

*A Map*  
of the *MISSISSIPPI RIVER,*  
Containing the route from the Mouth of the  
*OHIO to NEW-ORLEANS.*





# TRAVELS

ON

## AN INLAND VOYAGE

THROUGH THE

*STATES OF NEW-YORK, PENNSYLVANIA, VIRGINIA,  
OHIO, KENTUCKY AND TENNESSEE,*

AND THROUGH

*THE TERRITORIES OF INDIANA, LOUISIANA,  
MISSISSIPPI AND NEW-ORLEANS;*

PERFORMED

IN THE YEARS 1807 AND 1808;

INCLUDING A TOUR OF NEARLY SIX THOUSAND MILES.

WITH MAPS AND PLATES.

*BY CHRISTIAN SCHULTZ, JUN. ESQ.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.....VOL. II.

NEW-YORK :

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DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK, ss.

**B**E IT REMEMBERED, That on the twentieth day of March, in the thirty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America, ISAAC RILEY, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words and figures following, to wit :

“Travels on an Inland Voyage through the States of New-York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, and through the Territories of Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi and New-Orleans; performed in the years 1807 and 1808; including a tour of nearly six thousand miles. With Maps and Plates. By Christian Schultz, Jun. Esq. In two Volumes. Volume II.”

IN CONFORMITY to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;” and also to an act, entitled, “An act, supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints.”

CHARLES CLINTON,  
Clerk of the District of New-York.

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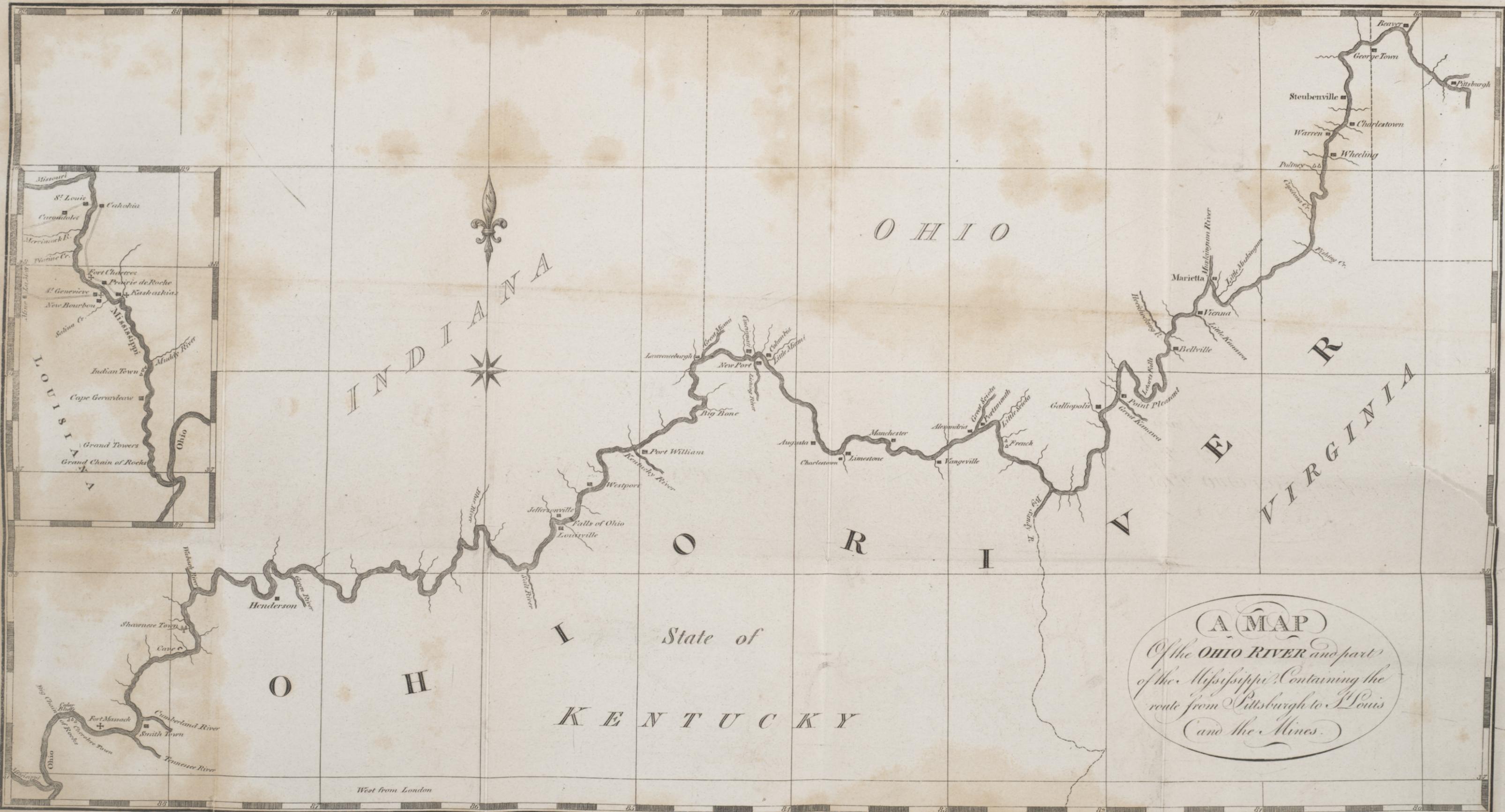
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(A MAP)  
 Of the OHIO RIVER and part  
 of the Mississippi, Containing the  
 route from Pittsburgh to St. Louis  
 (and the Mines.)



# TRAVELS.

## LETTER XVIII.

*Mississippi, (Mouth of Ohio,)  
October 24, 1807.*

Dear Friend,

AFTER leaving Cumberland River, and descending twelve miles along the Kentucky shore, you gently glide into the Tennessee or Cherokee River, which is certainly the finest and largest stream that contributes to the main river. Its waters are clear and transparent, whilst those of the Ohio still continue turbid and thick, and even after uniting with the latter may be traced for a mile quite separate and distinct. It is about four hundred and sixty or eighty yards in breadth at its mouth, and navigable for two hundred and fifty miles, when it is obstructed by sand-beds called the Muscle Shoals. Light craft, it is said, may ascend this river for one thousand miles further. After passing the Cumberland moun-

tains, it expands itself in the form of a small lake, from ten to twelve hundred yards in width, while immediately at the mountains it is contracted to the small space of seventy or eighty yards only.

The head waters of this river rise in the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, and collectively pass off into the Ohio, about twenty miles north of the boundary line between the States of Kentucky and Tennessee. The Muscle Shoals are said to be about twenty miles in length and three in breadth, and are formed by a great number of small sand-bars, shoals, and islands, abounding with fresh-water pearl muscle. At a very trifling expense, a channel might be opened through them, sufficient to afford a constant navigation at all seasons of the year. About one mile below the mouth of the Tennessee is a very fine site for the establishment of a town; but as this part of the State is yet entirely unsettled, and the Indian title probably not yet extinguished, some years must elapse before any considerable improvements can take place; and a much longer time before any attention will be paid to improving the navigation of the river.

Twelve miles below the Tennessee you arrive at Fort Massack, situated on the right bank of the river in the Territory of Indiana. This is a military post, occupied by a garrison, and formerly was the head-quarters of the army. This station appears to have been chosen merely on ac-

count of its facility of communication with the posts on the Mississippi and Ohio, as it cannot be very healthy, in consequence of the land back of the fort being subject to inundation by every rise of the river. At a distance it has the appearance of a little town, from the number of houses and other buildings belonging to the garrison.

It is said, that Burr and Wilkinson held a long consultation at this post, some time before the *mysterious connection* was known to the public; and that even as late as when Burr descended the river, although the whole country was in arms to arrest him, he not only halted here at his leisure, but even procured some arms and other necessary supplies!

Sixteen miles below Massack, you pass a station which *has* been called Wilkinsonville, formerly Cedar Bluffs. This was a few years back the head-quarters of the commander in chief; but from the unhealthiness of the place, the garrison was removed back to Fort Massack. No white settlers are now found at this place; but, since its abandonment by the army, it has been occupied by a few families of Cherokee Indians. Directly opposite to this, is a small Cherokee town, consisting of about twelve families, where we stopped, under an impression of its being a white settlement, in order to procure some milk for our coffee. All the hands, for one purpose or other, had landed, and strolled up the bank, while

I remained alone in the boat, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the town, not being able to approach nearer, owing to the wide flats which extended from the shore. I saw L— enter the town, and in a few minutes heard several Indian whoops, which startled me a little, as it was a prevailing opinion that the Indians had entered into a confederacy to make war upon the United States. Shortly after, four stout Indians jumped down the bank, and with a continued yell came running with all their speed towards the boat. As I was alone, and could perceive nothing of L— or any of the boatmen, who, it appears, had entered the town, I began to think they had all been secured, and that the four Indians who were approaching intended to seize me likewise. I could not discover that they had any arms, yet, I concluded, that if they once came near me, their knives, which they always carry about them, would be sufficient for their purpose. I would have been glad, at this moment, to have been out in the stream; but, in consequence of the shallowness of the water, and the want of assistance, it was in vain to attempt it. I had two fowling-pieces, a rifle, and a pair of pistols, all loaded; and my air-gun, which had been charged a few hours before, for the purpose of shooting at a flock of wild turkeys, was worth a dozen common guns at a moderate distance. I stood in the stern of the boat as they approached, and had my

arms all prepared, lying before me under an awning, and concealed from their view, with a determination to use them, should I discover any signs of hostility. I was soon convinced, however, by their countenances, that their intentions were friendly; they halted about thirty yards from the boat, and did not offer to approach before I repeatedly invited them to come on board. One of them, who afterwards informed me he was son to the chief, told me, that some Indians (pointing to the north-west) had lately paid a visit to their chief, whose name was Captain Jack, and was one of the four then on board, inviting them to join in hostilities against the United States. This he said they had refused, and had given for answer, that it suited them best to remain at peace; yet, if they must go to war, they would side with the United States. I had purchased at Pittsburgh a small American jack, displaying the stars and stripes of my country. I therefore on this occasion hoisted it at the mast head, and my visitors seemed much pleased with the compliment. They were strongly impressed with the idea that I was employed by government; and when they understood, from inquiries, that I was for ascending the Mississippi, they repeatedly inquired, whether I carried *talks* to the tribes inhabiting the upper waters. In the course of the conversation, I laid before them a plain map

of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers; and although it was probably the first they had ever seen, yet, after I pointed out to them their present situation, together with that of the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Wabash, I was surprised at the degree of intelligence they discovered in pointing out several errors on my map, in the courses of those and other streams.

I next inquired of them what they knew respecting the great bones found up the river at Big Bone Lick, but could obtain no satisfactory information, as they had never seen them, though they had heard that such bones were likewise found on some of the head waters of the Tennessee river. It was their opinion, however, "that the animal had existed and perished long *before* the "red men were created."

You would have been much pleased in witnessing the surprise of these people upon seeing my air-gun, which I now showed to them. It was impossible to make them comprehend the nature of its construction, when I assured them it would do execution without fire or powder. I presented it to them one after another for examination, but could not persuade them to take it into their hands. Captain Jack inquired, whether it made smoke and noise like another gun, and finally requested to see me shoot. One of them immediately stepped up to an old canoe, and placed a chip upon the gunwale for a mark. I fired and

buried the ball in the side of the canoe, about an inch below the mark. They were astonished, and looked at each other without speaking a word. But you may judge of their surprise when they saw me fire a second time without seeing me put in the ball, which I did while they were running to examine the mark. The second struck the chip and passed through it, making a wake in the sand beyond. They all ran to look at it again, while I unobserved slipped a third ball in the barrel. After firing the third time, they were as well convinced that my gun would fire from morning to night, as if it had been done in their presence. They had no idea of the air being compressed into the butt by artificial means, but concluded that the gun, like a watch, would go all the time.

I now treated my visitors with a dram of whiskey, and for this purpose had to unlock a travelling liquor-case, the flasks of which, being white and handsomely gilt and flowered, soon caught their attention. "How *mush* buck? How *mush* "buck?" was repeated half a dozen times before I discovered that it meant, *How many buckskins would I take for a flask?* I told them I could not spare any, as I had to travel many moons on the waters. But yet, as a mark of friendship, I made Captain Jack a present of one full of liquor. He was extremely well pleased with the gift, and insisted upon my going up to the town to re-

ceive some *bucks* in return. With great difficulty I excused myself. He then, with his companions, left me in great haste; and in about twenty minutes returned with his wife and daughters, each having a small bundle under her arm. On coming on board he took the bundles, and presented them to me: they consisted of six drest buckskins, some jerked venison, and a bottle of milk. His two daughters appeared to be about fourteen and sixteen years of age, and, notwithstanding their light copper complexion, were extremely handsome, and behaved with as much modesty as I could expect from any female friend of my own, on a similar occasion. Captain Jack is about five feet nine inches high, light built, of a pleasing countenance, and about fifty years of age; he appears to be possessed of a considerable share of intelligence and information, and has lately introduced among his tribe many of our improvements in husbandry and dress. The women and girls are all habited in short gowns and petticoats, after the fashion of the white people, from homespun cottons of their own manufacture; but instead of the hat and stocking, they use a cloak and moccasins. You may be sure I did not fail to treat my *fair* visitors with all the delicacies which my *vessel* afforded. I first presented them with a glass of noyau, which went all round, and came back half full. I then presented another of wine, which seemed to be relished but very little better.

At length I offered them some French brandy. This hit the mark exactly; for each lady took off her glass without making any wry faces. I then served them with crackers, cheese, and dry rusk, to all which they did equal honour. Our hands being by this time assembled on board, we took a friendly leave of our visitors, and promised to call whenever we passed that way again.

About four miles below this Indian settlement, you pass what is called the Big Chain of Rocks, a broken ledge, which extends in detached fragments nearly two-thirds across the river. The navigation of this passage is perfectly safe in the day-time, but unless you are well acquainted with its situation, it is imprudent to attempt it at night. Here, in all probability, has been a fall or rapid in the river, but now worn away by the constant friction of the water. After passing the Big Chain of Rocks, you descend twenty miles, and find yourself at the mouth of the Ohio, where it discharges into the Mississippi, at the distance of one thousand and forty miles from its head at Pittsburgh, and situated in lat. 36. 59. N. long. 88. 45. W.

Having at length reached that point which I suppose to be nearly the half of my intended voyage into the interior, I shall, before I enter on any new subject, say a few words on the probable increase of trade in this country, and the different

channels through which they may receive their supplies from the Atlantic States.

From the rapid increase of population in this country within the last twelve years, and the immense tracts of the finest lands in the world, which yet remain to be settled, you may form some idea, not only of the vast quantities of India, European, and West-India goods, already consumed, but likewise to what an astonishing amount it must arise in the short period of fifty years.

If you cast your eye over the map, you will find, that at least one-third of the whole United States must, as it becomes settled, receive their supply of foreign articles from the Atlantic ports, either overland from Philadelphia and Baltimore, or by way of the lakes from New-York. There are two other points which may likewise be mentioned, namely, Alexandria and New-Orleans, as being more advantageously situated for supplying the lower parts of the Ohio and the surrounding country. But neither of these can ever rival New-York in supplying the Western Country, as the former, independently of a rough land carriage of three hundred miles, is too small ever to furnish that variety which such a vast extent of country must require. The latter never can send any goods to the mouth of the Ohio in less than sixty days, and at a cost of nearly six dollars on every hundred weight.

The whole competition for the supply of this country with these articles, has hitherto been confined to the cities of Philadelphia and Baltimore, from whence the goods are brought three hundred miles in waggons, nearly one-third of which pass over the Alleghany mountains, and other rough ledges, and average the expense (exclusive of breakage) at five dollars on every hundred weight. It generally takes from eighteen to twenty days to perform this journey; but as the waggons are heavily laden, they often break down, which frequently adds three or four days more to the time just mentioned.

New-York, though equally well situated, and at all times able to furnish a greater variety of goods, on much lower terms, has not yet entered into a competition with her rivals for the supply of this extensive market. This probably has proceeded from the want of a more minute description of the route, and from the expense attending it; as I could not learn, from all my inquiries, that any merchandise had ever been brought, before this year, from New-York or Albany, by the route I travelled to the waters of the Ohio. I shall therefore proceed to give you a correct estimate of the time and money necessarily expended on this route, in order to show upon what terms New-York can supply that country *at present*, and what will probably be the reduced price a few years hence.

*Table of Distances, Time, and Expenses.*

	Miles.		Days.	Highest Charge. per cwt.	Lowest charge. per cwt.
From New-York to Albany	160	is by steam-boat	1 1-2	40	20
Schenectady	15	turnpike road	1-2	16	16
Utica	104	by five and ten ton boats	5	75	50
Oswego	104	by the same	3	tolls. 1 25	1 0
Niagara or Lewis-Town	} 172	by sea vessels	3	50	50
Fort Schlosser and Black Rock	} 7 } 17	level road by ten ton boats	} 1 1-2	25	25
Presque Isle	90	by sea vessels	2	50	50
Le Beauf	15	turnpike road	1	50	50
Pittsburgh	207	by ten ton boats	5	50	50
	<hr/> 891		<hr/> 22 1-2 days.	<hr/> \$4 81	<hr/> \$4 11

From the foregoing statement it will be seen, that although the distance is nearly three times as great as the land carriage from Philadelphia and Baltimore, yet an ordinary passage will consume only twenty-two days and a half, and cost at most four dollars and eighty-one cents per hundred for bulky articles, and four dollars and eleven cents for those of greater solidity; excepting salt in barrels, which is still lower. Add to this, that the portages do not altogether amount to more than thirty-eight miles, and since that of Le Beauf has been turnpiked, the whole of that distance may be considered as a smooth and even road, without so much as a stone to obstruct the wheels of a carriage. Those, therefore, who may hereafter pursue this route, need not be under any apprehension of meeting with delays on these waters for want of a ready conveyance; or of being detained at any of the portages for want of teams, as these are always ready to start at a moment's warning; so that within half an hour after landing, the goods may be on their way to the next place of shipment.

This route may be used at all times of the year, when the navigation is open, by boats of ten tons burthen, except from July to October, while the waters are low; when it may still be navigated by light boats carrying three or four tons only. I would advise those who transport goods this way, to provide themselves with large tarpawlings

to cover them, which will effectually secure them from all damages of wind or weather.

Another advantage attending this' route is, that those who wish to transport their goods beyond Pittsburgh, may at all times purchase a boat at Le Beauf cheaper than at the former place, and by this means reduce the last item of the charges of freight exactly one half, which would bring it to four dollars and fifty-six cents, and three dollars and eighty-six cents; on every hundred weight.

Although this estimate is already far below the price of waggon-hire from Philadelphia and Baltimore, yet I had assurances from the captains of both the vessels in which I sailed across the lakes, that they would reduce their freight still lower in order to encourage the transportation of merchandise by that route. And Messrs. Porter, Barton, & Co. who have the exclusive portage around the Falls of Niagara, informed me that they would not only reduce their rates to the lowest cent, and afford every facility to those who travel that route, but would likewise make it a general rule to give merchandise the preference in all their shipments.

You will find, upon referring to my table of expenses, that the distance from Utica to Oswego is the most extravagant of all the charges, being not less than a dollar and twenty-five cents per hundred weight for a hundred and four miles.

You will no doubt recollect the observations I communicated to you while passing that route. I shall therefore now only add, that as the Western Inland Navigation Company seem unable to extend their improvements agreeably to their charter, it is more than probable the legislature will soon adopt some effectual measures to accomplish the objects for which they were incorporated. It is of the utmost importance to the State, that this navigation should be completed with all convenient speed, and that the tolls should be so reduced as to make it an object to those who may prefer this circuitous route. When this is accomplished, and the tolls reduced (as they will be) at least fifty per cent. we can then deliver our goods at Pittsburgh at a less cost than four dollars per hundred weight, and be enabled to supply the back parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia, the whole of the States of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, together with the Territories of Michigan, Indiana, and Louisiana.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XIX.

*Louisiana, Mouth of Ohio,*  
*October 24, 1807.*

Dear Friend,

I ALWAYS supposed we had a fort established at the junction of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, but upon inspection I find that I was mistaken as to its situation. It was built on the left bank of the Mississippi, a few miles below the Ohio, but has long since been abandoned as useless.

The land immediately above and below the mouth of the Ohio is too low to admit of fortifications or permanent settlements being made with any prospect of success, as the height and frequency of the inundations would always render them unhealthy. There is at present one solitary hut upon the upper point, which is always abandoned when the waters rise to a certain height. The Louisiana side is much more elevated; but Colonel B—, who resides here, informed me, that

he had twice seen it covered with eight or ten inches of water in the course of thirteen years.

