



[William Crosfield Letters](#)

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III
Thos. "Giles" Hay

Mississippi River October 30, 1857

My dear Mother,

Last night I mailed a letter to papa which I should like him to get through the chances are just as great that it will miss you here the U.S. mail is about the most uncertain agency. Nothing is more common than to see in a daily paper "We thank Captain — conductor on the — R.R. for New Orleans papers in advance of the mail."

One which I sent from Vicksburg would give you an account of my wanderings, to within the days of this date. I spent Saturday Sunday and a part of Monday in Vicksburg. Had a letter to the Mayor of the city from R.D.C. and so it will perhaps be but fast on my part not to tell all I hear about him he is a sort of "Mayor of Negan" in dignity. But whatever can be said of the magistrates the city itself seems to be in a very prosperous state though business is bad there are 4,000 houses now going up, and as with us all are taken the moment they are finished and rents are fast going up a house smaller than No. 6 cannot be got for less than \$1,000. The most fashionable part of the city is Lucas Place where most of the upper

crust residing the houses here are
of an exceedingly handsome kind
and are built at an enormous
cost of brick, stone and marble.
Some very plain and some quite
the reverse, some in very good taste
and some in very bad. A continuation
of this street towards the river is
Vocist street principally devoted to
churches. The ugliest I am soon
to confess is the work of an English
architect very lofty like a rectangular
truncation of the Capital palace at our
corner is an immense square
tower half as high again as the
roof and this is matched by one
which just reaches to the roofline.
Effect of the whole built of very red
brick is very bad, but this is the
worst specimen in the city. In front
street all the first class retail stores
are situated and they need not
comparison with those of any city
in America, after Broadway. In the
street too is a library containing a
large collection of volumes and some
fine pieces of sculpture the work of
Miss Wormer, and also one by a quite
unknown artist which was found
in "an ancient city" of Nineveh and
now seems very much out of its element
out west. Connected with this institution
is a concert room, serving by way
adapted to its purpose. In this street
too is the state house in an incomparable

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state as most of them are. Suppose
from the fact that a large public is a
work is a very useful political agent.
Main street is where the wholesale stores
carry on a smart trade as all are stone-
keepers you cannot tell what a man
is, but in matters no matter for you
know all men are equal - and yet a
man who used this expression declined
to grant me that has a drum head in the
gutter is equal to himself but must
speak of him afterwards. The service is
a bank of the river where steamers
lie several days after they are advertised
"to sail positively" in connection with the
U.S. Mail "bath". On Sunday night
after wandering through the streets to
find a church where there would be
service I found myself in a very large
Episcopal the inside painted entirely
white a practice very common and
very comfortable. The service was opened
by a chant "lend your hearts and not
your garments" sung by a very fine
female voice assisted now and then
by a male of great power. I wondered
what was going on and at one time
thought it must be an opera rehearsal
going on next door. The effect was very
beautiful but did not seem to me
like worship. However "chacun a son
gout" and the service was very well read
without any peculiarity save that I
am accustomed to the prayer for the
President of the United States and the
corrections of grammar in the
book of prayer. On Saturday afternoon

Mr Whittingham to whom I had
letter and an English man with
took me to Belcher's Sugar House and
tho' I did not see the works I must
put on record the great difference in
my reception in the west and in
east. They are upside down under
repair or they would have been more
happy and must believe them. Of
transacting my business with Mr
Mayor Hillier I dined and set off to
Monday
this boat which started on Sunday
Guano, after a wretched delay of 5 hours
Sandoval and another of 1 hour at
Centratia this which slept and nearly
got left behind I got into a sleeping
car and arrived at Guano the capital
Egypt at 5 1/2 on Tuesday morning
a great hurry I joined the boat as it
was to start on the arrival of the car
but after a long delay I did not
Mr Brooke, the civil and gentleman
clerk and was told that we should
lie till evening I did survive for
the tower is almost invisible I made
the acquaintance of Capt Wamill
2nd Life Guards - nephew of Colonel
Campbell and relative to Gordon Cum
none the better for being companion
arms with Lord Garnet Vane Tempe
(who is rusticated somewhere out here)
Once member of Parliament with
aspirations in the same direction
at home an ultra liberal a little
softened by his visit ~~out~~ here he was
not now willing to go the other way

