



[William Crosfield Letters](#)

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Saint Louis Mo
Sunday October 23. 1859

My dear Mother

I have traversed the
Upper Mississippi - The Mississippi
now much of poetry, of beauty, of
wildness, and of grandeur would
ever remain connected with that
name if I were to leave it here. May
my after associations be no more
painful than at present! How
must I speak of those scenes that
I have passed this during last week.
so completely did the ~~other~~ scenery
carry me away that if a band of
fierce barbarians had suddenly by
showed themselves on the summit
of one of the many beautiful hills
it would not have surprised me
any more - on one occasion I even
found myself looking for a tribe
of Indians. I was not aware that I
had any definite idea of the sort of
country up there but when I saw it
seemed to have read all about it
when I don't know. A mixture of
Cooper - Philip Randolph and Kanawha
New York, Virginia and the Mississippi
The Bluffs are almost continuous
from Dubuque to St Paul their
characteristic feature is a rocky face
rising straight almost from the water
a few trees only intervening - a scanty
growth on the top and when an inviting
valley permits the river to be seen

a grassy slope is visible on the
side a fine country is to be found
behind all this but it has to be seen
The hunter and explorer are the
proper people to push up these banks
in the river bank as we must
the most of our time (my companion
and I) we are doomed to stick to
steam boats. Standing on the upper
(hurricane) deck looking down
a pleasant group two or three
canoes made from a single tree
pile of guns, two or three dogs
would form a formation for
quite an Indian picture but
are also game bags and shot bags
which bear an unmistakable mark
of civilization, the owners too
hardy fellows, one particularly
has a canoe with a well defined
profile and striking nose while
a bushy black beard hangs above
below his mouth chin he seems
have none. Add to all this the
steam boat on whose deck they
stand and one must forget
Indians. The Saint Lawrence
with her thousand isles must
in the east for her rival on this side
the lakes will "whip" her. It is
that the Upper Mississippi is
most beautiful spot to use it in
large sense. ^{that I have seen} you will not look
back and count how many
I have said that before; will you

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What the topics may be of course
know not but here is beauty enough
for any man of moderate appetite
The stream runs slow. The sun
shines bright. The air again feels
warm after the frost that we have
left behind us in the north: one
forgets the machinery that is
impelling us onward and looks
only at the blue sky, the equally
blue water the broken hill side
there in front down the river on
the right bank is a castle - its walls
are not overgrown with ivy it is true
but then those white lines drawn
with such distinctness show that
all the mortar, where vegetation
could live is gone - but it is a mistake
a solitary rock is all that shows itself
when we reach the spot. I think I
never saw nature so much resemble
art as in some cases on these banks
where the rocks are worn with the
winds of ages and to all appearance
with water also the "sometimes"
it is a hundred feet above our
heads that those lines are drawn.
For many many miles (perhaps
200) there is a mark on the face
of the cliff the same height all
along which to my mind must
indicate the surface of the stream
at one time. Oh how our notions

of a lifetime lesson before such
evidences as these of the duration
of time — But Hadley that my
description of the river will not
be forcible enough to carry you as
as the reality did me — I wish it
would and carry you to the new
boom town of Lake Pepin where
of the highest rocks is connected
with an Indian love story and
named the "Incident's Rock" or
another where I was told "a man
the name of Gattin was killed
the Indians." Nothing but the
can convey any idea of the beauty
of the scene — I think I did once
to say something of our scene but in my life the begging I saw
I can't stick to my gift — the river
is studded with islands almost
all the way — these are low and
being more often covered with
than the better the trees are
time of the year greener on them
than elsewhere — or I should
here they are yellow the river
step before red this adds another
tint to the view which wants
nothing to make it surpass in
ly lovely. They tell me that
summers "cannot" as the used to it. It was a phase of Western life
to "found myself asking "what I should have been sorry to
were they there" the mornings, admiss. The audience numbered
evenings are misty and mild about 100 — thorough westerns

