' gay it is in good taste.
The dining room is beyond me it
is an immense hall with a high
buffet at each side and all round
alternately mirrors and windows.
The former in each case the larger
of the two. I never saw so large a
collection of mirrors as there will
be when all are finished. None
of the corridors one evening I

noticed in front of me walking ^{away} two ladies whose figures struck me and I wanted to see the faces and quickened when I nearly walked through a glass for I was walking from them and to their shadows. The breakfast table & 'hote at 50c is in the large hall but early dinners and teas are in two beautiful little rooms I call them little but one in Paris would astonish me I dare say. These two rooms are to be made than half mirrored and when they are done they will be complete. Now for a climb - we must go to the fifth story and neither of the elevators is ready - (there is to be one for ladies and one for baggage) so we must tramp it. And landed there we have not much satisfaction for we may pass along the great passages to my room and scarcely see a door open. Mine being a "single man's room" very plain but it has water laid on into the room as all

63 in the house have. The furniture consists of a spring mattress on a walnut bedstead that was my best friend there I think we became much attached before the week was out and the last day my lady friends had gone out to make calls before I had had any breakfast. Such is life away from home. There is a wardrobe with a marble slab and looking-glass for a door, lots of drawers; a first rate arm chair; plain do; and writing table; and then the marble basted topped washstand. I have used the words "very plain" and I thought it was true but that list does not look bad. There are ladies rooms on the same landing and rooms in groups, a boudoir and several bed rooms round, with a bath-room they all look most luxurious but without a lady there is no hope for a room like these. For since the third day of opening they have sent people away.

impression
If a man wants a good (idea) of
the city of New York let him drive
up Broadway as far as the 5th
Hotel, rendered interesting by the
neighbourhood of Minerva Mac
-Grimsey for it is also in Madison
Square. From there let him go up
to Croton Reservoir by 5 Avenue and
now he must return the same way
for there is no good street to bring
him back tho' some of the best are
If he are up here at right angles to
5 Avenue back at the Hotel drive along
23 street for some handsome houses
and when he gets to 8 Avenue he had
better get some one to drive him
(while he shuts his eyes and nose)
important of all his nose. But
they come to about 16th where he
can get back and cross Broadway
by Union square where again
he will find himself in good
company. The difficulty is that
all the good streets run at right
angles to 5th Avenue, and he is
never sure of finding good streets
going both ways and of course

he must not go near 5 Points
where anything might happen. New
York is a very fine city and her
churches are more uniformly
handsome than in any city that
I know Paris perhaps excepted.
Here they build their houses and
place the beams and then stick
the marble front on. The paving
of the streets is ~~usually~~ ^{always} bad
except only Broadway, there seems
to be no foundation.

Today I was in Independence
Hall and just looking at the
bell wh. declared to the crowd
that independence was deter-
mined upon; it bears an inscrip-
tion by order of Congress that this
bell "shall declare liberty through-
out the land to all men" a poor
negro hobbled in on two sticks
free of course, but what of his
brother did that bell do as was
decreed or only say to Britain
"we will have none of your leading
strings." Will you tell Miss Mary
Job that I have seen two very
fine negroes and whilst I make

up my mind I shall thank her
to choose the colours for I should
like the cap she was good enough
to promise to be ready and in
shape like a cap of liberty - but
no perhaps it had better wait for
one of the women was already
married and the other was a
very young servant girl at a
friends house. You are amused
no doubt with my want of plan
but as an idea strikes me I jot
it down for you: I now speak of
landing again at New Orleans and
coming up the country from Cuba
as I may be able to gain time in
that way communication being
so much more frequent there
than to N Y and I shall see more
of Georgia and Carolina than I
should otherwise. I do not write
to David as I think of him having
the benefit of all my yarns to you.
Mr Farnall spoke of the Sat Review
and the Guardian on the 10th both
of which he saw. Please give my
love to all at Wake Lane Lodge
Lane as well as David, and
believe me yours very truly
W. P. Grosfield