The point of land above the Ohio, is perhaps as rich a soil as nature can produce, having been formed by frequent layers of mud and slime deposited by repeated overflowings of the river, and when moistened by a flood or continued rain, becomes soft and slippery like soap. The surface of the margin of this tract, for a quarter of a mile in breadth, and as far as I walked, which was about two miles, in length, exhibits something of a curiosity, being cut and chequered in a thousand different forms and figures, by the contraction of the soil, occasioned by a long continuance of dry weather. Some of these fissures are so broad and deep, that unless you look before you at every step, you fall in up to your knees. The edge of this soil is covered with a thick growth of willows, which are always the first occupants of a new accumulation of soil, and grow here to a very large size. These trees are ranged in such regular order, that a stranger being introduced into a grove of them without knowing how he got there, would conclude he was in some old nursery grounds, as every year's growth may be traced distinctly, the youngest being always in front nearest the river, and the oldest in the rear. I found large groves of these willows, which at a distance had the appearance of having suffered

from a hurricane or tornado, but, upon a nearer examination, I discovered that this scene of destruction had been committed by a tribe of the feathered creation! Here was a space of about forty acres of willows, which had not only all the branches broken off, but likewise many of the middling sized saplings were bent to the ground, while the surface was literally coated over with dung and feathers. I soon discovered that this was a pigeon-roost, and that, from the myriads which come every evening to the same place, the branches are crowded at every twig, until, by the increase of weight, they are broken off. We likewise found wild geese and brant in the greatest plenty at this place, and so little afraid, that we could at any time approach within fifty yards of them. You may judge of the facility with which they are shot, when I inform you, that I knocked over fifteen in less than two hours. They appear to have changed their manner of living with the country they inhabit; for with you they are generally seen on the water, but here they seem as constantly attached to the land; nor will they indeed take to the river, unless frequently disturbed. This, however, may be owing to their finding their food altogether on the shores at this season of the year, and it is not until that fails, that they resort to the shallow waters. They do not partake in the least

of that rancid, fishy taste, so common to those on the coasts, and, in my opinion, are far preferable to our tame geese.

The people of this country frequently catch the young goslings before they can use their wings, and rear them with a tame brood. It is necessary, however, to keep their wings cut for the first year, as they sometimes will join a flock passing over, particularly if it flies low. I have seen flocks of twenty and thirty raised in this manner around some yards, and they appeared perfectly tame. I likewise saw several broods of the wild turkey, produced in a similar way: these are procured by placing the eggs, which are frequently found in the woods, under a hen or a tame turkey, and the brood become as much attached to the barnyard as if they had a claim to it by hereditary right. I shot several dozens of wild turkeys in descending the river, but could never discover the least difference betwixt them and those we have domesticated. They can scarcely be denominated wild, as we frequently passed within thirty yards of flocks which were drinking by the river, without their showing the least signs of alarm.

In descending the Ohio from Pittsburgh to this place, you pass no less than eighty-five islands, many of which contain from a hundred to some thousand acres, and are all composed of the richest soil: most of them, however, are so very low as

to be entirely useless, being frequently covered with water. I likewise remarked, that most of the spurs or ridges of mountains, and highlands, generally extended from the north-east to the south-west; more elevated to the east, but gradually subsiding into plains as they advance to the west.

I certainly was much disappointed in my expectations, when I arrived at the mouth of the Ohio, and entered the Mississippi. From what I had heard, I anticipated something awfully grand or beautiful from the junction of two of the largest rivers on our continent. Judge, then, how much I was surprised, when we passed from one river into the other, without being sensible of any other change than that of an increased velocity of current. Indeed, had we not been on the watch, we had glided into the rapid and mighty Mississippi, and still thought ourselves on the gentle Ohio.

The inhabitants of the Ohio country in general have very little of that unmeaning politeness, which we so much praise and admire in the Atlantic States. They are as yet the mere children of nature, and neither their virtues nor their vices are calculated to please refined tastes. They are brave, generous, and humane, and, in proportion to their population, are able to produce the most effective military force of any in our country.

This preeminence may chiefly be attributed to their exposed situation on an Indian frontier, where they were not only kept in constant danger and alarm, but even found it necessary to teach their sons and daughters, as soon as they were big enough to raise a gun, to load and level the rifle. On more than one occasion have I seen these Spartan females, while engaged at the spinning-wheel, or in some other domestic occupation, snatch up the loaded rifle, and fell the bounding deer as he incautiously passed within shot of the cabin. But since peace has been established with the Indians, (most of whom have removed to a greater distance from the whites,) the rifle has become the target of honour among these hardy Americans; and a Kentuckian\* would scorn to shoot a squirrel, or even a swallow, unless with a rifle; in the choice of which they are even more particular than in selecting a wife. There are a number of rifle manufactories established this country, but the best and handsomest I have seen are to be procured in Kentucky and Tennessee, where they are made of every size from twenty balls to the pound up to one hundred, and the price from fifteen to a hundred dollars.

The inhabitants of this country, however, labour under one very great inconvenience, which

\* All the inhabitants on the Ohio are here called *Kentuckians*.

arises from the scarcity of cash ; as, for want of a sufficient circulating medium, their trade and dealings are necessarily confined to barter. The merchants, whose stores may be said to be so many collectors' offices, receive their goods overland from New-York, by way of Alexandria, Philadelphia and Baltimore, and some small supplies from Alexandria. Payments are made to them chiefly in the bulky produce of the country, the only market for which is at New-Orleans. The consequence is, that they are constantly occupied in collecting all the specie they can, in order to make their remittances over land. Several plans, I am informed, have been projected for detaining the money in the country, but none I believe have operated so effectually as that in practice in the States of Kentucky and Tennessee. Here a round dollar no sooner makes its appearance, than it is divided from the centre into eight equal pieces ; and some, I am told, carry their ingenuity so far as to make *nine* and even *ten* eighths out of a dollar ; securing at once a profit of twenty-five per cent. for their labour.

The country above Cincinnati is healthy, and free from all kinds of bilious complaints, although the shores of the river are generally one continued and impassable bed of mud and slime. On the contrary, the shores below are more dry and gravelly, and frequently present a clean beach to the eye ; yet they are very subject to complaints of the

bilious kind. I was not a little surprised, when I first noticed these circumstances, as the facts turned out so different from my own calculations; but upon a more minute inquiry, I think I discovered the cause in the great difference of the face of the two divisions. The upper being a more hilly and mountainous country, affords an easier descent for the waters; while the lower is gradually subsiding into a plain and level country, where the lands back from the river, being in many places considerably lower than the banks, retain large portions of water from every rain or inundation; these, for want of a passage to the river, soon become stagnant and putrid, and give rise to complaints, from which, in the other case, they would be perfectly exempt.

This country being as yet quite new, it cannot be expected that any extraordinary advances should have been made in the propagation of fruit-trees, especially of those kinds which require a growth of ten or twelve years before they become profitable. Apples, pears, and cherries, are, therefore, not to be considered as common on the Ohio, although, in some of the old interior settlements, they have them in abundance. The peach-tree, however, may be said to cover the banks of the river, as there is scarcely a settlement between Pittsburgh and the Falls of the Ohio, that has not one or more orchards of them. At three years of age they begin to bear plentifully; and indeed it

often becomes necessary to shake off a portion of their superabundant load. Peach-brandy is distilled in great quantities every season, and constitutes a considerable branch of the domestic trade of this country. While descending the river, we landed daily, for the purpose of procuring a supply of peaches, the price of which was generally from twelve and a half cents to a quarter of a dollar per bushel.

The following are the natural fruit and forest-trees, which I noticed on the banks of the Ohio: mandrakes, currants, grapes and small berries of various kinds, plums, mulberries, wild cherries, black and white haws, buck-eyes, papaws, and cucumbers; likewise black walnut, white walnut, butter-nut, chesnut, honey-locust, pecan nut,\* pines, sassafras, white-oak, black-oak, dog-wood, locust, beech, ash, elm, sycamore, sugar-maple, soft maple, tulip, (magnolia,) black thorn, Jerusalem oak, or spice oak, cotton or poplar, and of willows an endless variety. I do not recollect meeting with any white pine below Pittsburgh, nor with any pitch or yellow pines below the Falls of Ohio.

I have now given you a detail of my progress over a route of more than two thousand miles to this place; but whether I shall descend immediately to New-Orleans, or ascend to Cape Gi-

\* Pecan nuts are first found below Scioto.

ardeau, St. Genevieve, or St. Louis, or even as far as the Missouri, I am undetermined. I have a great inclination to visit the Mines, and the capital of Louisiana, especially as I can hardly expect to have a better opportunity. I shall consult my pillow, and resolve to-night. To-morrow's sun will therefore behold me either rapidly passing down into the mild and genial climates of the south, or slowly creeping through snags and sawyers towards the more unpleasant but vigorous seasons of the north.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XX.

*Cape Girardeau, (Louisiana,)*  
*October 27, 1807.*

Dear Friend,

YOU will perceive that my compass has pointed to the north, and that, instead of descending immediately to New-Orleans, I have determined to make a short excursion up the Mississippi. Independently of the desire I had to ascend this river and visit its capital, two other circumstances occurred, which finally induced me to make the attempt. The first was the report brought up by a barge just arrived from New-Orleans, that the inhabitants were dying there so much faster than they could be buried, that the negroes were provided with long poles and hooks, with which they dragged the bodies of the dead to the Mississippi, and there committed them to the flood. My hands were all *aback* at the recital of this melancholy news, nor could they by any means be prevailed upon to continue the voyage. The other was, that as no hands could be got in this part of the wil-

derness, I should be under the necessity of going up as high as St. Genevieve, which is nearly two-thirds of the distance to St. Louis. Having, therefore, an opportunity of taking a passage in the barge just mentioned, which was bound to St. Genevieve, I determined at once to pay off my hands, and leave the boat at the mouth of the Ohio.

While the necessary preparations were making for our departure, I walked some distance up the Mississippi, when I perceived an animal of a black colour, nearly in the middle of the river, making frequent splashings in the water around him. I was much at a loss to conjecture what it could be, and the distance prevented me from satisfying my curiosity. I soon noticed, however, that it made no progress towards either shore, but seemed rather to swim down with the stream. My eye was steadily fixed on this object, until it came in a line with a low white sandy beach, when suddenly I perceived a man, rising as it were out of the sand, who with one arm pointed up the river, while with the other he made all the violent motions he possibly could. I soon distinguished the sound of his voice, but was unable to comprehend the meaning either of his words or his actions. The only idea that struck me was, that he mistook me for some other person, and wished to be taken across the river; and that he pointed to some place where a boat might

be procured for that purpose. I began, however, to retrace my steps, still keeping my eye on the man, as likewise on the first object, which now appeared to be sitting on a piece of drift-wood, from which it was every now and then jumping into the water. As soon, therefore, as I came within hail of the barge's crew, I informed them of my observations, and pointed out the man who seemed to follow me, and still continued the same violent actions. The crew no sooner saw him and observed his motions, than they cried out, that there was a boat lost, while the captain ordered every man to their relief. Five, with himself, jumped into my empty boat; two into the small skiff; two more into a canoe which I had picked up the day before, and Colonel B—, with three of his negroes, in his own boat, all went off to their assistance. Before they were at any great distance from the shore, I ascended an old tree on the bank of the river, and perceived the head of one poor fellow, who had clinched a floating tree, and, although he had dropped down below us, and passed within hail of our camp, yet, in all human probability, must have been lost, had I not seen him just as I did. I pointed him out to the small canoe, and had the satisfaction to see him taken in and landed at our camp. The poor fellow was unable to walk, stand, or even sit, without support; and the men who took him up informed me, that he had not spoken a sin-

gle word ; nor was it indeed without great difficulty that they broke his hold from the tree. The remains of the wreck began about this time to float by us, and consisted of a long string of trunks, chests, boxes, kegs, barrels, bedding, packs of furs, and buffalo robes ; most of which were saved by our boats. With great difficulty three men belonging to the wreck had gained the opposite shore, to which they were nearest when the accident happened. Three more, by hanging on oars and boards, were carried into the middle of the river, and after drifting about one mile, found they were nearest to our shore, where, with the greatest difficulty, they effected a landing. Two were drowned immediately after the boat struck. One of these was an excellent swimmer, and it was said, would on any other occasion have swam across the Mississippi for a frolic ; but on the present occasion so effectually lost his presence of mind, that he was unable to swim a single stroke. On the other hand, the one we picked up had never learned to swim ; yet, having caught hold of the gang-boards, he held on until he was carried into a lodge of drift-wood, where he received a very severe bruise on the head ; and although it must have nearly deprived him of his senses, he said he did not then feel it, and had even presence of mind sufficient to exchange his gang-board for a whole tree, upon which we found

him. The black object which I first descried they informed me was a tame bear, which had been chained to the steering-oar, and his frequent tumbling into the water was probably occasioned by the shortness of his chain. This boat was loaded with lead and furs, bound from St. Genevieve to Louisville on the Ohio, and about six miles above the mouth of the river must have been struck with a sleeping sawyer, there not being the least sign of any ripple or commotion in the water.

I find, since I am on the Mississippi, that I shall be under the necessity of using many terms not very familiar to you. I shall therefore furnish you with a kind of glossary of them.

*Sawyers* are the bodies of trees, whose roots have by some means become fastened to the bottom of the river, in such a manner, that, from the continual pressure of the current, they receive a regular vibratory motion, from the resemblance of which to that of a saw-mill, they have derived their name. Some of these have a very quick motion; others again are slower, frequently disappearing from one to twenty minutes, and then elevating their monstrous shafts from one to ten feet above the surface of the water; and wo betide the boat whose bottom comes in contact with them at this unlucky moment!

*Sleeping Sawyers* are the same as those just mentioned, except that their motion is entirely

under water, and the danger proportionably greater, as it is impossible to discover them before you feel the dreadful effects of their power. When their heads approach within twelve or fifteen inches of the surface of the river, an expert boatman will discover them by the ripple of the water with which they are accompanied; but when they are three or four inches lower, it is impossible to ascertain their position.

*Planters* are likewise large trees, firmly bedded by the roots in the soft muddy bottom of the river. Some of these stand perpendicular; others have an inclination down the stream, and a few upwards; which last are by far the most dangerous. These trees have at first all their branches, but the immense quantities of floating timber soon strip off the whole, and sometimes leave a perpendicular shaft of thirty or forty feet in height, and twelve in circumference.

*Falling Banks* are so called from their being undermined by the current in such a manner, that small portions are continually falling. It very often happens, that masses of an acre in extent, disappear in an instant; and trees, which were once growing on a bank thirty or forty feet above the surface, now seem half buried in the water. This phenomenon is easily accounted for, the bank being composed entirely of that rich, loose, and triable soil, which I noticed near the

mouth of the Ohio, without any thing to bind it together, or resist the force of the current, which is always strongest in these places. The consequence is, that its base is constantly wearing away, till at length the weight of the projecting bank becomes too great to maintain its adhesion, and, obedient to the laws of gravitation, falls to the bottom of the river.

From this description you will no doubt see the propriety of always avoiding these banks, and preferring willow points or islands for encampments. I do not recollect a single instance of meeting with falling banks on both sides of the river at the same time.

*Wooden Islands* are generally formed at the upper end of a real one, where an enormous collection of trees and floating timber becomes entangled and matted together, sometimes to the extent of nearly a quarter of a mile, and in time makes part of the main island. These are very dangerous, as the depth of water at their head or point is frequently thirty, forty, or sixty feet, and the velocity of the current is such, that notwithstanding the exertions of a large boat's crew which we met on the river, they very narrowly escaped being dashed on the point of one of these islands.

*Floating Islands* are the same as the above, being indifferently known by both names.

I shall probably have occasion to make use of more expressions that are in vogue on this river; but as they are chiefly applicable to the navigation below the mouth of the Ohio, I shall postpone any further explanations till I can make them from observations of my own.

I shall not be very particular in my remarks, while ascending the river, it being my intention to describe the country more accurately on my return. I shall therefore at present give you little more than the names and distances of certain points on my voyage to this place.

After leaving the mouth of the Ohio, you ascend fifteen miles, and come to a difficult passage called the Grand Chain of Rocks, which extends nearly across the river. Although, from the slowness of your motion in ascending, which never exceeds fifteen or eighteen miles a day, there is little or no danger in passing this reef, yet, in the present low state of the water, a loaded boat runs considerable risk of being wrecked in descending, unless guided by an experienced pilot. Six miles below this reef you pass a stupendous mass of rocks called the Grand Tower, where the river turns suddenly to the left, and in the next mile turns again to the right; from whence you have fourteen miles more of a safe navigation to the town of Cape Girardeau.

In ascending the river to this place, I counted nine considerable settlements on the Louisiana

side, but not a single one on the Indiana. All these, however, were gratuitous grants under the Spanish government, which has been extremely liberal in encouraging settlers.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXI.

*St. Louis, (Louisiana,)*  
*November 22, 1807.*

Dear Friend,

HAVING landed you in my last rather abruptly at Cape Girardeau, I am in the same haste to bring you to the capital of Louisiana. You will, therefore, after leaving the former place, ascend ten miles, and pass a town of the Shawanese tribe of Indians, situated on the Louisiana side of the river. Four miles higher, on the opposite side, is the mouth of Muddy River, where we encamped during the night; and never, during our travels, were we better entertained by a full concert of wolf-music. For my own part, my attention was so completely engaged *all night*, that I found it necessary to keep my bed the whole of the next day. From Muddy River to Picket Island, a very difficult passage in descending, is sixteen miles, and from thence to the mouth of the Kaskaskias, is twenty more. Six miles higher, on

the opposite shore, you pass the mouth of Salina Creek, which is seven miles below the village of New Bourbon, and three more will bring you to the village of St. Genevieve, the port to which our barge was bound.

After having remained ten days at St. Genevieve, without meeting with an opportunity of ascending by water, I concluded to perform the journey by land, and, in order to diversify my route, resolved to cross the river, and pass through the Indiana Territory to Prairie Le Roche, Fort Chartres, and Cahokia, where, recrossing the river, I could return by way of the Mines.

Leaving St. Genevieve, you ascend two miles, in the direction of the river, to the Little Rocks, where there is a good ferry. Six miles further, in a most charming country, being a continued prairie of the richest soil, you find Prairie le Roche, an old French settlement of about forty families, who are all Roman Catholics, and support a confessor and chapel of their own.

This village is built upon a very contracted scale, the streets being barely twenty feet wide. This apparent economy, however, was not without a sufficient reason at the time these settlements were made, it being done for the purpose of consolidating the village as much as possible, that it might serve instead of fortifications, and that the inhabitants might always be near enough to assist each other in case of surprise by the savages.

The people of this settlement all live by tillage, and in their outward appearance seem but a few degrees superior to their savage neighbours ; yet, when accosted, they immediately discover their national trait of politeness.

About four miles from Prairie le Roche is situated the celebrated post of Fort Chartres, which is said to have cost the Spanish government a hundred thousand crowns. It seems, that no pains or expense has been spared to render this fortress impregnable ; and, as far as I can judge, without any other object than that of making it a general depository of military stores, as the situation is not superior to many others along the banks of the river. The whole of these extensive works were laid in stone and mortar. At the time of erecting them they were upwards of a quarter of a mile from the river, but, at the present moment, half of them have fallen into the Mississippi, and, in a very few years, the site of old Fort Chartres will be sought for in vain !

After leaving Prairie le Roche, you pass fifteen miles over a tract of what appears to be a high level country, but in travelling forward you find it entirely cut up and chequered by deep sink-holes. Some of these are very large, and all serve by means of subterranean canals, to carry off the waters to the bed of the Mississippi, as no streams or rivulets are to be found along the banks in

front of this tract. In winter these caverns likewise serve as dens for bears, wolves, and other animals, which are frequently found concealed in them. Their shape is nearly similar to the upper part of a tin funnel; and, throughout a distance of twelve miles, I think it would be impossible to find a hundred acre lot without at least half a dozen of these holes. Some of the largest are two and three hundred feet across the mouth, and oftentimes so steep, that if cattle fall into them, they cannot get out without assistance.

Having passed through this piece of broken ground, you next ride fifteen miles over one of the richest and most beautiful tracts I have ever seen. It is called the American Bottom, and is a prairie of such extent as to weary the eye in tracing its boundaries. On this tract there are some very considerable settlements, which raise large droves of cattle, and annually send off great quantities of corn, pork, and other produce, to New-Orleans. These bottoms, however, which are inexhaustibly rich, have their evils, being subject to fevers, occasioned by putrid exhalations, and the continual moisture with which they abound. Even in the driest seasons of the year, a very slight rain renders the roads so loose and muddy, that to me they appeared almost impassable. This does not seem to be any great inconvenience to the natives, as they are accustomed to it; and if the mud does

not quite reach over your boot-tops when you sit on the saddle, they call it a middling good road. About thirty miles above this place, you arrive at Cahokia, an old French settlement, which likewise maintains a priest and chapel. This village consists of about a hundred and thirty houses, one dozen of which may be inhabited by Americans. It has heretofore had a considerable peltry trade, but the inhabitants at present chiefly live by tillage. The town of Cahokia, although apparently of considerable elevation, is still a damp and disagreeable situation, owing to its being too level to permit the rains to run off very easily. At this village you cross the Mississippi again, and after a pleasant ride of three miles along the bank of the river, find yourself in the metropolis of Louisiana, which is one hundred and seventy miles from the mouth of the Ohio.