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bright and warm (hot) — Yesterday
was a good example of that most
poetical season of the year.
Monday spent at St. Paul writing to
you and waiting for the gentlemen
I was with who had business my stay
was most fortunate for that day
was very dull but if I had been alone
I should have still set out for the
hills — as it turned out the next
day was bright and thoroughly
enjoyable. I walked through the
city amused to see the people so
generally going into winter quarters
all sported a fur of some kind — most
a coat. A few Indians were in the
streets selling game. Poor things
I think I never saw a more wretched
the begging I saw — I should have
I should have been invited by
I saw a man who proclaimed
all the way — these are low and
being more often covered with
than the better the trees are
time of the year greener on them
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Expected to burst with laughter
when he stopped suddenly in the
middle of a sentence and said -
"but it will become one to speak on
such a subject before an audience
so ~~ex~~ eminently intelligent" -
seemed flattered. There are still
the remains of talent in the man
tho' 12 years of whisky drinking
have considerably spoiled if not
entirely destroyed. Thos Marshall
once an ornament in the Senate
(as they tell me) he was once believed
to be "running for President" and
with success. He belonged to an old
Kentucky family before his mis-
fortune took possession of him.
As regards his dress he looked like
a journey man shoemaker. His
attitude was decidedly thick
added to a hic-cup he had a quiver
in his mouth - an American
lecturer but I must not judge
by him any more than I would
America by St Pauls or Gunglans
by an Irish hamlet.

On Tuesday we took a carriage
and wrapping our shawls around
us we commenced a cold drive of
18 miles. For a few miles we went
up the river to a point where it
makes a sharp turn at a right angle
to its previous course, and is joined

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by the Minnesota River here as
broad as itself. We have to descend a
steep bank to the water's edge and
before us stands Fort Snelling. The
position is a grand one on the
front by which we are approaching
it the rock rises straight from the
water 200 feet. A carriage road leads
us round the rugged rock and
when we reach the top we find
ourselves on an open prairie and
then in an open fort. The art of war
is falling before the advance of
commerce. Fort Snelling not long
ago was an outpost and helped to
conquer the Indian tribes of
Minnesota but now abandoned
(sold) by government its last use
was as a home for the labourers
building a railroad that "is to be."
We wandered about the fort then
being noon to prevent and
from the flag staff enjoyed a view
which can be exceeded by few where
snow and ice do not hinder their
aid; for then all must give way.
We looked down on "the meeting of
the waters" what stories this building
could tell, or if not it the two rivers.
A triangle of heights encloses a
plain where trees now casting their
leaves were blazing in the sunshine

another spot is before us where
all who have read "Hiawatha"
must long to stay until however
they like the poem. Soon we came
to Minnahan.

"Here the falls of Minnahan
dash and gleam among the oak trees
laugh and leap into the valley"

from the open prairie above to
this sheltered glen where the water
seems to have split what a charm
on the foot path to the foot path
bottom of the fall I nearly broke my
neck for as it was bitterly cold
the carriage I began to run at
once and was nearly brought to
too sudden a stand by the mass
of ice. Luckily I saw it just in
the worst and had time to stop
myself when I found that I was
in a chamber draped with ice.

The effect was most exquisite
I assure you when from the bottom
we looked on a high bank where
the spray had fallen frozen
the trees, the grass, the ground
was a mass of ice. Icicles common
a foot long hanging as clear as
crystal from the overhanging
earth each one had a shade of

grass imprisoned in its centre
To leave you to imagine it seems
and yet it is all I can do if
you won't come and see it for
yourselves. What an idea I have
got to the ninth page and not
a word about your letters - most
humily "thank you". Papa shall
have my duty when I get down
the river - it seems a great joke
to read Maggie's whilst she declares
that there is "nothing to say" but it
would be no joke to go with out I do
assure you. "Blessings on the man
who first invented letters" who
was the man that brought letters
from Egypt and where is his statue.
But he brought simple & p. not
"introductions" as I remember above
at school said he did. A good many
questions have to be answered and
explanations given.

I must push on to that Western
wonder St Anthony and its sister
Minnneapolis. The two having
between them 10000 inhabitants
are connected by a very pretty
little suspension bridge - quite
a work for this far off spot. In
importance Minnneapolis is greater
but in importance and building
St Anthony. Seven years ago the
former had 3 houses say 20 people

at the outside now 5000. St
Anthony has a hotel as good as
any out of New York capable of
containing & entertaining
400 people. It is built of a kind
of blue granite found there and
furnished in a style but at a
great loss but that "aint to
count" to us. A few hours spent
up there and at the ruined
falls of St Anthony (now has
grown enough to keep the water
going) and we return. The falls
were in a great degree destroyed
in April by floods - but I have
seen Minnehaha and am satis-
fied. We started on Wednesday
return - I left my friend at Duluth
and came here by car -
leave again on Tuesday for New
Orleans and then! but you shall
hear. I am so glad papa is doing
so well as he seems - and very
thankful for the letters - the letter
of Feb 28 she very much pleases
to follow inclination from N. O.
St Louis is a subject for my next.
have just room for one more to
each of my friends and to send
still your affectionate son
Wm. Grosfield