



[William Crosfield Letters](#)

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Shamilton Augusta County Va
Saturday September 24/59

My dear Mama,

I am now in what is familiarly called "Old Dominion" but before I tell you any thing about the many curiosities of this region I shall begin where I left off in my last from Philadelphia. I think I left off on Saturday night.

Where every one seems to go upon the "healthy, wealthy, wise" principle, for in the private houses where I have spent the night they got up early. Before breakfast on Sunday morning we helped Mr. Garmatt's negro servant to clear away the tree which during the storm had fallen with its head on the drive. He and I walked about two miles to the Church of St James the Less, I think that it is well so called for I do not believe I was ever in so small a church, but with all its littleness it makes great pretensions architecturally and seems perfect in every respect, I wish I could say the same for the service, when I tell

you that it was just suited to Mr G's view over the country westwards.
you will understand that I could turning our faces homewards at
not find much enjoyment in the village of Flower town we passed
the service or sermon. The latter was over Ghesnut Will now a very
very beautifully read by an Oxford favorite suburb of Philadelphia
man, Oxford in more senses than one. Horse cars and the railroad bring people
But I will not criticise as I came from the city in a very short time, &
praise. After dinner Mr G took me to the 'only ten miles away it is easy to
a drive along the valley of the Wissahickon forget that there are any cities within
a creek which runs within a few even ten times the distance. Altogether
hundred yards of his house. By the way I was highly delighted with our tour
of the great rains the water was so muddy and can congratulate Mrs G on her
muddy, but I could see enough to change from the sands of New Brighton.
know that in ordinary times when But I am travelling slowly and
all is clear the reflections of the hills must hurry on to tell how I went in
would be most beautiful, this to the city early on Monday and spent
there is the most beautiful feature of the forenoon very pleasantly writing
of the drive, and was therefore some time. In the afternoon I visited
manned, but I never cease to admire Independence Hall where many
the rich foliage still so green the relics of the Country's Father are kept
very few weeks will find all the for the admiration of the nation.
bearing the fall tints. The valley I cannot say that I like the way
several miles is very confined, just in which they introduce the words
leaving room for the road along "freedom" & "liberty" everywhere, &
the river's bank. After a while however cannot confine it, as they meant
we came to the end of the hill but no doubt, to free government
country and now we had an extended freedom from the yoke of a

native living afar off, and know too little of their ways and prejudices. I like to give it a wider meaning than they are willing to allow. It is pleasant to see how they hoard up anything of the slightest historical interest and if it does not die away they will be able to form very valuable collections by the time they in their turn become an "Old country". The room in which the Declaration was signed is kept holy, the greater part of the furniture is still retained in the room and pictures of celebrities hang on the walls. The old bell which was rung to proclaim to the assembled crowd outside that Congress had privately determined to cut away from the mother country is placed on a stand on one side, and at the end opposite the door is a wooden statue of the Great man. Girard's college is an institution founded by the will of a Frenchman who bequeathed ^{two} ~~three~~ million dollars to build and endow a house for Orphan boys, in 1831. The site, which

he also gave, occupies ⁷² 45 acres. One of the clauses of his will provides; "that no clergyman of any denomination whatever shall be employed as teacher or in any capacity or shall enter the building as a visitor". The will goes on to explain that he bore no dislike to any clergyman but he did not wish to have anyone fighting for the souls of the poor boys and therefore "strict morality" was to be the highest lesson that they learn. They read prayers in the chapel twice a day but I cannot say what form as it is done in private without any visitors. The central building is entire of white marble from the ground to the roof, and inside handsome marble staircases lead to the upper stories. Externally the style of the building is Corinthian columns of the same massive material running round. From here I went on to Fairmount a reservoir for the city which stands on a high mound and is surrounded with grounds intended for a public park now

being laid out. It is situated close to the Schuylkill and on the river side the mound is rocky and almost precipitous, a few trees on this side and on the river's bank formed a very agreeable shade on that hot afternoon. Spent that evening at the hotel and next morning before starting for Baltimore I went to the United States Mint although there is a mint at Washington this in the chief coinage place of this country. The instruments were very interesting but did not show so much advancement as I expected to find in an establishment which might command the whole field of human invention. I was never in our own mint and therefore cannot compare the two, but from what I have read I imagine the processes with us are fewer. I left Philadelphia where I had so much cause to form a high estimate of the friendliness. It well deserves the name of the Quaker City, almost every fourth person

one meets is a Quaker, and here they seem to have the command of a much larger body of Quakers than in England or perhaps they take more liberty in a land of freedom. We had not left the city far behind as when clouds began to gather and rain came along; the old friend of mine wetting rain which has now so often forced its company upon me. This caused me to consider the conclusion I came to was that I would take a carriage, call at the Post Office, get my letter, and go on to Washington by the following train and leave Baltimore to its fate. It is only four hours for two things and those preeminently. Powderism: not an interesting subject to study even here in its chief seat, and the beauty of its ladies that is a better feature, but as rain is not apt to induce beauty to walk abroad I was reconciled to that also. Soon after seven in the evening I was at Washington. This city is in no state and has no

interests apart from its political bearing upon the nation at large for it has no representative of its own and just now is simple Washington (D.C.) for there is no Congress till December and no celebrity lives here at this time of year except James Buchanan. I found everything in a state of dormancy in a large hotel with only a few inmates on their way home in the south. Next morning I found that it was as travellers always are "a day too late" for the only way to get to Mount Vernon is to take a small steamer which goes down twice a week & yesterday being one of her days. I could not think of waiting here a day more than was necessary so I gave up the ruined tomb of Washington and visited the National Building of the shagging city.

First I turned my face up the only "street" Pennsylvania Avenue towards the white house; my course was interrupted by a long, plain

but handsome stone edifice, which they are still building. The Treasury department. Finding my way round the other end of this building I came upon the object of my search. It is indeed a "white house" thanks to successive coats of paint with which they have clothed the freestone of which the building is constructed. I admire plain deal with nature's own ornamenting more than wood painted to look like fine serpentine; and on the same principle I think that clean freestone would look far far better than this marble-imitation. The form of the mansion is imposing (so is the paint) on the side which I first saw there are four columns supporting a portico under which carriages drive to the front door. This side looks across the Avenue onto the lawn or park in the middle of which there is an equestrian statue of General Jackson. It is made of bronze and designed by Clark Mills, beyond the park is desolation where there should

have been a city according to the original plan. Went on a little and turned down between the White House and the War Department a very plain building, and passing along the wall of the more private grounds I was on the river front of the house this side has a circular colonnade in the center and in this the handsomeness of the two sides I stood on a great block of unworked granite and looked over the wall at the national palace.

Immediately before the presidential windows, between and the river, is an erection which looks like an enlarged land mark broken off about fifty feet from the ground this is sometimes to be a monument to the immortal Washington it is to rise from a circular temple for whose interior each state gives a stone of its own production and this is all that they do give for they cannot get the money to raise this great want. Thus it stands a warning to Presidents of what their memory may come to if they make themselves great. I am just thinking that a disgrace it is to so great a nation. I remember a movement to believe I can say no more. I post this before eleven an hour and must continue another time for you will get this by Persia if I send it today. Had a mind to double it and send it all in all. My love to all at home or abroad also that you can send it. Your very affectionate son W. Grosfield