St. Louis is beautifully situated on an elevated bank on the west side of the river. It contains about two hundred houses, which, from the whiteness of a considerable number of them, as they are rough cast and white-washed, appear to great advantage as you approach the town. This is likewise a French settlement, established in the year 1765; the inhabitants are chiefly Roman Catholics, and have a chapel and confessor. A small number of American families have of late years settled in this town, and have had so much influence as to give a decided American *ton* to the fashions of

the place; but as their numbers are too few to erect a church of their own, they have, by way of *amusement*, made arrangements with the father confessor, to give them a little lecture in his chapel every Sunday evening.

I observed two or three BIG houses in the town, which are said to have cost from twenty to sixty thousand dollars, but they have nothing either of beauty or taste in their appearance to recommend them, being simply *big*, heavy, and unsightly structures. In this country, however, where fashion and taste differ so materially from fashion and taste with us, they are considered as something not only grand, but even elegant.

St. Louis has for many years past been the centre of the fur trade in this country; but this branch of business, I am informed, is now rapidly declining, in consequence of the game becoming comparatively scarce.

This town has been strongly fortified by the Spanish government, having two forts, two block-houses, four stone towers, and one half moon. These encircle the whole town on the land side, and are within gun-shot of each other. Some little care is still taken of the forts and barracks occupied by the garrison which is stationed at this place, but the towers and block-houses are entirely neglected, and, for want of repairs, already tumbling to pieces.

The ladies of St. Louis I had heard generally celebrated through all the lower country for their beauty, modesty, and agreeable manners, as well as for their taste and the splendour of their dress. I was therefore very happy in having an opportunity of accepting an invitation to one of their balls, on the first Sunday evening after my arrival; having previously attended the chapel, for the express purpose of being able to form some kind of judgment with respect to their claims; and I must confess, that they appeared to be eminently entitled to all that I had heard in their favour.

St. Louis is situated in lat. 38. 18. N. long: 89. 36. W. from which you would be inclined to believe the climate somewhat warmer than that of New-York, in lat. 40. 40; but I certainly do not think I ever experienced in that city colder weather, at this season of the year, than I have felt in St. Louis for these few days past. I made this remark to some gentlemen who have lived here for four or five years past, but who formerly resided in Philadelphia; and they were of opinion that the winters generally were equally severe, but did not last so long.

During my stay at St. Louis, I made a small excursion to the mouth of the Missouri, and found that it entered the Mississippi fourteen miles above the town, and to me appeared much the larger stream of the two. I cannot conceive what should have induced the first discoverers of these waters

to have named the general stream the Mississippi, as the Missouri, I am informed, continues all its characteristic marks of muddiness and rapidity, down to the sea, while the Mississippi, from its junction, may be traced as a clear, limpid, and much gentler stream, to the Falls of St. Anthony, a distance of a thousand and thirty miles.

Twelve miles distant from the junction of the two rivers, is the principal encampment of the garrison of this country. I did intend to have visited it; but in consequence of the rain, and the great anxiety of my company to return, who assured me they would not walk a hundred yards to satisfy their curiosity, if they had never seen it, I gave up my intention altogether. Twenty miles above the Missouri, the Illinois river falls into the Mississippi from the opposite shore. This river is said to be four hundred yards wide, and is navigable for four hundred and fifty miles, with a very gentle current. It communicates by a portage of five or six miles with the Chicago river, which falls into Lake Michigan; and should a canal be opened, which I am informed is practicable at a very moderate expense, an inland navigation will then be opened from New-York to New-Orleans, with a land carriage of only nineteen miles.

— Considerable settlements have already been made for some hundred miles along the banks of the Mis-

souri River, whence they begin to send off considerable quantities of cattle, corn, and other produce. The country through which this river flows, is represented as equal in extent to that on the Mississippi, and capable of producing every thing to be expected from a soil so rich and luxuriant.

Having remained much longer at St. Louis and its vicinity than I at first intended, I obtained directions for finding the Mines, which lie about seventy-two miles from the town. I had to travel through a perfect wilderness for the greater part of the way, having no other than a blind horse path, which is frequently lost in the innumerable tracks made by cattle, deer, and other animals, crossing from one bottom or lick to another.

It was on this occasion that I had an opportunity of remarking what a powerful impression *habit* can have on the mind of a person, who notwithstanding he may flatter himself that he has so far the command of his own ideas as to be able to accommodate them agreeably to those made use of by others on a similar occasion; yet, when attempting to reduce it to practice, will meet with a disappointment. This I experienced in my inquiries respecting the road to the Mines. I was informed by one, who like myself had seen some of our new countries, yet never had travelled through a wilderness of Louisiana, that he had attempted the one I allude to. He doubted whether

I would be able to find my way through without a guide. I afterwards had an opportunity of receiving further information respecting it from a native of the country, who told me it was a plain road, and that I could not possibly miss it; that I might even ride it at night by the light of the stars. This information was likewise corroborated by several others, who all laughed at the idea of taking a guide, as the road was very plain. I accordingly set out on a Spanish horse, at a round gallop of six miles to the hour. These are a kind of animals you have probably never seen. They are generally about thirteen hands high, hardy, and full of mettle, and may almost be said to live by hard riding, as they are frequently galloped fifty and sixty miles in a day, without even halting to feed. After riding about twenty miles, I found my path begin to grow so small and blind, that I was frequently under the necessity of riding back for a mile or two, in order to satisfy myself that I had not missed it altogether. About noon I heard the report of a gun on my right, and presently after discovered a wounded deer making directly towards me: he was already so far spent as not to notice me when he passed, and before he had proceeded two hundred yards further, fell to the ground. Shortly after a party of five Indians hove in sight, and, lest it might have the appearance of fear if I avoided them, I turned my horse and rode up to them, in hopes of receiving some

directions respecting my route. I soon discovered that they belonged to the Osage tribe ; yet, as none of them understood my inquiries particularly, the only information I received was that point of the compass in the direction of which the Mines lay. I had been informed at St. Louis, that at the distance of fifty miles I should find a cabin, which to me, who had not of late been much accustomed to the saddle, appeared a severe day's journey. I now consulted my watch, and finding that I had rode nine hours at the same rate, concluded I must be near that distance. A thousand times did I censure my folly in setting out on this journey alone, and a thousand times exclaim against my own stupidity and ignorance in expecting to find any thing like a *road* through this wilderness. That there was what my informers would call a *road*, I had no doubt, and that they might ride it at full gallop I could not dispute, as the whole wilderness is open and clear as an orchard. But I soon discovered that *their ideas* of a road differed very essentially from *mine*. They had never seen any thing like the road I alluded to, excepting the streets around the town, and therefore very naturally concluded, when I inquired for a road of more than seventy miles through the wilderness, that I had at least an equivalent idea of what kind of *paths* were dignified with the name of roads. Likewise what kind of road might be expected to a village at that distance, with which they have

scarce any communication except through St. Genevieve, by water. The consequence of my adventure was, that I pursued something that had the appearance of a trail, until I found the sun had set. Being now assured, from the time I had rode, as well as from the distance I had come, that I had lost my way, I thought it time to make preparations for the night. Having prepared a good fire, tied my horse to a tree, and smoked a cigar by way of supper, I wrapped myself up in my watch-coat, and laid myself down by the fire, where I slept very soundly for about four hours. I was then awaked by the snorting of my horse, who was startled by some animal passing very suddenly near him. Finding myself both cold and stiff, I spent the remainder of the night in smoking and walking round the fire, and with the morning's dawn mounted my horse, and measured back my way to St. Louis with all convenient speed, where I arrived a little before dark ; and for the present have laid aside the expedition to the Mines of Louisiana.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXII.

*St. Genevieve, (Louisiana,)*

*December 30, 1807.*

Dear Friend,

AFTER my unsuccessful attempt to find the Mines, I remained another day at St. Louis, and then set out with a guide, who was a native, and well acquainted with the route. After leaving St. Louis, and travelling six miles, you arrive at a small French village called Carondelet, consisting of fifty houses, and is the first of that size which I have yet seen unprovided with a priest and chapel. From this place to the Mines, our route lay through a dry barren wilderness, covered with a stunted growth of oak timber, and so clear and open, that we could see for some miles round us. Fifteen miles from Carondelet, you ford a very considerable stream called the Merrimack river, which is about one hundred yards wide, and may, with some difficulty, be navigated in high water for about one hundred miles. There are some

very fine bottoms along this river, but too low for improvements, being subject to inundations from both rivers. About forty-five miles from the Mer-rimack, you ford another considerable stream, which empties into the former, and is called the Big River. It is, however, not quite so *big* as its name would seem to imply, being no more than thirty yards wide, and about six inches deep. It is not navigable, although some who have examined it say, that in high freshes a boat might descend with great safety. From Big River the road begins to be much plainer, and after riding seventeen miles more, you arrive at the celebrated Lead Mines of Louisiana.

The first you come to on the route I took are the Old Mines, where you find a small village of fifteen houses or cabins, situated on a small rich bottom, on one of the branches of the last-mentioned river. Two miles beyond the village you first see the earth on each side thrown up in hillocks, like so many small hay-cocks in a newly mowed meadow; and on alighting you perceive that the ground is closely chequered with corresponding excavations of about six or seven feet deep. Five miles further, you arrive at the Mine Le Berton, the most considerable and respectable, in point of appearance, of all the establishments. This is a thriving little village of about forty houses, and from the number of new buildings just completed and finishing, bids fair to acquire

some importance in this country. Three miles from Le Berton, and on the road to St. Genevieve, you pass the mines called the New Diggings, where at present are found about thirty temporary cabins; but as it is a new discovery, since the cession of the country to the United States, and withal a very rich one, I think it probable that it will have a rapid increase. Thirteen miles from the last are situated the Mines of Garberie, and seventeen more will bring you to the Mine le Mott, which is the nearest to the Mississippi; the two last are not on the road to St. Genevieve, nor are they considered so productive as those first enumerated.

The reason why I have thus hastily enumerated the whole, is, that the observations I have to make will apply equally to all. This mode will therefore save both you and me the trouble of a repetition.

The above-mentioned mines are all situated in a district of country about fifty miles long and twenty-five broad. It is generally denominated the Mines, as the whole district abounds with lead ore, which has been found in almost every direction. The Mine Le Berton was discovered about sixty years ago by a Frenchman of that name, who being out on a hunt, had built a fire against an odd looking kind of a root, that projected a small distance out of the earth, and soon

discovered itself to be ore by the fusion of those parts immediately acted upon by the fire. These mines at present send the greatest quantity of lead to market. The others have all been discovered at later periods, and new discoveries are made every day.

It is not, however, the mere finding of mineral which makes what they call a discovery; for unless it be found in such quantity and quality as to be an object worth pursuing, it is neglected. The mineral at Mine le Berton is generally found in veins of almost every size from three feet in circumference and under, and from six to twelve feet beneath the surface of the earth. At the New Diggings it is found from four to thirty feet underground, where they are obliged to discontinue their work on account of the water coming in upon them. They have no contrivance to draw it off, except a single bucket, suspended from an arm in a crotchet, after the manner of most of our country wells. The workmen are ill provided with instruments, having no other tools than a pick-ax and shovel, with which they open a hole about six or seven feet deep, and four or five in length and breadth; if they are successful they enlarge the hole, but if not they abandon it and open another, either along side of the former, or in any other spot where their fancy may direct. I have no doubt that those grounds or mines which have apparently been exhausted, or abandoned on

account of the water flowing in upon them, will eventually be found the richest discoveries yet made. I am of opinion, that in no instance have they yet fallen upon the main bed of ore, which probably lies at such a depth as will require the sinking of a shaft to a considerable depth, to enable them to work it. Hitherto they have been contented with the small spurs or veins which are found near the surface of the earth.

When the mineral is collected for smelting, they build up in the woods a back wall with two sides, about sixteen feet in front, eight wide, and six in height, with the floor a little inclining towards the back, where a few small holes are left for the lead as it melts to run into the moulds. Here they pile up wood and mineral in alternate layers, and setting fire to the whole, the operation of smelting is quickly performed. There is but one regular built air-furnace throughout this country, which is at the Mine Le Berton. The expense of such a building is so great, and the mineral so plenty, that the miners prefer an open furnace, which in all probability cannot cost them more than forty or fifty dollars; whereas a proper air-furnace, like the one just mentioned, would cost them five or six thousand dollars. The price of mineral at the works is from eighteen to twenty dollars a thousand pounds weight, and the price of lead five dollars a hundred. The cartage to the landing is one dollar a hundred. Most of the mi-

neral found is so exceeding rich, that one hundred pounds of ore will produce from eighty to ninety of pure lead. From an accurate calculation which I have been enabled to make, I find that nine hundred and twelve tons have been smelted within the last year by the whole number of furnaces; but from the inexhaustible state of the mineral, I suppose that any quantity may be made, even to furnishing a sufficient supply to the whole world. A shot manufactory has lately been established at the Mine Le Berton, where any quantity may be had and of any size, at nine dollars the hundred weight.

The United States have reserved all lead mines not already located, which is a very prudent regulation. However, a gentleman has lately arrived from France, who lays claim to nearly the whole district, by virtue of a power from the heirs of a French officer, who held the same under a grant. Should this claim be confirmed, as those not interested seem to think it will, the whole of this immense wealth must fall into their hands, to the ruin of numbers who now live in ease and affluence. Doctor B—, formerly of Westchester, has become considerably interested in the event of this dispute, as he claims an equal third of the New Diggings, comprising a tract of one thousand acres.

The mine country is a very unpleasant place of residence, as the continual broils and

quarrels among the workmen, as well as the proprietors, keep up a constant scene of warfare. You would certainly feel yourself in very suspicious company, were you to discover, that most of those around you wore a concealed dagger, and sometimes even two, one in the bosom, and the other under the coat; while others have a brace of pistols in the girdle behind the back. I have heard of a number of quarrels since I have been here, and of two or three being wounded by pistol-shot, but no lives were lost; which has rather been owing to the precipitancy of firing, than want of inclination to kill. It is not always that an honourable challenge takes place on account of an affront or difference of opinion; but an instantaneous plunge of the dirk, or a pistol to your face, is the first signal of war. They have, however, become so naturalized to these *ideal dangers*, that of three shots made within two yards of the objects, none were followed with any thing more serious than the loss of three fingers off a hand, and a hole through the lower part of the crown of a hat, just grazing the skin and hair. This bad or good luck is owing to the activity of the antagonist, who is generally aware of his opponent's intention, and prepared to knock the pistol up with his own as soon as it is presented. Rifle-barrelled pistols are altogether used at this place, as likewise at Genevieve; and pistol-shooting at a mark for

wagers seems to be a very general kind of amusement among these people.

After having seen and examined the Mines, I became very anxious to quit a country whose inhabitants are so disgusting in their manners. I felt much better pleased, when I found myself some few miles on the road to St. Genevieve, to which place there is a good waggon road the whole distance, which is fifty-four miles, through a high, dry, and barren country, which, although somewhat hilly, is far from being either rough or mountainous. About midway you pass the Big River, and throughout this road, as well as all others that I have yet travelled in this country, you meet with deer and wild turkeys in abundance; but as there is only one solitary cabin on the route, which promises no enviable entertainment, a desire to reach St. Genevieve, where you may expect to fare better, will prevent any time being unnecessarily lost on the road.

St. Genevieve is an old French settlement, pleasantly situated on the higher ridge of a prairie about two miles from the Mississippi, and contains two hundred families, among which are included about thirty Americans. The greater part of the inhabitants are catholics, who have their chapel and confessor. No other society is yet numerous enough to establish any other religion, and this seems to be but little respected among the few Americans who have settled here. The prairie,

which is here denominated the Big Field, contains about fifteen thousand acres of natural meadow, rich and level as the plānter could wish. This is surveyed out into lots of eighty and a hundred acres or more, and owned by almost every person in the town. As the prairie has no timber upon it, the trouble and expense of fencing would be very considerable: they have therefore but one fence around the whole. The manner of using and improving their respective lots is regulated by law and custom; so that any person who permits his lot to lie idle, or who gets his crops in before his neighbours, cannot derive any benefit or advantage from turning in his cattle, as this is only allowed to be done on a certain day appointed, when the gates are thrown open, and the whole prairie becomes a rich and well-foddered common for the cattle of the whole community. This custom is likewise observed at most of the French settlements in this country. They appear to have borrowed it from the Indians, who, in order to save the labour of fencing, always cultivate their maize in one common field.

This village, when first settled, was built immediately on the banks of the river; but it being there found rather low, and subject to be overflowed by every extraordinary rise of the river, the inhabitants have removed it to its present situation.

St. Genevieve, which lies in lat. 37. 51. N. long. 89. 28. W. is the store-house of the Mines. All the lead prepared at those places is deposited either for sale or shipment at this place; from whence it is sent up the Ohio as far as Pittsburgh, and down the Mississippi to New-Orleans, where it is again distributed throughout the United States. Every inhabitant of the village is more or less engaged in digging mineral at the Mines, or carting of lead, wood, stone, &c. which, with a little tillage, constitutes their principal support. The French use a little kind of cart, made something like those in your city, to which they harness two horses, one before the other, and drive altogether without reins. The blacksmith, carpenter, and tailor, were the only tradesmen employed at this place; all the other necessaries and conveniences of life are procured by importation, at an enormous expense. The majority of the French in this place are almost as easily supplied as the native Indians: neither of them make any use of a hat or shoes; a pair of mockasons and a blanket seems equally common to both, except that the former will cut his into the shape of a coat, whereas the latter always prefers his loose.

A creek called the Gauberie passes just above the town; and although at present perfectly dry, yet from the size of its bed, it must at times contain a considerable stream. This is the case with

most of the creeks on this river as well as the Ohio.

While I was at St. Louis I was informed of an American, formerly of New-York, who resided on the opposite side of the river, and whom misfortunes prevented from returning home. As I understood that he bore an unexceptionable character, and claimed connection with some of the most respectable families in our State, with whom I was acquainted, I sent him a note requesting to see him there, or at St. Genevieve. He accordingly a few days after called upon me at this place, and in the course of our conversation informed me, that he was formerly of Westchester county, in the State of New-York, and had been twelve years in this country. I afterwards discovered that he was a man of extreme sensibility, and, from his own story, unable to bear up against some pecuniary misfortunes, which had induced him to leave his home and retire into this country, with a determination never to return, unless he should prove more fortunate. He had not heard from his family or friends, nor they from him during the whole of that period. I informed him that I was acquainted with most of his connections, and he appeared to be violently agitated when I told him that his father had died but a few years since. I made him an offer of my services to defray his expenses if he wished

to return ; but he declined, and urged as an excuse, the care and charge of a farm, which at that time depended upon him.

I have just received a note, containing the very unpleasant intelligence that my boat, which I left at the mouth of the Ohio, has been stove to pieces by a lodge of drift-wood, and totally carried off. This is not only a serious loss in itself, but the time required to procure another, or even a passage at this season of the year, will, I am told, be attended with great delay. I had no intention of spending more than three weeks in this country when I first ascended the river, but, with the prospect before me, I may be detained a month or two longer.

Yours,

C. S.



- A Highest Bank
- B Level of the Swamp
- C Bottom of the River



*A Section of the Channel and Banks of the Mississippi River*

PUBLISHED by D. D. LEITCH, July 1849.

## LETTER XXIII.

*St. Genevieve, (Louisiana),*  
*February 1, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

YOU no doubt begin to suspect that I have either grown very dilatory, or that I am in pursuit of something which affords me more amusement than common. Neither of these is the case, I can assure you, nor is there any thing at present which gives me greater anxiety than the impossibility of getting off for some time to come, on account of the great drift of ice now in the Mississippi. I should scarcely have believed, had anyone told me, that this great and rapid river is sometimes frozen over at this place, so as to be impassable for two or three weeks together, although very few choose to make the attempt. From the experience I have had, I assure you, that the cold, for six weeks past, has been every way as severe as in the city of New-York. We have had several falls of snow, and at this moment all the

lads and lasses in the village are driving in large parties through the town in *things* which they call sleighs, but so miserably coarse and ill made, that I fancy if one of them, with all the harness and “appurtenances thereunto belonging,” were offered for sale in your city, it would not defray the expenses of cartage.

St. Genevieve does not seem to be in want of amusements, if eternal dancing and gambling deserve that name. One ball follows another so close in succession, that I have often wondered how the ladies were enabled to support themselves under this violent exercise, which is here carried to extremes. The balls are generally opened at candle-light, and continue till ten or twelve o'clock the next day.