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with John Bright, Scotch kind of
with all this for know most as much
as myself except that he is a perfect
gentleman and one of the best fellows
I ever saw. I am going to do my very
best to keep with him to Wavona. He
joins me again on Tuesday and if
possible I am to make arrangements
to be off on Wednesday but it seems very
doubtful. There was a rumour on our
board that he is a lord because he
refused to turn out our fellow passengers
on the repeated question "What is your
name" generally followed by "are you
married" "are your father and mother
living" &c. Life on board these boats is
an extraordinary piece of experience
and to me very pleasant tho' some
of my friends would be glad to leave.
The saloon is about 250 feet long with
berths all above each side or I should
say state rooms - about six of these
at the stern are larger and better
furnished than the rest and are
appropriated to the ladies who
occupy this end of the saloon and
are blessed with sofas and better fix-
ings than the remaining part -
They have their stove and a piano
opposite is another stove distinct
than the ladies' because the gentlemen
use it for other purposes than
warmth tho' surrounded by vessels
of use not ornament - there are
the greatest nuisance in this country

It was only this morning that I cut a piece out of my boot again the corner of a spittoon - they are always in the way and seldom used - The last stateroom on either side opens towards the bow of the boat and is used the one as a bar and the other as an office where you transact your business and a hotel. The meals are three in number breakfast at 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ with a large choice of dishes - dinner at one with almost everything and a plain tea at six - I should say breakfast & cold meat which defines plain in America.

I am afraid that my experience of the last week does not very clearly prove that "God's greatest work is man" So I will speak of nature outside the boat. The river seems just the same size here as it does at St Louis 300 miles above the it has received the Ohio and several rivers which would make Egypt even greater than she is, if she had them. The life on this river is very exciting for instance on Wednesday night we overtook the steamer "Empire City" she was on a sand bar with a hole in her bottom and 50 feet of water in her hold, which

114 means that her lower deck was under water to the great discomfort of her deck passengers who had to go to the "haricon" or uppermost deck above the saloon. We were already full with several hundred Irish on our own lower deck but of course we helped her in her distress and started with her living cargo added to our own in a quantity of an hour we were in a fix ourselves but without any damage more than delay - we were firmly on a bar and everything else failing they had to lift us off. This process is so peculiarly Mississippiian that I must explain it. In the fore part of the boat are two beams set on end usually upright but when used they can be lowered to any angle required to these great trusts are applied one end being on the bar ropes and pulleys are adapted and seldom fail to get the boat off in our case it took from six in the evening to six next morning. They got light from a fire on each side in an open grate such as we see in the streets these were raised and fed with wood and now and then a handful of arsenic. You may readily believe that this

makes quite a picture. By noon the raspberry - the stalk is brown
 next day we were moored to the in colour and strong. The leaf in
 bank for the pilots to go and shape like ivy, the colour of sycamore
 found to find us a passage above with a soft texture and nap - the
 four hours were consumed the flower as I saw it in the afternoon
 it was not very satisfactory as of a light lemon colour and
 we were obliged to keep with it in shape like a convolvulus
 hearing of the bell so we only with the colour is said to vary with the sun
 on shore and loafed about the the pod is about the size of a walnut
 barks and in the cornfields - and when it opens it splits into
 discussing the respective merits and as it ripens the cotton
 of melons, squashes and pumpkins hangs in long masses. We two
 -kins which are always found Britons were the only ones who
 among the stalks of Indian cotton the trouble to go to see the
 this process has been repeated many - everything about the place
 times and sometimes we get except the machine itself (a
 stuck on a bar in the middle of the river within sight of a wood
 pile which we want to reach. In the simple kind the boards of which
 first view of cotton fields was the floors were made were not
 Thursday afternoon when we even saw but just split with
 wooded alongside of one of our an axe. Today we have passed
 and I were out instantly water some sugar plantations which
 little six year old negroes and look much more than
 venerable "uncles" men women cotton ditto. Today all the negro
 and children picking cotton wanters look very neat and
 fricked too but for my own use whitewashed to a nicety; a great
 not to help fill the basket. The improvement on the up river
 felt in glory and uttered son plantations. The barks are mostly
 sentiments enter now on the very flat and very often heavily
 subject of "the institution" the wooded - the cotton wood tree is
 plant grows about the height the most dense wall appearance

