



[William Crosfield Letters](#)

Copyright Notice:

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit www.mnhs.org/copyright.

Exchange Hotel Richmond Va
Sunday October 2. 1859

My dearest Mama,

Such is life! How little we know on Sunday when we shall be on Saturday! The uncertainty of American travel ebbing & flowing all week yesterday made a great and thore a last thro' and landed me here. My greatest regret is that I am still 3 days from your letters and suspense is painful.

In my last letter I wrote from the Natural Bridge but was unable to give you any account of it. If your imagination is as vivid as mine you will not want many words from me. Remember as if it were last week & how I wondered at the last view in the Panorama of the Mammoth Cave, which showed the Natural Bridge - and still it is so many years since it exhibited in Silver Pool - ever since I first saw that picture I have longed to see the thing itself and last Sunday my wish was accomplished. I came upon it as if I was calling upon an old friend and at first seemed to know it before I looked at it - it was just as I supposed it would be. After spending a day there it seemed to come over me how grand it really was -

The most beautiful view of it is
from the road which passes along
the opposite side of the valley, at a
point about half a mile from
the tavern there you have a sloping
foreground occupied by a grove of
pines the centre is rock framed
trees and in the midst of this is an
arch which from this point looks
as if built by rule and line the
base of the abutments is lost in
the face of the bridge has a look of
solidity which destroys the appearance
of art and to crown the whole is a
lovely wood. If you examine just
to rest your eye after looking at
admiring the one object you find
at a distance purple hills and a
blue sky, what more can a man
want for happiness? companionless
I had just parted with some very
pleasant folks a Richmond Quaker
and a geological student who spoke
upon the glorious goodness of Agassiz
his professor, so I felt badly.
The grandest view is from below
by a narrow rocky path you go
the bottom of the gully and then
there is a view which makes poetic
people scream with delight. At a
height of 250 feet above you is the
rock thrown across and forming
such an arch as no man could
build, here is a spot where you may

85
ramble to your hearts content or
sitting down in the bed of the stream
read - The scene forms such a chamber
as if you cannot find any where else.
Here I enjoyed Tennyson thoroughly,
what a striking scene the torch light
departure of the great Pseudodragonship
and the group of mums forms! and
many others the description of the
ruin (the fern plumed tower) is very
good for this day but not I think for
King Arthur's reign. But America
should be my theme nature's own
structure not art's imperfections
which time unaided destroys.

On Tuesday afternoon I closed the
Natural Bridge Hotel. The property
has just been sold, I believe 45 acres
with the bridge for \$2,000. I learned a
matter of history its first owner by
title was Thomas Jefferson, at his
death, being insolvent, his trustees
sold it for \$1,500 this is the way they
treat such gems. It is said to be a
very good investment! Could any
body buy Bolton Abbey and the
land adjoining? How not

could be, but if it wasn't for
my wife and children I'd be in
the odder country too" Then the
poor fellow went on to tell the
other two all about the Brazil
how they thought that they were
happy in slavery and complain
when they were taken away - how
God destroyed the masters and
they did not live their children
inherited the promised land. Then
he went on to speak of the Aurora
Borealis and I do believe the poor
fellow saw a connection between
the Northern Light and that "fire
of fire" of which he had been telling
us. I am told that "niggers have
no affection" I don't believe it -
again that "slaves look with con-
tempt at free blacks" it is not so.
After a time we got to the White
and then found that the stage
had started that morning, in
vegetation I wrote the last bit of
Bertha's letter so as to be off instant
and kept it in my pocket when
I went to look for a buggy but
was not one to be had and if there
had been I should have had to
hurry out of the way.

spend today at some little place
of unknown ⁸significance and
most likely not get to my journey's
end any sooner. So I made up my
mind that as I had to do it I had
better substitute the expected stage ride
and scenery for cars a Sunday at
Baltimore and the views on the
Balt & Ohio R.R. the rest of the after-
noon and worse the evening I
passed, the only guest at an establish-
ment made for 15000 and which
has held 2000 persons. Perhaps
you can form an idea what it
was like - I can and shall do
for some long time to come. At
six next morning I turned
my face eastwards and in the
afternoon a stage deposited me
at the terminus of the railroad
at Jackson's River. The ride was
grand Hell yes; we crossed two
ridges of the Alleghenies and it
was fine to a degree that I had no
conception of the foliage was so
rich! There were all shades and
sorts of colour from light green
emerald - yellow, orange, pink
red, crimson, scarlet, brown,
copper colour, deep green, white
green (the white pine) and black
(the cedar)

It was pleasant to feel myself
once more on the track within
the bounds of timetables (sketches)
with some little idea of where
should get to where. At half
past six we stopped at St. Louis
that was delay to be sure but
was inevitable and if that was
on I should not have been there
any sooner so I slept content
that town whose acquaintance
I had made before and did not
feel much desire to renew them
it might well be improved.
Twelve hours there and at 8.30
Saturday we are really off and
I shall sleep at Baltimore and
on Monday be off straight to
Cincinnati in an hour we had
to stop the engine was giving
cautiously we went on a little
way to a station the engine
was hitched and went to rest and
be repaired. There's hope in the
telegraph for an engine - no
it's out of order a few miles further
down so a hand car has to be
worked 18 miles and then
perhaps they may have an
engine. All the men got out
to see what was the matter

The engineer⁸⁸ was trying to mend
it, but no one made any fuss
no one a suggestion - "Well it's
a bad look out" "Take the world
easy there's plenty of time" They
all settled down quietly many
to sleep; some to knock round;
some got guns ~~and~~ ^{and} went out
to hunt; some few to read; many
to talk; and the occupants of
the coloured car (the first I have
seen) to discuss the uncertainty
of human life and the necessity
of having a will ready made -
poor things, a matter of import-
to some of them! None to grumble
I set down to think that my
connection was lost and I was
24 hours from my letters further
than before. I could be in Washⁿ
at 4 oc on Sunday morning
I would travel on Sunday yes
I would and perhaps gain 12
hours - no I would not I began
the week with a bit of Sunday
work and I would not begin
another the same way - yes I

would - what matter only 4 hours
"no I won't" and so here I am
There is nothing to drown you
like the sorrow of another greater
than your own so I got very deep
into the troubles of Betty, Sarah and
poor Adam Bede and when an
engine came to our rescue without
knowing it - 8 hours were gone since
we stopped - we must have waited
more if this engine had not by
the purest accident passed along
I should have left these cars at
Gordonsville to go north but I
came on here the conductor was
politely franking me 100 miles
and having me a sovereign and
pleasing variety of American
Rail Roads. We stopped at a place
where there was a boys school and
their politeness was great for
they let us sit down to dinner
before them putting off their pro-
jects for an hour and not a word
of complaint from all those so
hungry boys - Aint they bricks
I must close without any word
of thanks for letters but it can't
be helped and all well more
satisfaction in my next. Many
loves to all my relatives and
friends from your affectionate
son
Wm. Prospekt