They have, however, a very pretty practice of introducing their balls at the commencement of the carnival, which I shall endeavour to describe for your amusement. Two or three ladies make arrangements with their male friends for the first ball, during which two or more elegant bouquets are presented by the ladies to as many gentlemen; this piece of ceremony raises the select number to the rank of kings, and entitles them to the privilege of saluting the fair donors. The gentlemen then each make choice of a favourite lady, to whom with great politeness they present their bouquets: this mark of distinction likewise raises the favoured ladies to the rank of queens, and the gen-

lemen take their pay in another salutation for the honour conferred. This ceremony having passed, it becomes the duty of the royal parties to give the next ball, previous to which the royal ladies pass many impatient hours in waiting for the silk shoes, gloves, stockings, bracelets, ear-rings, &c. which it is expected the royal gentlemen will have the royal goodness to present. The royal parties always do the company the honour to open their balls.

Whenever there is a ball given by even the most rigid and superstitious of these catholics, there is always one room set apart for gambling. *Vingt-un* is the word; and never did I see people embark with so much spirit and perseverance to win each other's money, as in this little village. I have frequently known them to sit thirty hours at the same table without any other refreshment than a dish of miserable coffee, or a glass or two of sour claret; and I recollect one instance of an infatuated young man, who could ill afford it, having lost eleven hundred dollars at one sitting. Exclusive of these frequent opportunities to indulge their favourite propensities, they have meetings thrice a week for no other purpose than playing their favourite game. Nor is it the French alone who pursue this destructive habit: the Americans likewise (with a very few laudable exceptions) have followed the same scandalous practice.

I am informed it has become a custom of long standing for every stranger who has resided two or three weeks in this village, to honour the ladies with a ball before his departure. These balls are tolerably expensive for a town in the wilderness, as they generally cost from a hundred to a hundred and fifty dollars each. I am not certain but I shall venture to break through this established custom, as it would take at least a hundred and fifty of these balls to afford me one dollar's worth of satisfaction or amusement.

I was much surprised to find the savage custom of carrying a concealed dagger practised likewise at this place, and on more than one occasion have seen it fall out of the bosom, or from behind the girdle, while its owner was dancing with a lady, without her betraying the least sign of surprise or displeasure. The fair sex in general betray a certain degree of uneasiness at the sudden and unexpected exposure of such murderous and assassin-like weapons; but custom, it seems, has blunted their finer feelings in this place, as they hardly notice the dagger, even when it falls at their feet.

Sunday is much better known in all the French settlements of this country as a day of general amusement, than of worship. It is true, that as they have a chapel and confessor, they must necessarily make some kind of use of them; they

therefore have a high mass performed every Sunday morning, which lasts half an hour. According to ancient custom, they ought likewise to have a low mass every other morning; but as this does not always suit the convenience of the father, it is mostly dispensed with. You see nothing of that general cessation from labour on this day so common with you. On the contrary you see the slaves with their horses and carts (going on their own business) driving about as usual; and indeed no kind of work or amusement is suspended on account of the day. There is commonly a ball on Sunday evening; and should the billiard-rooms, of which there are three in the town, be closed the whole week, you will always see them open and crowded on Sunday.

From the character I have just given you of the inhabitants of St. Genevieve, you may be inclined to believe that they are free and liberal-minded with regard to matters of religion. Yet this is far from being the case, as they remain in the most abject ignorance of every thing either human or divine, not immediately connected with the *mass* or *vingt-un*. They believe their priest or confessor possesses unlimited powers from the pope, to send each one to heaven or hell as he may think fit.

As an instance of this confidence in the *almighty* power of their priest, I will entertain you with a singular piece of superstition, which I was in-

formed took place a few years ago. The Mississippi, it seems, had arisen to such a height as threatened to overflow the Big Field, and sweep off the whole of their crops. In this dilemma the credulous inhabitants flew to the priest, and intreated him to form a procession with the holy host, in order to drive back the waters. The priest hesitated, sometimes urging one excuse and sometimes another, but after repeated solicitations told them he would make the necessary preparations, and, if possible, be ready that or the succeeding day. The height of the water had filled a number of small creeks, some of which ran up through the town. The holy father had paid particular attention to one, to ascertain the *moment* when the waters should begin to subside; which, when he discovered, he ordered the chapel bell to be rung. Men, women, and children, of all conditions and complexions, soon flocked together; and with the *holy host*, *cross*, and two or three *bells* tinkling, they solemnly moved along, chanting "Pater noster" and "Ave Marias." The procession at length arrived at the edge of the water, where, in the name of the *host* the waters were forbid to rise any higher. And, strange to relate, within a few minutes after they were discovered absolutely to have fallen nearly a quarter of an inch—not one of the multitude doubting the almighty power of the host!!

I have myself noticed several religious processions, on the occasion of a person being very ill, and his life despaired of, when the *host* was carried with all the parade and pageantry their circumstances would admit of, preceded by the priest drest out in his pontifical robes; and every good catholic, on hearing the bells, runs to join the procession on so important an occasion!

I must not omit entertaining you with a ludicrous circumstance which befel myself on the first day of the new year, which with the catholics is a day of great festivity and rejoicing. It seems they have a custom for persons who meet on that day to kiss each other. The negro kisses his mistress, and the master kisses his wenches. Yet no one could account for so strange a custom, although it probably is intended as a token of reconciliation, and forgetfulness of all past animosities. It was on the new year, that finding every person arrayed in his best, I thought I could not better please my landlady, who is a rigid catholic, than by conforming to the fashion. I had accordingly just made some previous arrangements, and had my face well lathered in order to commence the operation of shaving, when I was suddenly seized by the neck, and kissed. After the first salutation, I was able to move my head a little on one side, and found I was surrounded by eight Piorias Indians, all dressed in their best, who came

up in regular succession, and kissed me so completely, that I had not an atom of lather remaining on my face. These poor creatures, knowing that the vicar-general had taken his lodgings at this house, came, it seems, to pay him the *compliments of the season*; when, finding me dressed in black, without more ado they fell to kissing me; and falling on their knees, expected my blessing, without my being able to explain their mistake. In fact, the ceremony proceeded so rapidly, that it was pretty well over before I had recovered from my surprise. But as they still continued on their knees, I thought it would spoil the farce not to go through with the whole, and accordingly for the first time followed the *trade* I had served a *regular apprenticeship* to, by giving them my blessing, with a “Domine vobiscum,” &c. and afterwards treated them with a bottle of whiskey, which I soon discovered they thought the *better blessing* of the two. The vicar-general, on his return, was so well pleased with the joke, as likewise with having escaped their greasy kisses, that he volunteered a bottle of the best from his own stores, These Indians are part of the remnant of the Piorias tribe, and consist of about twelve families, who are all catholics, and, from their inability to defend or protect themselves, have been permitted to settle at the lower extremity of the village.

The religious duties of the church at this place seem to depend wholly on the conveniency of the

priest. If he feels disposed to rise early enough to hold a mass, he directs the bell to be rung. This signal is so well understood, that in a few minutes you see the women and girls, with nothing but a handkerchief slipped over their heads, hurrying to the church, as the notice is so short that they have no time to decorate themselves, unless on a Sunday, when it is of course expected.

The French settlers throughout this country generally entertain a very bad opinion of the religion of the Americans, and even go so far as to say they have no religion at all. This conclusion they have drawn from the sample which those Americans who have had the earliest intercourse with them, have given of their piety, which is said not to have been to our credit. They, however, entertain a very high opinion of our knowledge, spirit, and enterprise, and think we excel, in those points, all other nations. There is a small circle of Frenchmen, who, from a familiar intercourse with the Americans, have conquered both their local and religious prejudices, and may be considered as agreeable society, when absent from the *card-table*. These again are considered by the mass of good catholics as very little better than atheists, for doubting of the infallibility and holiness of their old mother church.

It is perceivable here, as well as elsewhere, that religion has fewer votaries among the male than

the female sex. I have frequently attended at their low mass, when I was the only male person present except the priest and bell-ringer. The chapel, which is a coarse but large frame building, has nothing in it worth noticing except two miserable effigies of St. Peter and the Virgin Mary. These may be considered as something of a curiosity; not from any merit they possess, but merely from their position, being placed on each side of the altar, and habited in such an absurd and fantastic manner, that had I seen them in any other place, I should certainly have taken her ladyship for a gingerbread woman, and the other for some rake in disguise.

At the lower end of the town is still to be seen the remains of a Spanish fort, which, being erected on an eminence, corresponded with that of Kaskaskias by signals. I was informed of a very singular transaction relative to the building of this fort, which, while it holds out another evidence of the shameless manner in which public works are conducted, bears honourable testimony to the integrity of the then commandant of this district.

It seems, after the fort was completed, the commandant had to wait upon the governor of the province to present his charges. They were accordingly presented, and amounted to 421 dollars. The governor, after examining the account, returned it to the commandant, informing him there was some mistake. The commandant retired and

examined it again, but finding it entirely correct, presented it once more. The governor, on looking it over, informed him that it was still incorrect, and advised him to consult with some friend, as he had omitted a figure or two. The commandant then called upon a friend to look over his accounts with him, who no sooner saw the amount, than he burst into a loud laugh, and taking up a pen added an 0 to the sum already stated. The commandant presented his accounts the third time, when his excellency replied, that it was not quite right yet. The commandant was amazed ! but what was his astonishment, when he related the affair to his friend, to see him add another 0 to the last sum, making it 42,100 instead of 421. On presenting the account the fourth time it was graciously received ; and for the discharge of the whole a very small part was paid to the commandant.

In the fall of the year, when the grass and woods are generally dry, the country on both sides of the river is almost continually on fire in some place or other. This principally proceeds from a custom the Indians have of clearing the woods for hunting; which it effectually accomplishes by consuming all the grass, weeds, and underwood, with which they are obstructed. It likewise in a great measure destroys the trees of the forests, as I have frequently travelled through tracts of thirty and forty miles in extent, upon which not a single

tree was to be seen that had not suffered from the fire ; and it is from this cause that most of the timber in this country is of so stunted a growth. These fires likewise very often originate with travellers, who, after kindling one at each place of encampment, never extinguish them. The consequence is, that if the season is dry, and the wind strong, they will run over a large district of country in a very short time ; nor will they halt until interrupted in their ravages by a river, swamp, or piece of burnt ground. These fires are so very common, that I do not recollect a single instance, in all my excursions through this country, of travelling two hours together, without an opportunity of lighting my cigar by some tree or fire in the woods.

These fires are likewise attended with some dangerous consequences to a traveller, who may be caught in the woods without the means of avoiding their dreadful approach ; as they advance, with a fair wind, with a rapidity scarcely to be conceived. All those, therefore, who have occasion to travel this country, never fail to provide themselves with a complete fire apparatus, and when likely to be caught in such a situation, without any stream or swamp to retreat to, always strike up another fire, which immediately increases and spreads the way the wind blows, and by following it up they are soon out of reach of the other fire, which, finding nothing to feed its fur-

ther progress in that direction, passes off on each side. I have seen the light of one of these fires, when it was at a distance of forty miles from this place; and have even collected some of the dead flakes and cinders at the same distance from the fire which produced them.

To-morrow I shall take a journey up to the Platten, (a creek which empties into the Mississippi about forty-five miles above this place,) to see what progress has been made with a boat, which is there building for me. If she is completed, I shall set out immediately; but if not, I shall cross over to a place called the Eagle, where I hear there is one for sale.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXIV.

*Louisiana, Mouth of Ohio,  
March 6, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

YOU will no doubt be pleased to find that I am once more in motion, and have descended the Mississippi thus far on my way to New-Orleans. The ice broke up about the third of February, and by the twelfth the river was entirely free, although the water continued remarkably low for this season of the year. It was not until the first day of March that we were enabled to bid adieu to St. Genevieve, owing to the difficulty of procuring hands, as a few days before several boats from the Missouri, St. Louis, and American Bottom, had called, and taken away most of the best boatmen belonging to the place. We embarked in a New-Orleans boat, for which I had to pay a hundred and fifty dollars, while one of the same kind at Pittsburgh would not have cost more than half that sum. This great difference is owing to

the difficulty of procuring plank and workmen; the former, from the want of mills, are very scarce, and of the latter, very few understand their business. For a particular description of this kind of boat I refer you to my letter while on the Ohio. It was sixty feet in length, fourteen in breadth, and five in height, all roofed in; but not one pennyweight of iron, or other metal, in her whole construction. Unfortunately, our roof did not prove water-tight; therefore, whenever it rained, we were under the disagreeable necessity of frequently shifting our quarters; but when this is guarded against, you may live very comfortably in one of these *fresh water frigates*.

Three miles from St. Genevieve you pass New Bourbon, a small French village of thirty families, situated on an eminence on the same side of the river. This village is generally considered as an appendage of St. Genevieve, having no separate chapel or civil authority of its own. The vicar-general resides here during the summer, although he prefers taking up his quarters at St. Genevieve during the winter.

Seven miles below New Bourbon, still on the same side, you arrive at Saline Creek, a considerable stream, and navigable for a few miles during a part of the year. Its banks or borders abound with salt springs, which supply the whole upper country with salt at the rate of two dollars a bushel. Considerable quantities are also sent up

the Cumberland river into Kentucky and Tennessee, where it frequently commands four and five dollars a bushel. These works are conducted in a similar manner to those already described on the Ohio, and at present have forty-six kettles, containing about twenty-five gallons each, which produce about fifteen thousand bushels annually. The proprietor informed me he expected two dozen more kettles in a very short time, which he intended to set up immediately.

Six miles below the Saline, but from the opposite side, the Kaskaskias River empties itself into the Mississippi. This is a very considerable stream, being navigable for a hundred and fifty miles, and flowing through a rich and fertile country, formerly inhabited by a powerful tribe of Indians, whose small remains, now reduced to a few families, still continue in the neighbourhood of their ancient village. The town of Kaskaskias, which is one of the oldest in this country, is situated within the Territory of Indiana, about three miles from the Mississippi, and six up the stream above mentioned; but, on account of its distance from the banks, you perceive nothing of it as you descend the river. This was formerly the most flourishing of all the French settlements in this country, having been founded by the Jesuits when in the plenitude of their power, and having endowments for a college and chapel. The village has now declined almost to nothing, not more than fifty

families remaining, who are chiefly Roman Catholics. Like St. Genevieve, it is situated on a prairie containing several thousand acres of the richest soil. It once commanded a considerable trade in peltry, but, from scarcity of game, this has now almost wholly ceased. At a small distance from the town is still to be seen the fort of the old garrison occupied by the Americans, while the opposite shore remained in the possession of the Spaniards.

Twenty-four miles below the Kaskaskias you have to pass through a very dangerous channel called Picket Island Passage, which is on either side so full of snags, sawyers, and planters, as to render it extremely dangerous to attempt it in low water, with such an unweildy machine as that in which we navigated it. No less than six boats which had preceded us eight or ten days, were all more or less injured in this difficult passage; and it was only owing to the united exertions of all hands on board, that we were enabled to pass through without sustaining any other injury than that of staving in one of our posts or stanchions.

About sixteen miles below Picket Island, you pass the mouth of Muddy River, which empties itself into the Mississippi from the left side. This is a very considerable stream, being navigable for sixty miles, and its banks containing the only sea-coal which has as yet been discovered in this country.

The Delaware and Shawanese Indians have a town about four miles below Muddy River, on the opposite shore, where we concluded to halt, in order to procure some dried venison hams. After having landed, and one of our Canadian sailors given the whoop, (a signal for trade,) we were soon visited by ten or twelve squaws, with their papposes, to whom we soon made our wants known, and, after the customary preliminary of a glass of whiskey, some of them were sent up to the town to bring down a supply. When the women returned, several men accompanied them on board, one of whom, being rather better dressed than the others, and distinguished by a silver band around his forehead, and bracelets round his arms, I took him for a chief, and soon found that he could express his ideas tolerably well in broken English.

Amongst the women who first came down to the boat, and had now returned, I discovered one whose accent seemed very different from the rest, and was likewise remarkable for being the most talkative of the whole group. I spoke to her in English, but she did not understand a single sentence except the words "You lie," which seems to be a kind of by-word among them, which they use on all occasions, without comprehending its import. I inquired of the one who appeared to be the chief, whether she was an Indian woman. He informed me she was not, and that she had

been taken prisoner when so big, (pointing to a lad of about six years old,) with her mother. I inquired what countrywoman she was. He said he could not tell, as they spoke "no French, no English, no Indian." After repeated inquiries as to the place where they were made prisoners, he replied, that she was not taken by their tribe, but had been transferred from another; and that he had heard she was from "Schu-che-aù-nav." It was a considerable time before I could comprehend his meaning, as his slow mode of pronunciation, and lengthened accent on the third syllable, did not strike my ear; but finally, by prevailing on him to repeat each syllable separately and distinctly, he made out in sound, as nearly as I could catch it, the above expression; which, after some reflection, struck me as having the nearest resemblance to our modern "Susquehanna." Another circumstance, which tends to confirm the above opinion is, that as she spoke "no French, no English, no Indian," her mother was most probably the wife, and herself the child of one of the German settlers, of whom there were considerable numbers on the upper part of the Susquehanna, which was the Indian frontier of those days. I made some inquiries of her through the chief, but found she had lost all knowledge of her name, her country, and her friends, and barely knows, from the tribe with which she is incorporated, that her mother was a

white woman, who died about a year after her captivity. I spoke to her in German, making use of some of the most common and early words which children are taught, but she was equally ignorant of their meaning.

I next inquired of the chief respecting the bones at Big Lick on the river Ohio, believing I should at least hear a confirmation of the traditions already noticed, if nothing more. But in this I was disappointed; for although he fully comprehended the subject, he was either unable or unwilling to satisfy my curiosity. To a direct question I put to him, whether his people believed the animal still existed in the west, he replied by a negative shake of the head. In the course of the conversation he informed me that they intended shortly to go to war with the Osage nation, who had stolen some of their horses when out a hunting last fall, and that they expected to be joined by a great number of their friends from the Lake.

After leaving the Indian village, you descend ten miles, when you arrive at the town of Cape Girardeau, situated on an eminence on the right side of the river, and consisting of thirty houses. This is a new settlement as a town, but has long before been known as a plantation. From the goodness of the soil, and the well-known industry of the Germans, of whom there are considerable settlements about twenty miles back, the Cape

bids fair to arrive at some consequence, as it is the nearest point from which all the surplus stock and produce of the surrounding country can be exported. It is situated in lat. 37. 17. N. long. 89. 8. W.

This village is thirty-five miles distant from the Ohio, yet it very frequently happens, that the floods of that river are so great as to be perceptible within ten miles of Cape Girardeau. This, however, can only happen when the Mississippi is low. In that case, the waters of the Ohio flow directly across this mighty river, and by that means dam up the current of the Mississippi for twenty and five and twenty miles back ; during the continuance of which, even Kentucky or New-Orleans boats of the kind we are now navigating, have worked up the river for that distance. The same may be said of the Ohio when it is low and the Mississippi full, in which case back water has been observed nearly as high up as Fort Massack, a distance of about thirty miles.

The country on the Louisiana side of the river, from the Missouri to Cape Girardeau, continues generally high ; (always excepting the prairies along the margin of the river ;) yet you perceive nothing like a mountain throughout the whole of this distance, although you may observe something like a hill, forming a tolerably elevated ridge from one to four miles distance from the river. At Cape Girardeau the land on the same side

begins to acquire more of the appearance of a rough and mountainous country. From the height it continues level for some distance ; but before you reach the Grand Towers, it presents a perpendicular rocky precipice of about two hundred feet. The Indiana side, on the contrary, is a plain level country, excepting a similar ridge of hills, which may be traced from below Kaskaskias quite up to the American Bottom, at a distance of from three to twelve miles from the river. From the Grand Towers to the Grand Chain of Rocks, the land gradually descends to its general level, which it afterwards continues without interruption.

Immediately opposite to Muddy River, I remarked a bed of fine chalk on the edge of a bank on the right side of the Mississippi. I landed with the skiff, and took a small sample for examination, which I found to be of a very fine quality. About fourteen miles below Cape Girardeau, on the left side of the river, you pass a small cavern called the Devil's Oven, which is situated upon an elevated rocky point, immediately on the bank of the river, but has nothing remarkable about it except its form, which resembles that of a large oven. Directly opposite to this you are likewise shown the Devil's Tea-table, which is a rock on the height of the elevated land, so curiously formed by nature as to have a striking resemblance to a large round tea-table, standing on a pedestal.