but this is only a shrub about
six feet high the higher trees
I have not been able to discover
except an occasional cypress.
The greatest beauty of the forest
is the creepers which sometimes
seem to loose their hold and
fall from the trunk giving a
very dense look to the lower part
of the woods - today I have seen
a great deal of the celebrated
moss this hangs from the branches
with a grace that nature only can
give - in huge masses of dull
buff colour I have not been able
to get a specimen. After dinner
I and a friend went on shore
during "a woodin" and strolled
to a gentleman's garden - there
were acacia trees twenty feet
high, fig trees, orange do, and
thousands of roses were in flower
but best of all were the magnolia
well clipped hedges and close
lawns proclaimed at once
I afterwards found this Jan
Englishman's garden. Mr Brown
the owner was once an Englishman
but now he is a slave holder. So
what a depth can man descend
The country round might be a

very heaven without slavery the
curse of the south as almost
every one is willing to admit.
One man said in the course
of discussion to me "wish you
had them all in Canada"
Now for the people. Warrington left
us yesterday to go to see the bright
side of the system on the plantation
of a Mr Wade Hampton an exceedingly
gentlemanly man of large
property in Tennessee. Herk and
Hood: he and a young New Yorker
are my closest companions. Last
night I made the acquaintance
of some ladies who left us at three
o'clock this morning - one of them
played for us till eleven and sang
songs just to my taste "Oh say do
they miss me at home" "Holly jolly
yes" and ended by volunteering
"Oh Willie we have missed you" then
till twelve we played dominoes
and sat round the fire till one
talking slavery and the reverse.
The company at the men's end
was of the most varied kind now
for some days the majority were
black legs, but we have left most
of them and have now only two
on board who have fleeced many
of their companions. There is

an old French man on board, who yesterday by saying "now
is a very jolly fellow he has pretty mulatto in New Orleans
been almost everywhere and said many things if you do - heaven
talk about anything among help you - that's all" - you may
other things, as he and I were to believe that I did not express any
one morning (it was one of the distasteful of the class, to call
he astonished me by eulogising with a remark like that. The way
Sir Stamford Poffles and then they talk is most absurd for instance
to the Crimean war during which I would have them educated
he lived in Constantinople on to prepare for freedom he said -
business. True he keeps a wretched then suppose you would have them
table; and plays cards and deal educated above their position"
faro, and has several games of war ever anything more preposterous
rough it more which pay him on attend by mail? All their
very well, but he is perfectly honest come to this "the slavery
and with him everything is of black and white" for the main
board - if men will spend their argument is their inability to
money so I cannot help it, then for themselves which will
know just what to expect with apply to most of the Irish who come
large percentage against them. In this land of Liberty his
there is an immense amount of saying remark was "now don't you
of game blies on board and walk this way when you get to New
heavy surburbs have been lost Orleans, or you will find yourself
my knowledge. A newspaper in a mess; "eyes open and mouth
from Illinois is one of the compliments" is the only safe motto for a man
and he and I have had long talks you down there. Warrington and
about the Slaves we always at New had many a good bit of fun
just where we begin with me with them but with a laugh now
mutual pity. We surprised and then all has passed off well.