Immediately below his Satanic Majesty's oven and tea-table, you pass what is called the Grand Towers, which certainly are the greatest natural curiosity I have seen on the Mississippi. The right bank of the river has now acquired a grand and lofty appearance. It consists of a solid perpendicular rocky front, generally from one to two hundred feet in height. The river, after having rolled along the base of this mountain for some miles, suddenly finds its whole course interrupted by an angle of the same stupendous foundation, through which, notwithstanding, it has scooped out a bay or basin of two or three hundred yards in length; but finding its efforts to force the solid rampart vain, it suddenly turns off to the left, and continues its course along the remaining border of the mountain.

It is indeed astonishing to view the effect of the current of this mighty river, which, in forcing its way so far through a mass of solid rock, and afterwards in retreating, (from the numberless whirls and counter-currents caused by the inequalities of the bottom,) has formed in this extraordinary bend several curious and picturesque islands of solid rock: these being of a circular figure, with their sides perpendicular, and towering to a height of one hundred feet, have, at a distance, the appearance of being regularly built castles, or ancient watch-towers; and it even requires a nearer in-

spection to be satisfied that they are the works of nature.

The bend or basin in the rear of these Towers is entirely dry at low water ; but when the river is high, every boat that is unfortunate enough to be drawn into it has very little chance of extricating itself, or avoiding almost certain shipwreck ; as the unequal projection of sharp pointed rocks creates dangers which, together with the whirl-pools, render it almost impassable.

About six miles below the Grand Towers you pass the Grand Chain of Rocks, which, in low water, as at present, is even a more dangerous passage than the one just mentioned. This chain extends in little clusters or islands entirely across the bed of the river, many of which may be seen above water at this season of the year ; leaving, however, small spaces sufficiently large for navigation, to those who are acquainted with their situation.

From the appearance of the country above to this spot, I am inclined to believe that the Grand Tower ridge, and the Grand Chain of Rocks, formed, at some remote period, a barrier to the waters of the Mississippi, which perhaps in those days flowed off through the Illinois, and other streams, into the Lakes ; or possibly it was a part of the ancient lake itself, which in such a case must have covered the greatest part of the Indiana

Territory, and other adjacent parts of the country. My reason for this hypothesis is, that the Grand Tower ridge, after having passed the Mississippi in the Grand Chain already described, is to be traced through the southern extremity of Indiana, where it again passes the Ohio by the name of the Big Chain of Rocks, and from thence is lost in the high lands of Kentucky, about eighteen miles above the mouth of the Ohio. This ridge may properly be said to divide the country west of the Mississippi into a higher and lower region. The whole country below, even as far as New-Orleans, on the right side of the river, is said to be a low horizontal level, subject to be inundated by every rise of this mighty river. Whereas the country above is sufficiently high to have served for the bounds or banks of this ancient lake; excepting at the lower end of Indiana, where probably on account of its looser texture, it may have been wasted away.

It is likewise well known, that even at this day we may pass from the Mississippi through the Ouisconsing River into Fox River, which empties into Lake Michigan, and thence through Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. I have seen several Indian traders, who say, that when both rivers are full they have navigated the Illinois, (a mild and gentle stream, with very little current, flowing through a dead level country,) within a mile of another commu-

nication with the same lake : so that a very trifling additional rise of the waters, would afford a constant and open communication between the two rivers.

Another corroborating circumstance, that some great change has taken place in this country, is to be seen in the appearance of the stupendous ridge of rocks found on the land side of the large and extensive prairies, particularly that called the American Bottom, on the left side of the river, said to be seventy or eighty miles in length, which exhibit evident, and I will say undeniable, marks of having at some distant period been washed by a body of mighty waters. These prairies are generally bounded on the inland side by a stratum of solid perpendicular rocks, strongly resembling the bold and rugged shores of some great river or lake ; yet probably have not been washed by the Mississippi as a river, nor even as a lake, for some thousands of years.

The prairie at St. Genevieve is likewise bounded on the land side by a similar ridge of bold, rocky hills ; and although the river in its highest stage never reaches to the base of the mountain ; yet the remaining marks of a water-course are so very plain and self-evident, that no one who has ever taken the trouble to examine them, hesitates a moment to declare, that they were once washed by the Mississippi. From these data I have con-

jectured, that some mighty convulsion of nature, probably like that which rent the iron mounds of Niagara, might likewise have burst asunder the barrier of the Grand Tower on the Mississippi; and by their giving vent to the accumulated waters above, drained off and exposed to view those large and extensive flats and shoals, which time and vegetation have since converted into natural prairies.

After having passed the Grand Towers and the Grand Chain of Rocks, you may be said to have passed the most difficult part of the river between the mouth of the Ohio and Cape Girardeau. The remaining distance, which is only fifteen miles, is at all times safe and easy; but in consequence of a great rise in the Ohio, we found the Mississippi backed up to the Grand Chain; and within two or three miles of its mouth, we actually drifted *up* the Mississippi. We lost one whole day in *descending* this small distance of the *ascending* stream.

In consequence of the little progress made on this day, I spent the greatest part of it on shore with my gun, and found sufficient amusement in shooting pigeons along the banks, where they were at rest on the trees. The woods being literally covered with them, I soon had more than I could carry to the boat. The geese and brant are all gone from the point where they were in

such plenty when I was here last, and very few ducks are now to be seen in the river ; yet I often found means to shoot them in the small pools and ponds in the woods.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXV.

*New Madrid, (Louisiana,)*

*March 9, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

IN descending the Mississippi from the Missouri to the mouth of the Ohio, you pass twenty-three islands, not one of which is susceptible of improvement, on account of the dreaded inundations of the river. You likewise pass several plantations scattered along the right side of the bank of the river, but not a single one on the left below Kaskaskias, a distance of nearly one hundred miles. Most, if not all the improvements on the right side were made under the Spanish government, who gave every possible encouragement to settle the frontier of this province. Every family which arrived with an intent to settle, received, on a proper application, a title and grant for from two to eight hundred acres, according to the number of souls in the family. The greatest part of the settlers were Americans, who were

continually removing from some part of the United States to this country ; and although I had always considered the Spanish government as one of the most despotic and tyrannical upon earth, yet these good people have given me so favourable an account of their situation, that I am induced to change my opinion. I have met with several of these settlers, who did not hesitate to give the Spanish government a decided preference over that under which they now live ; and for the following reasons : First, the poor and friendless wanderer, immediately on his arrival, could build up his cabin, and receive a good title to his few hundred acres, without paying any thing for it. Secondly, he enjoyed full liberty of conscience, and had it at his option either to hear and pay a priest, or to let both alone. Thirdly, whatever he acquired by art, labour, or industry, was wholly his own, having no taxes or contributions to pay. And fourthly, they were never troubled with being called out either as jurors or as soldiers. This they considered as a particular exemption, and do not relish the idea of travelling sixty or a hundred miles, to attend to *other people's quarrels* ; or of carrying a gun and cartouch-box the same distance for *one man to look at*, and then bring it home again.

From Cape Girardeau to the mouth of the Ohio is about thirty-five miles, where we arrived without meeting with any accident whatever. We

were under the necessity of making some stay at that place, for the purpose of procuring a hand from Colonel B—, to pilot us down to New Madrid; as our present pilot's engagement ended at the mouth of the Ohio, which he intended to ascend.

I believe I neglected to inform you, when at this place before, that I had discovered a very curious kind of chronometer for this country; and probably should have forgotten it, had not a sight of the same place recalled it to my mind. The circumstance I allude to is this: You will recollect that the river was remarkably low when I ascended, and in consequence of the slow and tedious progress of the boat, I frequently went on shore. It was on one of these occasions, at about ten miles from the mouth of the Ohio, that I observed a large part of the bank newly broken off and fallen into the Mississippi. I thought this an excellent opportunity of ascertaining the number of inundations it had required to form the bank above the level of the water. I had before observed, in some places, the layers composing the banks tolerably distinct for a small height, but never so plainly as at this new fallen bank. In the first place, for want of means of more accurate measurement, I cut a pole by measure of my hands twenty-two feet in length. I then stuck it two feet in the ground, at such a distance

below the bank, as to bring its top, when perpendicular, in a horizontal line with the upper surface of the bank; this gave me twenty feet in height. I next brought its top, while placed as before, in a horizontal line with the spot where it last stood, and in this manner I found the whole height of the bank to be forty-three feet and a half. I next proceeded to count the different layers, but was unable to ascertain those of the first five feet next the river, on account of the earth which had fallen from above; therefore can only judge of the number of layers it probably might contain, from the next five feet, which I found to consist of one hundred and thirty-three. The next ten feet contained two hundred and twelve; the third division one hundred and ninety-eight; and the fourth one hundred and ninety-one; making forty feet in height, and seven hundred and ninety-eight *layers*. The remaining three feet and a half, which were nearest the surface, contained no more than five layers that I could distinguish, making the whole number eight hundred and three. These layers were from less than a quarter to three inches in thickness, and although the lowest were generally the smallest, yet there frequently occurred those of an inch among them. It was not without considerable difficulty that I made out the examination recited; nor will I venture to say it is wholly correct, as in many instances the layers were very

small, and sometimes so intermixed and confounded together, that I was under the necessity of substituting conjecture for facts. Yet I do not think I am far from the whole number of layers, which have formed the present bank.

From these data you will perceive, that although my *new chronometer* does not give the number of *years* which have passed during the formation of these banks, yet we may reasonably calculate that it has taken at least eight hundred inundations to deposit the like number of layers of earth which compose their present elevation.

Having ascertained with sufficient accuracy the number of inundations which have been required to raise these banks, it remains to calculate the frequency of their recurrence. To allow one inundation annually would give us in round numbers at most but eight hundred years; a period apparently too short for the formation of banks of forty feet in height. Yet I believe I can show, that eight hundred inundations must have taken place in a much less number of years.

It is well known that these banks are now seldom overflowed, as well from the accumulation of decayed leaves, trees, and other vegetable matter, as by the river deepening its own channel, and thereby lowering the surface of its waters. In order, therefore, to bring them more generally within the reach of freshes, let us deduct the odd three and

a half feet of my measurement ; when, by allowing only a spring and fall inundation for each year, it will give us a period of four hundred years. But although the Mississippi is not subject to regular autumnal inundations above the Ohio, yet, as it is always affected by those of that river, I should think an average calculation of two for each year would be hardly sufficient. I shall therefore proceed to give you another calculation, which, upon summing up, I find gives nearly the same result. It is obvious, that while the banks were low, they were more subject to inundation ; and consequently must always have been overflowed with every trifling rise of the river. We will therefore suppose, that the lowest division was overflowed as often as five times in each year, which will give us a period of fifty years. Allowing three times only each year for the second will make seventy years more ; for the third division say twice for each year, which gives one hundred and ninety-one years ; and for the fourth one annual inundation only, will give an addition of one hundred and twenty-one more ; making in the whole a period of four hundred and thirty-five years. Notwithstanding the result of these calculations, I feel myself lost in a wilderness of conjecture. For although I am satisfied that the period is sufficiently long to give time for the number of inundations ; yet my senses refuse to acknowledge the proba-

bility that banks of such stupendous height should have been formed within the same short period !

While we were refreshing ourselves at this place, we discovered a considerable fleet just heaving in sight, and descending the Ohio, which we afterwards found to be a large party of Indians, who, when they entered the Mississippi, made a halt on the opposite shore, where I soon observed they had lighted up their fires, which is always a sign that they have encamped for the night. I took two of my hands in the small boat, and passed over to them in order to pay them a visit ; nor did I forget *my letter of recommendation*, a bottle of whiskey, but soon uncorked it, and in a few minutes made a more general acquaintance than I expected, or even wished.

I found three who understood a few words of English, and after some time a fourth, who appeared to be a young chief, and spoke very well. Although I have always found the Indians backward in discovering their knowledge of any language but their own, yet this one, after a *peep* at my letter of recommendation, became quite communicative. He informed me, that their fleet consisted of fifty-one boats of every description, containing three hundred souls, men, women, and children, made up of the Delawares, Shawanese, Miamies, Potawotomas, Kickapaws, Poatowas, Wiandots, and some other tribes along the lakes, with all their families, who were emigrating into

Louisiana, where they intended, together with some Chickasaws and Cherokees, to establish a town upon La Riviere Blanch.

He likewise informed me, that they had another object in view ; that last spring they had received messengers from some of their friends already settled in Louisiana, as well as from some of the Chickasaws and Cherokees, to join with them in settling their new towns on the River Blanch, and afterwards to go to war with the Osage nation, in order to drive them out of their country, and take possession of their lands ; that they had also been encouraged to this step by some of our chiefs ; and finally had agreed to meet them at the River Blanch as soon as the grass was *so high*, (about four inches,) there to settle their squaws and papposes, and proceed immediately against the cruel Osage ; that they had already formed an alliance with the Shawanese and Delawares, who were settled in Louisiana, their relations, and the bitter enemies of the Osage ; that they had all determined never to bury the tomahawk until they had either driven them beyond the Missouri, or extirpated the whole race.

These Indians had descended the Wabash and Ohio in bark canoes, periaugers, and a light kind of flats, which they had purchased from the whites. They halted for the purpose of procuring a supply of wild potatoes, which grow along the rich banks of this river, where, by the falling

and washing away of the bank they are found in great plenty. When boiled they are a very pleasant and nutritious food.

I endeavoured to obtain some information from this chief respecting the bones at Big Lick. He informed me he had passed them at four different times; and that it was not only his opinion, but that of all his people, that the animal still existed in some distant regions far beyond the lakes.

Having gained all the information I could, we finished our visit, and returned to Colonel B—'s, from whence I had sent in search of a pilot, but without success. We had no alternative now, but to attempt a strange and to us dangerous navigation alone, or to prevail upon Colonel B— to take us as far as New Madrid. I had already mentioned such a favour to that gentleman, who signified his willingness, but that he had that morning received a letter from his commanding officer, requesting him to be prepared for any sudden orders, as the Osage Indians had committed some daring insults on some of the settlements. However, as he was disposed to oblige, I persuaded him, that by sending his horse over land to meet him at the spot, he might return on the third day, and he at length consented to see us safe thus far.

Having completed some little necessary arrangements in our boat, and Colonel B—'s horses sent on ahead, we again continued our voyage, and took a last view of the mouth of the Ohio about

noon. In an hour and a half we passed Fort Jefferson, a post five miles below the Ohio, situated near the mouth of Mayfield Creek, on the left side of the river, in the State of Kentucky. This Fort has long since been abandoned on account of its disadvantageous position.

Fifteen miles below the Fort, on the same side, you pass the Iron Banks, a high elevated bluff, having a front of about a quarter of a mile on the river, and is supposed to contain large quantities of iron ore. This, I believe, is a mistake, as it appeared to me to be nothing more than the strata of different coloured clays, some of which have all the appearance of stone and iron ore. Five miles lower, on the same side, you pass certain high cliffs, about the same extent on the river, called the Chalk Banks. I went ashore in the skiff at this place, and procured several samples, which I found were likewise composed of clays of various shades. Some of these banks in dry weather have all the appearance of cliffs of chalk, especially when viewed from a distance. Eighteen miles lower, on the same side, I observed a small stream called Bayou de She, which affords a shallow navigation. We saw three canoes with Indians just entering the creek as we came in sight, but had no opportunity of ascertaining who they were.

It was nearly sunset when we passed this stream. Our pilot therefore thought it prudent to land on the farthest shore, as there was no other safe

landing-place within five or six miles below us. He gave orders accordingly; but the hands being all engaged in listening to some interesting story, the orders were not given quite early enough to attain our object; as the wind, which was off that shore, and the velocity of the current, soon carried us beyond our mark. In consequence of having been sheltered under the land by the trees for the last two hours, we had not noticed any change in the weather; but as the current now swept us past the point, which had covered us, and which we intended to make, into the middle of the river, we found a considerable swell, and every appearance of a heavy blow on a lee-shore. It had now become quite dark, nor was it long before the wind and current had carried us over into the bend of the river on the opposite shore, which was full of sawyers and planters; and it was so dark, that we could not distinguish an object at the distance of fifty yards from the boat. We sent one of our men ahead with the small boat, to notify us of any danger, as likewise to discover a spot where we might possibly land. But the whirling of the water among the sawyers, and the dashing of the swells against the banks, prevented us from distinguishing the warning voice of our companion. We were by this time blown so close in with the shore, that we expected every moment to be wrecked. We already had several narrow escapes

from the sawyers; some we just grazed; others were so near as to be touched with the hand, and all of them strong enough to have shivered our boat to pieces, had we been so unfortunate as to come in direct contact with either of them. For three miles did we run in this perilous situation after dark, expecting every instant to be dashed to pieces, when we discovered a considerable number of lights ahead, and shortly after heard some voices calling to us to pull in for the shore. This we immediately began to do, and at last effected, but not without great risk to ourselves, as well as to part of a fleet of fourteen Kentuckians, who had made a harbour here for the night, and against whom we were driven with so much violence as to break four pair of their sweeps by endeavouring to keep us from dashing their boats to pieces. After so many narrow escapes, and being withal exhausted by the violent exertions we had made, we were not a little pleased to find ourselves in a safe harbour for the night, surrounded by fourteen vessels and their crews, of the hearty lads of Kentucky.

I cannot forbear observing at this moment how far some of our senses may be neutralized on certain occasions, without even our knowledge or consent. The case I am now about to state is from my own experience, and relates to the sense of feeling.

After the scene of danger and confusion just recited had passed over, and we found ourselves in security, I suddenly became sensible of a violent pain about the nail of one of my fingers, which, on examination, I found had received a severe bruise, and that a large splinter was under the nail. I was immediately convinced, from the appearance of the wound, and the pain which I suffered, that I should lose the nail; yet when, where, or how I received the injury, I never could recollect; and can only account for my insensibility at that moment, by supposing that my senses must have been so effectually engaged with dangers of a far greater magnitude, as to have wholly deadened, my feelings to what (at the time) could only be considered a mere trifle, in comparison of the greater dangers we were striving to avoid.

After we had secured our boat, and got things a little in order, we were honoured with the visits of a great number of our neighbours; among whom we soon acquired the name of the French boat, from the circumstance of all our hands being French Canadians. I had already heard so many unfavourable stories concerning the character of the Kentucky sailors, that I did not entertain that fair opinion of them which I believe they generally deserve. All who visited me on this occasion behaved with as much civility and decorum as could be wished, and on their departure very cordially invited us to their respective boats.

As the moon arose soon after, I had an opportunity of examining the fleet; which, although it did not quite equal that of Agamemnon before Troy, yet made a very respectable appearance in the wilderness by night. The two first were loaded with tobacco from Green River; four with flower and whiskey from Cincinnati; two with horses from Limestone; four with families and household stuff removing to the river Amityé; two with cotton and tobacco from Cumberland; and two with lime in bulk from Virginia.

After having visited most of the fleet, I went on board the family boats, and was most agreeably surprised at the neatness and order displayed in every part of them; far surpassing, in point of cleanliness and convenience, one half of the settlements on shore. The boats were of the largest size, and the floors covered with rough sawed boards. In the rear a partition had been run across, in which they had stowed away all their present useless furniture. Through the middle was a passage about five feet wide; on each side were small bed-chambers of about twelve feet long and six wide, divided and surrounded by clean white cotton curtains; while in front there was a large open space for the general use of the boat. Three of the four boats had each three charming girls on board; who, although plainly dressed, yet appeared equally neat with every thing else on board. They informed me, that excepting our

boat, their present fleet consisted of four divisions, all strangers to each other, having met at this place by mere accident. While conversing with these agreeable strangers, the notes of a violin from one of the boats struck our ears, when a lively little girl exclaimed, "O, if we could get it on board we might have a dance!" Although from the violent pain of my finger, I was much better disposed for crying than dancing, yet my disposition to oblige the girls impelled me to give them a promise to find out the musician, and, if possible, to bring him, with some other company, on board. I found no difficulty in succeeding; and had it not been for my wound, should have enjoyed a very agreeable evening.

The next morning at day-break we prosecuted our voyage, and had another very narrow escape from a sawyer, which all of a sudden showed itself so near as to touch the side of the boat as it arose. This is one of those dangers which no human prudence can either foresee or prevent. The river was as smooth as glass, and most of us on the look out; yet we had no notice of this until the moment it arose, nor did we see it again as long as we remained in sight of the place. Had our boat been ten inches more to the left, we must have been wrecked. Having thence descended thirty-two miles, and passed four islands, we arrived at the village of New Madrid, where we found the peach-trees in blossom.

It is very uncertain, after we pass New Madrid, whether I shall write to you again before I arrive at Natchez, as I am here informed that *this* is the *lower end* of the upper country, and the latter the *upper end* of the lower country; the intermediate space of nearly six hundred miles being almost wholly a wild and pathless wilderness. Should this prove to be the case, you will not find my next very interesting; but whatever may occur worth noticing, I shall not fail to apprise you of.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXVI.

*Lower Chickasaw Bluffs, Tennessee,  
March 19, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

MY last informed you of my arrival at New Madrid. I shall now give you a description of that town, and then conduct you to this place by the route I came.

New Madrid, which lies in lat. 36. 34. N. long. 89. 20. W. is situated on the right side of the river in Louisiana, two hundred and fifty-five miles below the Missouri. This town, which formerly, under the Spanish government, was protected by a fort and garrison, contains at present no more than thirty indifferent houses, including the chapel, which is fast tumbling to pieces. It was first planned and laid out upon an extensive scale, about twenty years ago, by Colonel Morgan, of New-Jersey; but owing to some dispute between him and the Spanish commandant, he did not receive the encouragement which he deserved,

and which at that period would certainly have rendered it a place of some consequence. Immediately above the town is a small stream, navigable for three or four miles when the river is high, the mouth of which affords a safe little harbour for the landing of boats. Large boats, however, ought to be careful how they enter; for should the water be falling, they may not easily get out again. A little below this town, on the opposite shore, is the division line between Kentucky and Tennessee.

The banks of the river at this place are about two feet higher than the general freshes; yet it is said to have been once overflowed since its first settlement. The bank itself is fast wasting away, and from some change in the current of the river, continues daily to lose. A great part of what was originally intended for the front street is already washed away, and now occupied by the river. This can only be considered a great evil with respect to large towns, of which fortunately there are none on the Mississippi within reach of the river; but as far as it relates to some of the new settlements, experience has already taught them to make every allowance for the daily changes and inroads of this mighty river.

The land is perfectly level, not only around the town, but throughout the whole distance from the Grand Chain of Rocks above to this place, and from thence, it is said, to the Gulf of Mexico, a

distance, by the river, of twelve hundred miles. About two miles back of New Madrid you reach the edge of the swamps, which run nearly parallel to the river for the same immense distance, and are said to be from twenty to fifty miles in breadth.

They begin to raise considerable crops of cotton at New Madrid, but it always bears the lowest price, as its quality is much injured by the early frosts. It will, however, answer very well for coarse homespun manufactories, when once the country becomes sufficiently peopled to create a demand. They raise corn and meat for their own consumption, but never have any to sell. On the contrary, we were repeatedly solicited by them to spare a part of our stores. Land is worth two dollars an acre exclusive of improvements; but the town lots do not seem to have any permanent value affixed to them, depending rather on the temper and disposition of the seller. Should he be inclined to remove, you may purchase his lot for very little, but otherwise he is unwilling to sell at any price. What few inhabitants there are seem to have very little intercourse with each other. The men mostly follow boating, and the women, during their absence, make out to raise a little corn to keep themselves alive until the return of their husbands, when they eat, drink and dance as long as their money lasts,

and then take another trip to obtain a fresh supply. This place lies in lat. 36. 28. N. long. 89. 20. W.

We were entirely disappointed in our expectation of obtaining a pilot, or pattron, as they are called, unless we would consent to lose three or four days at this place. Rather than do that I determined to follow the first Kentucky boat that should pass, as it was but thirty-three miles to Little Prairie, where we were assured we could obtain a pilot. A few minutes before we started, a Chickasaw Indian came on board and requested a passage as far as the Chickasaw Bluffs. The Frenchman who brought him on board informed us, that he was one of a small party whom we had passed higher up the river, and expected to find several families of his nation at the Bluffs, who were about to join the party at Rivière Blanch. The other did not understand English, or carefully concealed his knowledge from us, as we were unable to learn any thing from him. This Indian was a stout, hearty, athletic looking fellow; yet I was surprised to find his hands so tender as they proved to be. At one time we had great occasion for all our help at the oars to prevent being drawn into a wrong channel. I had taken hold of one, and as he stood by signified to him to assist at the other. When we had done rowing, which was in about half an hour, he came and showed me his hands, which I found blistered quite across.

Having descended thirty-three miles from New Madrid, and passed seven islands, we arrived at a small village of twenty houses, situated on the right bank of the river, and called, from its situation on a natural meadow, Little Prairie.

After landing, I found we should not be able to get off for that day, as the pilot whom I particularly wanted, had gone a few miles down the river, and would not return before evening. In order, therefore, to make the most of the time we should have to stay, I gave orders to have the boat completely washed and rinsed outside and inside, which had by this time become very necessary, from the increased warmth of the weather. The roof was likewise in a manner useless for one of the purposes intended: for although it answered very well for a shade, yet it had become so much cracked and opened with the sun, as to render our situation particularly uncomfortable in wet weather. To repair it we could not obtain the necessary materials. I therefore purchased a tolerably large tent from one of the traders, and after it was well washed and scoured, had it fitted up under the roof in such a manner, that during fine weather it was extended along the roof over head, and when it rained we had only to unloose it, and stretch it to its proper place.

Having waited the greatest part of the day, our pilot arrived about five o'clock in the evening, and was ready to start at five minutes notice; but as

the boat was not yet in order to receive us, I deferred moving until morning. One of our hands had been unwell for two days previous, and finding himself rather worse, desired to remain with an acquaintance that he had found in the village. He accordingly was paid off and permitted to remain; nor did we experience any difficulty in procuring a substitute. I believe I have hitherto neglected to inform you of the wages of the Mississippi sailors. At St. Genevieve, which I believe is as cheap a place as any, you must give twenty-five dollars a month; but at this place I had to give forty for a common hand, and sixty to the patroon. This is apparently very high wages; yet, when you reflect that most of them have to return overland through the wilderness, or engage at very low wages in some boat ascending the stream, it will not appear so unreasonable.

We found several of the Delaware, Shawanese, and Cherokee Indians at this place, who furnish the traders with small quantities of beaver-skins, and other furs. Several of them were at this time intoxicated, and reeling about the banks of the river. The sight of our Chickasaw soon drew some of them to the boat, where they became very noisy and troublesome; and I saw plainly, from the conduct of the Chickasaw, that he was ashamed of his visitors; yet the poor fellow could not get rid of them, until I gave him a bottle of whiskey, with a wink to take them ashore.

The next morning, as soon as it was light, having every thing in good order, we set off once more under the guidance of an excellent pilot. Having descended twenty-seven miles below Little Prairie, and passed a number of low islands, we came to the mouth of the Bayou River, which empties in from the Tennessee shore, being forty or fifty yards wide, and navigable for some considerable distance. Forty-four miles below this river, you pass an island, which, from the number of boats loaded with flower that have been wrecked upon it, has acquired the name of the Flower Island. The great danger here seems to be from the current setting over very strongly in a bend in the island, which is so thickly beset with planters and sawyers as to endanger the safety of every boat that is forced in among them. This is the fifty-sixth island we have already passed below the Missouri, some of which are five or six miles in length; but as they are all low, and subject to inundations, they have never been settled.

Two miles below Flower Island, you pass the Upper Chickasaw Bluffs, which lie in lat. 35. 36. N. long. 89. 37. W. and extend about one mile along the river. Eleven miles further, you arrive at the Second Chickasaw Bluffs, which are of the same extent as the former. Sixteen miles below these there is a very difficult and dangerous passage called the Devil's Race Ground. The rapi-

dition of the current, together with the obstruction of planters and sawyers, render this passage so dangerous as in some measure to justify the name given it by the Kentuckians. However, when there is no wind to set you to leeward, by prudent management it may be passed in safety.

Ten miles below this pass, you perceive the Third Chickasaw Bluffs, extending nearly a mile along the river. These Bluffs, as well as the iron and chalk banks already mentioned, all lie on the left side of the river, and are high, yet narrow commanding ridges, apparently of an excellent soil, but entirely uninhabited. They end abruptly on the river. They are all handsome, level tracts, when viewed from the summit, expanding as they advance back into the country; but from the opposite side of the river no trace of them is to be discovered. These elevations or bluffs are all situated in the State of Tennessee; they are excellent sites for towns, and no doubt will be rapidly improved, when once the Indian title is extinguished.

About six miles below the Third Bluffs, the river begins to turn to the left, and continues so to do, until it has formed one of the greatest bends we have yet met with. Twenty-six miles below the bend we passed a small stream which falls into the Mississippi from the left bank: this is called Wolf River, and is not navigable. One mile below this river you pass Fort Pickering,

where a small garrison is still kept, and there are in its vicinity about twelve houses, which give it the appearance of a little town. The opposite side of the river has likewise eight or ten scattered settlements. The banks are only of the ordinary height, while the opposite ones tower sixty feet above the greatest rise of the river. These bluffs lie in lat. 35. 1. N. long. 89. 54. W.

This situation is better known by the name of the Fourth Chickasaw Bluffs, and used to be occupied by a Spanish garrison. About two miles below Fort Pickering you pass Fort Pike, at the lower end of the Bluff. We landed our Chickasaw Indian at this place, who during the whole of his passage behaved with a great deal of propriety, never even asking for any thing to eat or drink, but accepting readily whatever was offered to him.

The Mississippi frequently rises to a height of forty feet; and where the banks are of any extraordinary elevation, the difficulty of ascending their slippery sides, particularly when the water is low, is proportionably great; and this is the case with all the bluffs, or head lands, we have yet passed.

These Bluffs occupy a front of about ten miles on the river, and is another of the few situations found on the Mississippi, on which any thing like a large and permanent town may be built: as there is no danger of its being washed away like the other parts of the bank. The distance of this

place from the Missouri is four hundred and twenty-seven miles, and from Little Prairie one hundred and forty; in which latter distance you do not meet with any settlements. Some small crops of cotton, exclusive of their necessary provisions, are the only articles raised in this country. The soil is of an excellent quality; and although their cotton is far from being of the best, yet it is evidently superior to that of New Madrid.

. Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXVII.

*Natchez, Mississippi Territory,*

*April 6, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

SHORTLY after leaving the Chickasaw Bluffs, you pass the boundary line between the States of Tennessee and Georgia, or, as it is now called, the Mississippi Territory. You likewise pass an island about four miles in length, the head of which lies in the middle of the river, whence it is said a chain of rocks may be seen, when the water is low, extending quite to the left shore, which probably is the remaining foundation of a continuation of the Bluffs.

About twenty miles below the Fort, we overtook a part of the fleet of Kentuckians, with whom we had made a harbour some distance above New Madrid. These had passed us while we were delayed at Little Prairie in obtaining a pilot; but in consequence of the superior skill of our pilot in

taking advantage of all the short cuts through the islands, we had now retrieved our lost time. We had floated in company for about twelve miles, when we discovered two boats ahead, apparently in distress; nor was it long before we were satisfied that our conjectures were true, as we could plainly distinguish persons walking around them. Shortly after we perceived their small boat making towards us, and upon their coming up they informed us, that three days before they had been carried on a sand-bar at the head of an island; that the water had already fallen so far as to leave their boats almost on dry ground; and that, finding themselves unable to launch them, they had unloaded, and cut a number of rollers in order to be ready whenever they could procure assistance. As my boat was the first that was boarded, I could not think of denying them our aid, and therefore requested the pilot to land, in order that as many as were willing might go to assist them. They likewise met with a ready acquiescence from all the other boats, and in a short time we all landed on the left shore. Our fleet now consisted of eight sail, or rather *floats*, most of them carrying a large and small canoe, in which the respective crews crossed over, to the number of one hundred and twenty persons.

Previous to this I had had a few slight attacks of an *intermittent fever*; and as I was then under

a regimen, I did not feel well enough to undergo any violent exertions. I therefore concluded to remain behind and embrace the opportunity of a few hours of undisturbed quiet to take up my pen. I had been about two hours engaged thus when I was suddenly roused by a "halloa," and looking round, found three more boats just abreast of me descending the river. I acquainted them with the cause of our delay, which they no sooner heard, than they mechanically pulled in for the shore, without waiting for any orders from the master; and after securing their boats they sent off three canoes, with nine additional hands, to assist the others.

Although I felt a little displeas'd at first for being disturb'd, yet their innate good-will, in being ready to render assistance unask'd, made me ample amends; and when they inform'd me they were all from Kentucky, I was confirm'd in the good opinion I had form'd, that the Kentucky sailors in general, although a rough, yet are a more amiable class of citizens, than they have been represent'd to be.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, the hands who went off at ten in the morning return'd, after having launch'd the boats, which they effect'd with great difficulty, notwithstanding their numbers. The owners were then busy in reloading their cargoes. They appear'd to be perfect strangers to the navigation of the river, not having a single

soul on board who had ever descended the Ohio before. They requested that we would wait for them at Council Island, which was about ten miles distant, and as far as we could go that afternoon, in order that they might have the advantage of our company for their better guidance. After promising to comply with their request, we got under way, and by sunset arrived at the before-mentioned island, which is about four miles long, but has nothing to recommend it, except, as is said, having formerly been the council seat of the conferences between the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes of Indians. Some short time after dark we heard the heavy sounding strokes of oars, by which we discovered that the other boats were coming; who, it seems, rather than lose our company, ran another risk of being wrecked in proceeding after dark. However, we at last had the satisfaction of seeing them safely moored among the rest of the fleet.

From Council Island you descend thirty-two miles without meeting with any thing worthy of notice. You then pass the river St. Francis, which empties in from the right bank. It is two hundred yards wide at its mouth, and is said to be navigable for upwards of two hundred miles. Some of the head branches of this river approach very near to the Mines of St. Genevieve. We saw two loaded boats lying at the mouth, apparently intending to ascend the river, but we were too far

distant to have any communication with them. It lies in lat. 34. 44. N. long. 90. 29. W.

Five miles below the St. Francis, you pass a few small scattered improvements, made upon a natural prairie; where, finding the land ready cleared, a few settlers, without any title or claim, have taken possession. Most of these people have come here since the cession of this country to the United States, expecting, as has heretofore been the case, to receive some encouragement from the government. I trust they will not be disappointed; and that our national legislature will be generous enough to these poor objects to grant them what their dangerous and exposed situation surely has entitled them to receive; either a free gift or a pre-emption right to their hard and well-earned improvements.

I took the small skiff, and landed at this settlement. My stay, however, was so short, that I only had an opportunity of picking up a few samples of cotton, which the women were spinning. I did not think it equal to the last I had seen at the Bluffs. In answer to my inquiry as to the distance of the swamps in their rear, they informed me it was no more than three quarters of a mile. Although I spent but ten minutes on shore, yet it was nearly an hour before I could overtake the boat; during which time I passed two canoes with four Indians. As neither of them seemed to understand me, I did not learn to what tribe they

belonged, but from their thick flat heads, our patrolron pronounced them Choctaws. I saw a catfish in one of their canoes as I passed them, which I supposed must have weighed sixty or seventy pounds.

During the remainder of the day we met with nothing worthy of notice, till towards sunset, when we were crossed by innumerable flocks of pigeons, which passed so near us that we were able to distinguish their eyes. We had fine sport for about an hour; but although well provided with pigeon-shot, we could not kill more than one or two at a time. Every one thought the guns were spelled or bewitched, as each of us had frequently shot five and six ducks at a time, and I had even brought down fourteen pigeons from a tree at a single shot. I attributed it to the nearness of the object, which prevented the shot from being sufficiently scattered; and in order to convince them, I took a pair of pistols, and put thirty or forty shot over the ball, with which I brought down two at the first shot; but after charging it with an ordinary load, it was easy to kill from three to seven at every fire.

On the same evening, after we had encamped on the Mississippi Territory side, we discovered a large French barge, the crew of which had lighted up fires directly opposite to us, and appeared to have come from New-Orleans. Several of our

hands wished to go to her, expecting to meet with some of their acquaintance. I accordingly took two in the small skiff, and crossed over. We found they were forty-eight days from New-Orleans, bound to St. Louis, and loaded with West-India goods. They informed us, that it was very healthy at New-Orleans; that before this time war had been declared against England, as it was expected every day before they sailed; and that the Balize was blockaded by two English frigates, who took every thing going out or coming in. This news did not at all accord with my wishes at the moment; for although I had no objection to contribute my mite, either by land or water, "whene'er my country's good required it," yet I must confess I really wished the report should prove unfounded; for if true it would leave me the choice of two alternatives; either to pass the Balize at the risk of being taken and sent to Jamaica, when I wished to be at New-York; or, what was almost as dreadful, to ride on horseback a distance of nearly seventeen hundred miles, and the greater part through a dreary wilderness. The latter part of the objection has but little weight with me now, as I have become naturalized to every inconvenience of that kind; but the idea of such a journey by land makes me indeed *shudder*, for you know I have always had a natural antipathy to any thing longer than a twelve hour's connection with a *saddle*.

Having collected all the information we could, together with three quarters of an old newspaper, we took our leave, not forgetting a few compliments to our friends astern. After getting on board our vessel, I found supper just ready, but was too impatient to look over my piece of newspaper to partake of it at that moment; and I felt a considerable elevation of spirits on reading the following article under the head of marine intelligence: "The brig Traveller, from New-York, and the schooner Two Brothers, from Philadelphia, both entered the Balize on Wednesday afternoon. The report of a blockade by an English frigate, is entirely without foundation."

About twenty miles below this encampment, our pilot, who was a Frenchman, and did not seem to relish so large a company as our fleet consisted of, purposely worked his vessel in with the right shore, while the remainder kept the mid-channel. The consequence of this manœuvre was, that, while they were carried by the current around the long turns of four islands a distance of ten miles, we slipped into a narrow channel about three miles through, whereby we gained an advance of seven miles. We next drifted twenty-six miles without meeting with any thing worthy of observation until we discovered a Bayou or outlet of the Mississippi on the left shore, through which the water rushed from the river with considerable rapidity. We were sufficiently far to be out of the reach of

its vortex ; yet some large trees that floated between us and the shore, were drawn into that channel.

These Bayous are places where the river has broken through the main banks, (which are always highest on the edge, and descending thence into the back swamps,) and when high, rushes out with great violence, continuing so to do until the river has subsided below the bed of the new-made channel. Our pilot pointed out a stream about half a mile lower on the opposite side ; but as it had no name, and was besides so small that I could hardly perceive it, it is not worth mentioning. About half a mile below this stream, we discovered a singular piece of low ground, which was covered with a late growth of the willow and cotton tree, while on each side it was surrounded by the large growth of the adjacent country. Upon inquiry we learned, that this had been the former bed of the river ; but from some change in the current an eddy was formed at this spot, which soon collected large quantities of drift-wood, and at length effectually dammed out the water, while the river opened another channel to the right.

Six miles below the old channel, you perceive White River coming in from the right. This stream is about one hundred and fifty yards wide at its mouth, and navigable for upwards of one

hundred miles. Four or five miles up this river there is said to be a natural navigable canal, which communicates with the Arkansas, and falls into that river about twenty-two miles above its mouth. Those navigators who are bound to the Osark village, a settlement of French and Indians, about fifty miles from the Mississippi, generally take this route, as being much nearer than to ascend the Arkansas.

Twenty-two miles below White River, you arrive at the Arkansas, a large stream rising in the Province of Mexico, navigable for three or four hundred miles, and discharging itself from the right side of the Mississippi. The country through which it flows is described as being one of the most pleasant and fruitful to the westward of the Mississippi; and one of its branches is said almost to interlock with a branch of the Osage River, which discharges itself into the Missouri. The mouth of this river lies in lat. 34. 1. N. long. 91. 4. W.

The Osark or Arkansas Indians inhabit the banks of this and White River; but as there were no settlements near the mouth, we lost no time by landing. Between the two, however, we were boarded by several canoes belonging to this tribe. These Indians were entirely naked, except a small breech-cloth as wide as your hand, and appeared much more regular and delicately formed than any of the tribes I had hitherto seen. They never

offered to come on board until requested; nor did they then wait for a second invitation; for no sooner did one jump on board than all the rest immediately followed. I was very attentive to the motions of a fine boy about six or seven years of age, who with his knife was dressing a bow and arrows, when, by some sudden motion of the canoe he dropped his knife in the river, and at the same moment was in after it. To my surprise he made out to recover it before it probably had descended two fathoms. As these people always expect to be treated when asked into a boat, I did not forget that ceremony, and after giving them a dram of whiskey, they departed well pleased.

The Arkansas River, which is six hundred and four miles from the Missouri, is remarkable for being the first place, where, I think, Ferdinand de Soto, after travelling through the wilds of the Floridas, came upon the Mississippi, nearly three hundred years ago. It likewise seems to be a dividing line between the upper and lower climates; as the alligator is seldom seen higher up than this river, and at no time numerous. The Arkansas is also remarkable for being a kind of boundary line to the growth of the cypress; for although above this you occasionally meet with it, yet below, it soon becomes the principal tree of the forests. It may further be noted for another distinction: we sel-

dom missed a day on which we did not shoot one or two wild turkeys above, but after passing below, I do not recollect ever hearing or seeing any. There is a characteristic of this river still to be mentioned. The foliage and drapery of the trees on its shores begin to present a new and interesting appearance, being curiously ornamented and festooned with a grayish vegetable moss, which attaches itself to them, and covers their branches in large and long clusters, strongly resembling bunches of horse-hair. This adheres very lightly together, and, containing its vegetative principle in every part alike, is scattered by the winds in fragments from tree to tree, where it again vegetates, and is again dispersed, as before. This singular and equally useful flying vegetable, is known in this country by the name of the Spanish beard, and when prepared and cured makes cheap mattresses, equally pleasant and elastic with those made from horse-hair. I am told it is already in considerable use for that purpose both at Natchez and New-Orleans.

From the Arkansas you descend about twenty-five miles without meeting with any thing particularly worthy of notice, except another small stream on the right hand side, for which I could not learn any name. You then descend twenty-five miles more, when you pass a small outlet on the same side, where we were under the necessity

of landing on account of the wind, which was very high. After it became dark, and we had lighted up our fires, we heard the heavy sounding strokes of oars, and shortly after were hailed by some boats, to know whether they might land in safety. We informed them of the outlet below us, but they, either not understanding us, or being fearful of greater dangers, pulled in for the shore, and were drawn into the outlet, which they descended thirty or forty yards before they could secure a fast to the shore. We found they were three boats in company, from Pittsburgh, loaded with flower, whiskey, and pork. The next morning we were detained five hours in assisting to extricate them from their difficulties, in which we succeeded, as the outlet was one of the smallest, with no great draught of water through it. From the outlet it is fifty-eight miles to a place called the Grand Lake, a name given to part of an old bed of the river, which evidently flowed through this lake in another channel, as may be seen by the difference in the growth of the trees around its margin. There are many instances of this kind to be met with along the Mississippi, and in one or two places you may distinguish small tracts of land, with tall and aged trees, that have formerly been islands, but are now surrounded with a younger growth of willow and cotton trees. Eighteen miles below Grand Lake you enter a part of the river, where there is a singular prospect, as at this place you have

a view of the river for ten or twelve miles ahead, whereas before this the sudden bends of the river have always confined your vision to a distance of four or five miles only.

About twenty-two miles below this Long Reach, as it is called, we spoke two barges loaded with West-India goods. They were thirty-one days from New-Orleans, and bound, the one to Louisville, and the other to Cincinnati, on the Ohio. They confirmed the report of the probability of immediate rupture with Great-Britain, but that no English men of war had been seen off the Balize. They likewise informed us they had passed on that day twenty-three Kentucky and New-Orleans boats, some of whom were but a few miles ahead. The next day we drifted thirty miles without passing any thing worth notice, until evening, when we fell in company with five Kentuckymen loaded with horses and tobacco. They were all encamped for the night; but as our pilot did not approve of the situation, we dropped down a mile or two below them, to a place called Wolf Island. About eighteen miles from Wolf Island, on the left side of the river, you perceive another old channel of the Mississippi, which may be traced to where it apparently had crossed the bed of the Yazoo River, being the site of the ancient junction of the two rivers. Seven miles below the old channel you arrive at the mouth of the famous Yazoo, a large stream about one hundred and sixty

yards wide at its mouth, and navigable for one hundred and thirty miles. It rises in the Mississippi Territory, (formerly the State of Georgia,) between the Mississippi and Tombigbee rivers, and its borders are chiefly inhabited by the Chickasaw and Choctaw tribes of Indians. This river passes through large and extensive tracts of valuable land, the illegal sales of which have given rise to the famous "Yazoo Claims," which have heretofore excited so much of the public attention throughout the United States. The mouth of this river lies in lat. 32. 26. N. long. 90. 52. W.

Immediately opposite the mouth of Yazoo River, on each side of the Mississippi, are two very strong eddies, which it is necessary to avoid, as they will twist and whirl a boat around like a top. Although it requires an infinite deal of trouble to work out of them, yet there is no other danger to be apprehended than that of delay. The eddy on the right hand side of the river is most to be avoided, as being of much larger extent than the other.

Twelve miles below the Yazoo River, you arrive at the Walnut Hills, or Fort M<sup>c</sup>Henry, which is situated on an eminence. These hills are the finest situation for a town I have yet seen on the Mississippi. They are of an eligible height, the ascent easy, the soil luxuriant, and the climate the most temperate on the river, being situated in about lat. 32. 15. N. Were I inclined to settle on

the Mississippi, here would I fix my abode; for although I have not yet seen the whole, I should rest satisfied with this charming situation. It is a little surprising, however, that with all these advantages the settlement contains no more than eight plantations. The planters appear to be in very easy circumstances. Their chief article of culture is cotton, which is of a far better quality than any I have seen on this river. The men generally had a sickly appearance, but the women and girls looked fresh and sprightly. From their own account, however, they considered the situation as unhealthy. If this is the case, it is my opinion there cannot be a spot on the whole Mississippi (below the mouth of the Ohio) fit for the residence of man. The fort, which was garrisoned and kept in repair under the Spanish government, has, since the cession of the province to the United States, been entirely evacuated as useless. This eminence has taken its name from the quality of the timber which formerly covered its sides; and although it has a charming brook of clear transparent water which empties into the river, yet it is so brackish that no use can be made of it.

Twenty-five miles below the Walnut Hills you pass a new settlement called Palmyra, situated on the left bank of the river, and although somewhat scattered, contains fifteen houses. The inhabitants confine themselves chiefly to raising cotton, which is of an excellent quality, and such provisions as

are necessary for their own consumption. Twenty-seven miles below Palmyra is Big Black, or Little Yazoo River, a considerable stream, which enters in from the left side, and rises between the Yazoo and Tombigbee Rivers, but is navigable only when the waters are high. One mile below the mouth of this river you pass through the Grand Gulf, which is nothing more than two considerable eddies on each side of the river, occasioned by its taking a sudden turn to the right, in consequence of the resistance of a high rocky shore against the current. These eddies are strong and troublesome on both sides of the river, but that on the left is the largest, and requires some care to keep out of it. If, however, you should happen to be drawn in, you have nothing more to dread than the loss of a few hours time before you can extricate yourself. I had heard some dreadful accounts respecting the passage of this gulf, but as our pilot assured me, so I found them all false. I took the small skiff, and crossed the eddies in every direction, yet incurred no other danger than may be met with in any mill-pond. Ten miles below the Grand Gulf is Bayou Pierre, a small navigable stream which puts in from the left side, and where you perceive some considerable improvements. Ten miles lower you pass the Petit Gulf; a place not unlike to the Grand Gulf, and caused by a similar resistance of certain high hills

upon the course of the current, which is here suddenly forced to the right. Here you find two other eddies, which, although not so large as the last, yet are equally troublesome.

Twenty-three miles below this last gulf, you pass Coles Creek, another small boatable stream, which comes in from the left shore. After leaving the Grand Gulf, the face of the country begins to improve very rapidly. The immense tracts of wilderness on each side of the river which tire and fatigue the eye, are here interspersed with a number of plantations; and during the last thirty miles we had constantly some improvements in sight. From Coles Creek you descend ten miles to another small stream, the name of which I have forgotten; from whence twenty-four miles more will bring you to the city of Natchez, at a distance of nine hundred and forty-four miles from the mouth of the Missouri; during which you pass one hundred and thirty-seven uninhabited islands.

I have frequently heard it remarked by foreigners, that the woods of the United States were unlike to those of the rest of the world, inasmuch as they never offered the cheering voice of the feathered songster, so common in other countries. I cannot say how far the assertion is correct, as it respects the comparison with the rest of the world, but I always found amusement from the notes of the little warblers, during my travels throughout

my own country, from Maine to Georgia on the sea coast, and from Lake Champlain to the Mississippi in the interior. I must, however, confess, that the borders of the Mississippi in this respect exceed all other parts of our country. About half an hour after day-light the wakeful martin (who winters in this country,) gives timely notice of the rising sun; and at the moment the gilded foliage of the lofty trees acknowledges his appearance, the whole feathered creation, as if with one accord, pour forth their gratitude in one general hymn. The woods on both sides of the river, ever since we passed the Arkansas, appeared to be literally alive with its numerous feathered inhabitants; and although we generally kept the middle of the river, which is one mile in breadth, yet we could hear the general chorus much better than on shore. I do not recollect ever to have heard any thing to equal this charming natural concert.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXVIII.

*Baton Rouge, West Florida,*  
*April 13, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

ALTHOUGH I intended to call at this place "en passant," as being the first fortified Spanish post I had met with on my travels, yet my anxiety to return to New-York would hardly have allowed me time to forward this letter, had not the weather, which detained us here for twenty-four hours, given me an opportunity to remember my promise to you.

My last contained a detail of my voyage down to the city of Natchez, of which place no doubt you will expect a particular description.

The city of Natchez, which has been erected a port of entry, lies in lat. 31. 32. N. long. 91. 15. W. and is situated on a most beautiful eminence on the left bank of the Mississippi. Immediately adjoining the river there is a lower bank, which appears to be upon the same level with the

opposite shore ; the whole extent of which, for nearly a mile, is lined with boats, intended either for this market or that of New-Orleans.

From the best information I could obtain, this city contains nearly three hundred houses, and about three thousand inhabitants, including all colours. There are several extensive mercantile houses established here, and one at least which imports goods directly from England. There are two printing-offices, and consequently two newspapers, which are published weekly. The buildings in general are neat, yet I found none within the town that can be considered as elegant. The principal hotels are upon a genteel establishment, yet not in a style corresponding to the general character of the place for luxury : but to a Mississippi sailor, who like an alligator may be said to have lived in mud while upon the river, they afford no trifling luxury.

The streets of Natchez are not paved, nor have they even the convenience of a paved side walk ; consequently in wet weather it must be disagreeable walking. As the city, however, is situated on the summit of the hills, (which have a striking resemblance to the Walnut Hills already described) the water from rains passes off very readily, and a bright sun in a few hours absorbs the remaining moisture.

My stay at Natchez was but two days and two nights : of course you will not expect me to say

any thing respecting the manners of its inhabitants, as the result of my own observations. Yet as this was always one of the principal items in my catalogue of inquiries, you may be sure I did not neglect it on this occasion. "The ladies in general are extremely delicate, which never fails to please, and excite the warmest sensations in the beholder. They are fond of dancing and all the other gay amusements, and though chaste as the virgin queen before the Gordian knot is tied, yet indulgent as the Cyprian goddess for ever after." Although this character, (given me by a married gentleman of the town,) may be applicable to a few, yet I entertain too exalted an opinion of the sex to make it general.

The gentlemen pass their time in the pursuit of three things: all make love; most of them play; and a few make money. With Religion they have nothing to do; having formed a treaty with her, the principal article of which is, "Trouble not us, nor will we trouble you."

From the eminence on which the city stands, which is about one hundred feet above the present level of the river, you have a very pleasing prospect of the river both above and below; but in front your vision is lost in tracing the immense forests which cover the low grounds, extending in one uniform horizontal line before you. One evening, as I was enjoying the cool refreshing breeze from this charming situation, I was agree-

ably surprised with the sight of a fleet of eleven Kentucky boats, which just came in sight, and were making for the landing. This is situated in a bend of the river, where the projecting point above causes a very extensive eddy along the shore below, and makes it very convenient for a landing-place. The current of the river is so strong, that the boatmen always make a proper allowance for the drift of the vessel while making in for the shore. But here the eddy setting up with nearly equal velocity, carried the most of them far above the town, where they had to take the channel once more, before they could effect a landing at the Levee. The next thing that afforded us amusement, was a long raft of boards and shingles, which was intended for this place. The owners expected its arrival, and were on the Levee to see it landed in safety, but it was soon discovered that it would not be able to reach even the eddy. They accordingly mustered all the ropes and boats which could be readily collected, and while those on the raft sent their boats and ropes ashore, these went off with theirs; but the power of the raft was so great, and the current so strong, that the ropes all snapped like threads; nor were they able to make a landing before they had drifted five miles below the city.

I had the curiosity the next morning to count the number of boats then lying along the Levee, and found they amounted to eighty-three, all

loaded with the produce of the upper country as far as the 42d degree of north latitude. When I went on board of my own boat, (which was very early, and before the sun had risen,) I discovered that my visit was as unwelcome as it was unexpected. I was so unfortunate as to disturb the morning slumbers of exactly one quarter of a dozen of the copper-coloured votaries of the Cyprian queen, who it seems had undertaken to enliven the idle hours of our Canadian crew. The *ladies* really seemed ashamed; but whether from a conviction of their being the intruders, or considering me as such, I am unable to say. Suffice it, I took my leave until they had time to decamp.

Although gambling is permitted in its fullest latitude *up* on the hill, yet it seems they have a law or ordinance which prohibits the least shadow of any thing that looks like it *below*. I had an opportunity of seeing this republican regulation put in force against a Monongahela boatman, who having had some trifling dispute with a spy of one of the ministerial officers of the tribunal, offered to leave the event to the turn of a dollar. This the other objected to; but offered to pitch a dollar at a point, which was agreed to by the first. The boatman lost his wager fairly; but what was his surprise when he afterwards found himself arrested upon the information of this very villain,

and fined either twenty-five or fifty dollars for *gambling!*

The river is about one mile broad at this place, and one hundred feet deep. From the brow of the hills before mentioned, you discover small fleets arriving daily, which keep up the hurry and bustle on the flats or Levee below; while at the same time you see detachments continually dropping off for New-Orleans, and the slaves breaking up the hulks of those that have discharged their cargoes, in order to make room for the new comers.

Sea vessels sometimes come up to this city against the stream, although it is three hundred miles above New-Orleans; but it is very seldom that they attempt it, as the sudden and frequent turns of the river render the fairest wind of very little use for any length of time, as that which is fair for one turn will probably be directly ahead at the next. Besides, the time lost in warping up the river, and around the bends, is sufficient in ordinary cases for a voyage to Europe and back again. In descending the river afterwards, we met a brig at the Fausse Rivière, one hundred and sixty-five miles above New-Orleans, which was then forty-two days from that city. This vessel had part of her cargo of slaves on board, and was bound to Natchez; and though she had the advantage of extraordinary assistance from her slaves,

she had performed only one half of her voyage. I have no doubt that her whole voyage from city to city took up more than eighty days.

The transportation of produce is chiefly done by the Kentucky and New-Orleans boats, which after having disposed of their cargoes, are purchased for a mere trifle, and reloaded with cotton. They have also a kind of barge, one hundred feet in length, and somewhat wider and deeper than those I have before noticed. These are decked for the purpose of preserving the merchandise which they bring up the river from being injured by the weather. They likewise carry a large square sail, with a standing mast, and are steered by a rudder. These boats ply constantly between the two cities, and as they are well manned, row constantly while descending. When ascending they depend chiefly on a very long tow line, which extends from the mast head to the shore, where eight or ten men drag her up against the stream. They generally descend this distance in one week, but it requires more than two to return.

The principal article of culture in this country at present is cotton, of which they already raise immense quantities, of a quality almost equal to any in the world. They formerly raised large crops of indigo; but in consequence of the low price of that article some years back, and its destructive effects on the health of the slaves, they

have generally fallen into the more profitable culture of cotton. This is planted about the middle or latter end of February. Their corn is planted between the first of March and the first of July. They likewise raise tobacco, rice, Indian corn, hemp, and flax ; but these articles are now brought down the river in such quantities from Kentucky and the upper country, that they can purchase them much cheaper than they can raise them, and prefer turning their labour to more profitable crops.

Improved land round about Natchez, even considering its superior quality, is extravagantly high, bearing on an average the price of twenty dollars an acre, exclusive of the value of the mansion-house and improvements, which must be paid for, at a rate of twenty-five per cent. less than the real value. It is a very common thing for a planter to have a hundred slaves, and some have as many as three hundred. The profits of an able-bodied slave may be safely calculated at one hundred dollars a year, some say two hundred, exclusive of his maintenance. The price of prime slaves is five hundred dollars each ; and those possessed of any extraordinary qualifications will command from six to nine hundred dollars.

They have peaches, figs, and plums in great perfection ; but their apple-trees produce very little, and that not eatable. Sour oranges are common. The markets are supplied with excel-

lent beef, mutton, pork and poultry, of their own raising. The cows look well, but the milk is thin and watery. Although the sheep answer very well for the table, yet I am credibly informed, that they do not promise much for the loom, as those of the best fleece have been found to degenerate so fast, as in a few years to afford only a scanty supply of very indifferent wool. The hogs are small, but prolific. I have heard of some planters who have from three to six hundred head of horned cattle.

Immediately opposite to Natchez is a small settlement named Concord, consisting of a few scattered families, who raise some cotton, together with a few necessaries of life. The bank on which it is situated is subject to be overflowed by the annual inundations of the river, which is the case with the whole western bank, from the mouth of the Ohio to this place. Natchez is generally allowed to be subject to those periodical fevers so common upon this river; yet from its height and situation it might be considered as one of those few exceptions which are exempt from the general evil.

There is a gang of idle Choctaw, Natchez, and Muskogee Indians, who stroll about the city, or rather are settled down on the Levee, which being the landing-place of the cargoes of whiskey and provisions that continually arrive, has attracted them to that spot. They are about forty in num-

ber, of both sexes, and of every age. They are provided with a full band of music, with which they serenade the different boats as they arrive morning and evening, or as often as they want a little money, whiskey, or provisions. You would no doubt have been surprised, if you had inspected the band, with their instruments, before the beginning of the performance ; but you would have been satisfied, after hearing the music, that a given quantity of discord may produce harmony. I must certainly do them the justice to say, that I never was more agreeably disappointed in my life, and the harmony produced by such an unpromising collection of instruments and performers, exceeded all my expectations.

As I was very particular in examining the instruments used on this occasion, I must not omit giving you a description of them. The first and largest was a joint of thick cane, open at both ends, which, when applied to the mouth, and sung or blown through with a strong voice, served as a bass to the whole. The next was also a joint of cane with both ends closed, containing a few small pebbles : this was used by shaking it to the time and motion of the piece. The third was two separate joints of cane, each of which were cracked in several places, and used by suspending the one between the fingers of the left hand, and striking the other upon it with the right ; producing a kind of rattling jarring sound. The

fourth was likewise a joint of cane open at one end, having a small slip of cane inserted directly across the aperture. This was held in a perpendicular direction, when by contracting the lips, and blowing or singing through the aperture upon the slip, it produced a hollow hissing sound. The fifth was another joint of cane closed at both ends, with a narrow strip cut from end to end, over which was extended a strong deer sinew; which being set in vibration by the thumb, produced a dull monotonous sound, something like the lowest string of the African jumbo. The sixth and last instrument was a two gallon tin kettle, with a dressed buckskin extended over the mouth, not unlike a drum, which it was intended to represent. This was carried under one arm, and beat with a stick held in the hand, producing a dull sound like a drum.

The first five instruments were of various sizes, according to the age of the persons using them, those of the children being always the smallest. Their manner of performance was as follows: Having first formed their company under a tree a small distance from the boats, they advance singing short stanzas of "ho ha." When near the boats, the captain or leader advances before with a white or striped silk banner, taking long and solemn strides, and then halting a moment for the rest to come up. After reaching the boat he stands as still as a post, not moving his eyes, or any of

his limbs. The men approach next, and form a circle round him: then follow the boys; after them the squaws with the girls in the rear. The music now becomes slow and solemn for about five minutes, when it gradually increases to a brisker motion, during which you will first perceive the captain move his eyes, next his lips, then his head and hands, and at last a very curious and pleasing pantomimical dance strikes up, which continues for about a quarter of an hour. The music is performed in two parts, being tenor and treble: the men and boys composing the former, and the women and girls the latter. The several instruments were used with such accurate time and motion, and so blended with the vocal music, that it rendered the performance far superior to any thing I had anticipated. The burthen of the song was the same throughout, consisting of a single stanza, and, as near as I can remember as follows: "Ho, hoa, ho; ho, al, hoa; hoa, ho, ho; ho, hoa, ho."

In traversing the city, I had noticed leopard skins hanging at the doors of several stores, which I concluded had been brought from the Atlantic ports, to be used in making military housings, as I knew that animal was not an inhabitant of our continent. I happened to mention this circumstance to a number of gentlemen at the hotel one evening, when I was informed they were the skins of animals killed in that country. One of the gen-

tllemen told me that he had the skin of one at his house which had been killed the week before, within twenty miles of that city. He invited me to examine it, which I did the next morning, and found that it measured five feet three inches in length, and four feet in breadth. I thought it as beautiful a spotted tiger or leopard skin as I had ever seen. The only remarkable difference that I could recollect was, those I had seen from Africa generally had a darker stripe along the back from the head to the tail; in other respects they appeared to me as skins of the same kind of animal. They are called the spotted tiger in this country, and although not numerous, yet of late years they are frequently met with.

Wild horses are likewise sometimes seen on the west side of the river. It requires great dexterity to take them, but when once broken they become very useful animals. The sugar-cane is sometimes planted as high up as the Natchez, but only in small patches for curiosity or medicinal purposes, as the frosts are too severe to insure a crop; but from Point Coupee, one hundred and forty miles below, the cane becomes the staple quite down to New-Orleans. Natchez Heights is the tenth bluff or ridge of the highlands which you pass on that side of the river, and is about one hundred and thirty miles in length, and twenty-five in breadth, and the soil of a most excellent quality. This country likewise exhibits signs of having formerly

cherished a population far exceeding any thing which has been known in our time. A considerable variety of ancient mounds are found here, some of which are round, others oval, but most of them square, with a small platform on the top. Some of these have been opened, and a single skeleton discovered near the top. Several very curious specimens of their ancient earthenware have likewise been discovered, with singular figures and characters well traced upon them.

The evening preceding that of my departure from Natchez being beautiful and bright, I walked down to the Levee, in order to give some directions to my boatmen. In passing two boats next to mine, I heard some very warm words; which my men informed me proceeded from some drunken sailors, who had a dispute respecting a *Choctaw lady*. Although I might fill half a dozen pages with the curious slang made use of on this occasion, yet I prefer selecting a few of the most brilliant expressions by way of sample. One said, "I am a man; I am a horse; I am a team. I can whip any man *in all Kentucky*, by G—d." The other replied, "I am an alligator; half man, half horse; can whip any *on the Mississippi* by G—d." The first one again, "I am a man; have the best horse, best dog, best gun, and handsomest wife in all Kentucky, by G—d." The other, "I am a Mississippi snapping turtle: have bear's claws,

alligator's teeth, and the devil's tail ; can whip *'any man*, by G—d." This was too much for the first, and at it they went like two bulls, and continued for half an hour, when the alligator was fairly vanquished by the horse.

I should have been glad to have spent a week or two longer at Natchez, in order to have an opportunity of making a few more observations. From the little I did observe, the inhabitants seemed to indulge themselves in all the ease and luxury of the east, but whether their proportion of happiness and contentment is equally great, I very much doubt ; as it has always been a favourite maxim with me, and confirmed during my travels in the Southern States and West-Indies, that "happiness can never exist in the breast of that individual who lives by the misery and wretchedness of others."

As this letter has already exceeded the limits I at first intended, I must defer the account of my voyage from Natchez to this place till my next, which will probably be from New-Orleans.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXIX.

*New-Orleans, April 20, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

I HAVE at length arrived at that point from whence I calculate that twenty-five or thirty days may bring me once more within the circle of my friends and acquaintance. A vessel sails from this place to-morrow for New-York; and believe me I find it very difficult to forego so favourable an opportunity of taking an immediate passage home. Had I arrived two days sooner, I certainly should have sailed in her; but as I do not expect ever to return to New-Orleans, I have conquered this ardent desire, and shall make myself contented for eight or ten days to come, when I shall certainly embark in the first vessel that sails either for New-York, Philadelphia or Baltimore.

As my last was wholly confined to a description and account of Natchez, you will no doubt wish

to learn the remainder of my voyage from that city to this place.

After leaving the city of Natchez, you descend nineteen miles, and pass a small stream called Catharine's Creek, which enters the Mississippi from a bend on the left shore, where we encamped for the night. While the hands were kindling a fire to prepare our supper, I took the small skiff and my gun, and rowed about a quarter of a mile up the creek, where I was drawn by the bellowing of the alligators. I wished to kill one of these animals, in order to have a fair opportunity of examining it; for although we had seen numbers since we passed the Walnut Hills, yet none were sufficiently near for that purpose. Several times in this little distance I thought myself within twenty yards of my object, yet could not get sight of it, for as I approached, it disappeared and was silent. After I had ascended some distance, I suffered the boat to drift with the current, expecting, as I now made no commotion in the water, to have a better opportunity of getting a shot. The noise, I had perceived, generally recommenced below me as I rowed up. It was not long before I observed what I thought to be an alligator crossing a shallow swampy place near the edge of the creek. I fired and killed him on the spot. But guess my disappointment, when I found I had been pursuing the notes of bull-frogs, instead of the bellowings of alligators; and shot a frog which every

hand on board imagined to weigh four pounds. I had never seen a bull-frog which weighed more than half a pound ; therefore was at least excusable in my conjecture, that nothing smaller than an alligator could emit such horridly dreadful sounds.

One mile below Catharine's Creek, you pass the White Cliffs, another, but less elevated, of those narrow strips of highland which end abruptly upon the left side of the river. This is composed of a whitish clay, and at a distance has the appearance of the chalk banks above. Twenty-seven miles below the cliffs, you pass the mouth of Hona Chitto River, emptying in from the left shore. This stream is navigable for a considerable distance when the waters are high. It is about sixty yards wide at its mouth, and has a number of settlements near its head waters. Six miles lower, on the same side, you perceive another stream, which is called Buffaloe Creek, where we were obliged to land, in consequence of an accident which I shall relate, as well as on account of the heavy swell in the river, occasioned by a strong head wind, which had blown during the greatest part of that day. The accident I allude to was the loss of a boat, which was at no greater distance from us than two hundred yards. We saw and had to pass the same danger ; but as we kept an early look out, we plyed our oars in time to avoid it. We endeavoured to give them all the notice in

our power, but in vain: they either did not observe it, or concluded we were joking; and the first notice they had of their misfortune was the crash of their boat against a heavy sawyer, which stove in the greatest part of her broadside, and threw her immediately into the trough of the sea, when being deep by loaded with lead and beaver, she filled and disappeared almost instantly. We had for some time been looking out for a place to land, but none had offered before we arrived at Buffalo Creek. Here we no sooner had secured our boat, than we walked (it being impossible to go up with our small boat) to the place where we had observed two men belonging to the wreck, who had swam ashore; but the other two, being the remainder of the crew, unable to swim, were unfortunately drowned. These poor fellows lost every thing but the shirt and trowsers which they wore. I took them on board of our boat, and gave them such assistance as their unfortunate situation required.

While we were detained at this place, one of the boatmen strolled a little way into the swamp. It was not long before we heard the report of his rifle; and as we knew there was no prospect of game in such a situation, we immediately concluded he had fired at an alligator. We found our conjectures were right, as he presently after appeared, and informed me he had shot one, which lay about three hundred yards in the swamp. We

proceeded to the spot, and found he had killed one, which measured eleven feet two inches from the head to the tail, and two feet eight inches in circumference round the thickest part of the body. The length of the head was one foot eight inches from the tip of the snout to the back of the neck. Its colours were bright and changeable in the sun, having nothing of that dull brownish shade so common in those you have seen preserved.

I found this animal to be strongly impregnated with musk, the whole place being perfumed with that odour. I had it opened, and every part examined, but found nothing which appeared to contain the effluvia; and am therefore of opinion that it is diffused through the whole system of the animal. We found, among other undigested matter in the stomach, two bones, about nine inches in length and three in circumference, which appeared to belong to the hind legs of some land animal.

We had before noticed some larger alligators than this, but I have not as yet seen any from eighteen to twenty feet in length, which travellers say are to be found in this river. When they swim near the surface of the water, they are looking out for prey on the shore. You may then perceive their two eyes, and the ridge of their back fin, which is very broad. Small ones of from four to six feet in length frequently approach within forty feet of the boats, but the water is so thick and

turbid that nothing can be seen of them except their eyes and fins, as already mentioned.

From Buffaloe Creek you descend about two miles, and arrive at Loftus Heights, lying in lat. 31. 5. N. long. 91. 22. W. a high commanding bluff, about one hundred and fifty feet above the present level of the river, and on which is situated the post of Fort Adams. This is the principal American garrison on the Mississippi, and the camp, which is about six miles inland from the fort, is said to contain fifteen hundred men. Loftus Heights is the twelfth elevated bluff you meet with on the left or eastern shore, and, like the others, ends abruptly on the river. It gives a serious check to the current, and by forcing it suddenly to the right, causes a considerable eddy on the left shore, just above the fort. This, like all the other eddies on the river, is only to be dreaded on account of the loss of time it occasions in extricating yourself when once drawn into its vortex. We had the *pleasure* of coasting it up and down for nearly two hours; but what was most provoking was to see five or six boats descending the river, while we were not only detained, but had to ascend the stream twice for the distance of nearly a mile, before we could regain the true current.

Five miles below Fort Adams you pass the line of demarcation between the United States and the Spanish province of West Florida, as settled several years since by the two powers. It crosses

the Mississippi in lat. 31. N. About five miles below the line you are shown a narrow neck of land six miles across to the Mississippi again ; but to the same place by water, owing to the curious turns and windings of the river, it is no less than fifty-two miles.

Ten miles below the line you pass the mouth of the Rivière Rouge, or Red River, where we encamped one night. This is a large stream entering into the Mississippi from the right shore, and said to be navigable for twelve or fifteen hundred miles. Considerable settlements are already made on this river, the principal of which are, those of Rapide, one hundred miles above the mouth ; Avoyellos, one hundred and fifty ; and Natchitoches, two hundred and twenty. There are likewise a few other scattered improvements, extending almost up to the Spanish posts of North Mexico ; one of which posts is said to be within the boundaries of Louisiana, and consequently within the jurisdiction of the United States.

Red River is so called from the colour or tinge of its water, but it is not equal to that of the Mississippi for ordinary use. About one hundred and fifty miles from its mouth, there is a bed of soft rocks extending quite across the channel, over which loaded boats cannot pass during the dry season. These rocks, or a part of them, might be very easily removed, as the substance (of

which I have a sample) may be cut with an axe, saw, or knife. Thirty miles above the mouth, the river Noire, or Black River, falls into Red River, and on one of its branches, named the Ouachita, lies the Washita patent, which Burr pretended he was going to settle. A few small salt springs are said to have been found on some of the branches of Red River, near the Sabine, and at its head report has placed a silver mine. Two tribes of Indians, the Caddoquies and Penis, are settled on this river. Beyond its head the hunters report two others, called the Appaches and Conchees, as residing on waters which flow to the west. All these tribes are said to be continually at war with the Spaniards.

A lieutenant —— and party were sent out some time before the developement of Burr's schemes, to explore Red River, it was then believed by order of our government, but, it has since appeared, without even their knowledge. I have heard strange conjectures respecting the object of that expedition; but they not being proper subjects for a letter, your curiosity must remain unsatisfied till we meet. The mouth of Red River is in lat. 31. 5. N. long. 91. 37. W. and, according to our pilot's reckoning, one thousand and fourteen miles below the Missouri.

Three miles below Red River is a dangerous outlet called the Bayou Chaffalaia. This is a channel seemingly worn through by the inundations of the river; which have there found a passage to the

sea, near Vermilion Bay, west of New-Orleans. I have conversed with some who are of opinion that this was anciently the only passage of the Mississippi to the sea; but at length becoming obstructed by the immense islands of drift-wood, the waters forced another passage, and found their way to the gulf by the present channel. I cannot say that I approve of this conjecture, because there is no kind of relation in the appearance of their respective channels, that of the Chaffalaia being quite too small ever to have received the whole stream of the Mississippi. I will endeavour to suggest a more probable hypothesis. It will be recollected, that Red River discharges itself into the Mississippi about three miles above the Bayou Chaffalaia. I ascended the one, and descended the other in a light skiff for about a quarter of a mile on each. I found the channel of the latter to correspond in size with that of the former, and, as far as I was able to judge in a hasty view, the timber and soil of the banks of either appear to be the same. The Mississippi, it is well known, is slowly but continually changing its channel, and about four or five miles to the eastward of their present junction, may still be traced a string of small lakes, which demonstrate almost to a certainty that the bed of the Mississippi formerly flowed through that channel; and that the lakes are the remains of the ancient river. I mentioned this idea to our pilot, who is an old Mississippi sailor. He

informed me, that no longer than two years ago, he passed through that old channel with a light boat, during a time of high water, on his return from New-Madrid to New-Orleans. If, therefore, this hypothesis be correct, there consequently would have been a strip of land five miles broad between the two rivers, and as the present channel would of course have been a part of it, the very nature of the ground would have invited the current of the Red River to the channel of the Chaffalaia. There is no other danger to be apprehended from this Bayou, than that of being drawn into it, in which case it would be absolutely impossible for a New-Orleans or Kentucky boat to get out unassisted. But by keeping the middle of the channel, or rather nearest to the opposite shore, the Bayou may easily be avoided.

I have already mentioned a narrow neck of land just below the Spanish line, which, though only six miles across, yet is fifty-two round by water. This neck, from the inroads of the current, is daily wasting away, and in time will be worn through; when, in all probability, the Red River may resume its ancient course through the Chaffalaia to the sea. Although I have remarked, that it would be dangerous for a boat to be drawn within the vortex of this outlet, yet I have not the least doubt but barges, keel-boats, and other sharp built vessels, may be brought up against the stream equally easy as against that of the Missis-

sippi. Although this channel in all probability once afforded a separate navigation to the sea, yet it does not appear to have been navigable within our knowledge of the country, except as it afforded occasional passages to canoes during high water. This is owing, it is said, to an astonishing natural floating bridge, which has been formed during the course of ages by an accumulation of floating trees, drift-wood, and of every thing buoyant which has passed the Chaffalaia. The first obstruction was caused by a few trees becoming bedded and entangled in the river, and increasing daily by the collection of others, at length extended from shore to shore, and at this time is said to cover an extent of eighteen miles, and is daily increasing in length and strength. This floating bridge is covered in many places with a considerable growth of timber. I am further informed, that below the first bridge there are several smaller obstructions of the same kind. The water which descends this channel passes under all the bridges, and in many places may be seen whirling through small holes and crevices, and at last rushes forth with considerable violence. When the water is high, small canoes may pass along the margin of the bridge, where a water-course has been formed.

Forty-five miles below the Chaffalaia, on the opposite side of the river, you pass another outlet called the Bayou Tunica. This is a small stream, yet has several rich settlements upon its banks.

Ten miles below this, you perceive, on the left bank of the river, some very considerable improvements, which are generally distinguished by the name of the Tunica Villages, the remnant of the Tunica tribe of Indians having a few settlements there. The river for thirty miles above this place has gradually described almost a complete circle, and at this village approaches within one mile of another part of its current, which by its course is at a distance of thirty miles. The narrow strip of this peninsula is rapidly wearing away, and, from the action of the current at present on both sides, must in three or four years force through this slight obstruction, by which means the course of the river will be diminished about thirty miles.

Twelve miles below Tunica Village you pass a number of plantations on the right bank of the river, and now begin to perceive a new district of country, every plantation having the appearance of a little town, and following each other in such quick succession, that the woods seem as if by magic to vanish from the sight. This district, which is named Point Coupee, is the richest settlement on the Mississippi. Sugar, cotton and rice are here the only articles of culture, and continue so for some distance below New-Orleans.

Immediately opposite to Point Coupee is another small outlet called the Bayou Sara; and five miles below, on the opposite side, the Fausse Rivière, formerly a bed of the Mississippi, but from

a change in the river, and the closing up of the ends of the old channel, has been converted into a lake almost annular, nearly the breadth of the river. Two miles further, on the right bank, you pass the Bayou Crocodile, or, as it is sometimes called, Thompson's Creek. About two miles and a half lower, you pass the Little Cliffs, another ridge of highlands, but less elevated than most of those you have already passed. It is nearly one mile in front, and on the left side of the river. From thence the right bank is generally improved for twenty-four miles, till you arrive at Batón Rouge, one hundred and eighty miles below the city of Natchez, and one thousand one hundred and twenty-two from the Missouri.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXX.

*New-Orleans, April 26, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

BATON ROUGE lies on the east side of the river, and is the only Spanish post on the Mississippi, occupied by a garrison. This fort is said to contain a park of two hundred pieces of artillery, with ammunition and other military stores in proportion. The garrison is rated at six hundred men, but at present there are not quite two hundred, most of them having deserted up the country. This is the *dépôt* which it is said Burr and Co. intended to seize, in order to equip themselves for greater enterprises; and had he attempted it with one hundred Kentuckians, he would no doubt have succeeded, as nearly half the garrison was unfit for duty at that time.

The village, which contains about one hundred houses, makes a very indifferent appearance. It is situated on a bluff about forty feet higher than the annual inundations generally rise. This is the

East of the bluffs or highlands you pass in your course down the river. The evening before our arrival at Baton Rouge, one of our men shot the last deer that we saw on the Mississippi. Game of every kind grows scarcer on this river as you descend, and that which we found below the Arkansas was very indifferent indeed. Baton Rouge lies in lat. 30. 29. N. long. 91. 10. W.

From Baton Rouge you descend fifteen miles to the Bayou Manchac, or, as it is sometimes called, the Ibberville River, being an outlet of the Mississippi on the left shore. This Bayou, or river, might with more propriety be called a natural ditch or canal, as it is only during three months of the year that it can be navigated at all, and that by vessels which draw less than five feet water. It is perfectly dry the remainder of the year. When the river is high, it forms a communication with the river Amitié, which is navigable for seventy or eighty miles, and with the lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain, and thence along the bays on the coast to Mobile Bay. It is likewise the boundary between the Spanish province of West Florida on that quarter, and the island of New-Orleans, which is formed by the communication of this Bayou with the Lakes and the Mississippi.

Eight miles below the Bayou Manchac, on the opposite side, you pass another outlet called the Bayou Plaquemine, which is said to form a com-

munication with the Bayou Chaffalaia. It likewise affords an easy inland communication by several channels with the gulf west of New-Orleans, and particularly with the rich and flourishing settlements of Atacapas and Opelousas. These are situated on Little Red and Teshee Rivers; small streams which empty themselves into Vermilion Bay, in the Gulf of Mexico, west of New-Orleans. Opelousas is noted for a breed of horses, whose good qualities, for travelling the immense wildernesses which lie between most of the settlements, render them particularly serviceable. They may be had at all prices between fifteen and twenty dollars. I have indeed heard of horses being sold as low as three or four dollars a head: but this is only applicable to the wild horses of North Mexico. Some scattered droves of these are frequently found beyond the swamps, ranging the prairies on the western side of the river. Ten miles further you pass the Manchac Church, on the left bank; and twenty-two more you see another on the opposite side, distinguished by the name of La Fourche Church, as likewise an outlet called Bayou La Fourche. This Bayou offers another inland communication with the coast west of New-Orleans, with which it communicates by two different channels; from whence it has taken its name of The Forks, or La Fourche. It likewise communicates with the settlements of Atacapas and Opelousas, which extend quite down to the

coast as already noticed. The Indians and French are better acquainted with this Bayou by the name of the Chitamaches River, from an ancient nation of that name, settled near its mouth, which, from being very powerful and warlike, has by wars and diseases dwindled away to about thirty families. I recollect some well authenticated facts of this nation, (at the time of La Salle's unfortunate expedition to the westward of their settlements,) being described as having actually been seen devouring the flesh of their enemies, who were either killed or taken in battle !

About six miles below this outlet we were weather-bound for thirty hours, during which time we experienced one of the most dreadful thunderstorms that I ever witnessed. The greatest part of that day and night, the Mississippi exhibited a constant war of the two elements. The wind, which blew a perfect hurricane, had raised a most tremendous swell in the river ; and had we not fortunately been on the windward shore, our boat in all probability would have shared the fate of two others, who passed us, and were dashed to pieces on the opposite side.

About ten miles below La Fourche, on the left side, you have a handsome view of the only elegant and modern built house upon this extensive river. It belongs to the estate of a Mr. B—, and displays not only the spirit, but the taste of the proprietor. From this seat you descend six miles to Contrell's

Church, and seventeen more to that of Bonna Cara, both on the opposite side of the river; and eighteen miles lower you pass the last, which is called Rouge or Red Church, on the left bank. From thence you have thirty miles more to the city of New-Orleans; being about one thousand two hundred and fifty-seven miles from the Missouri; and having passed one hundred and forty-nine islands.

Before I give you an account of the city of New-Orleans, (which I shall reserve for the subject of my next,) I have to make some general remarks and observations on the navigation of the Mississippi.

A voyage down the Mississippi is very different from one on the Ohio, where the numberless improvements arrest the attention, and the gentleness of the current affords time to dwell upon and admire the thousand beauties of that delightful stream. But on the Mississippi you are descending through an immense unimproved wilderness, where there is little to attract your notice. Besides, the rapidity of the stream, obstructed with endless islands, sand-bars, snags, sawyers, and planters, occupies so much of your care, that you scarce have time for reflection, except in the evening after landing.

Among the many observations I have made respecting the two rivers, I have noticed, that the Ohio is subject to be more violently agitated even by a less wind, than the Mississippi. I have fre-

quently been obliged to lay to all day on the former, in consequence of the heavy swell which was running; whilst on the latter, under similar circumstances, and even with a stronger wind, we were able to continue our course. This I can attribute only to the superior density\* and velocity of the Mississippi; and although I have seen it equally agitated with the Ohio, yet it then blew a smart gale.

Another very striking difference we experienced in the quantity and variety of game afforded by the two rivers. On the Ohio we had almost every day an opportunity of seeing a deer or a bear crossing from one shore to the other; but during my whole course to this place, I saw but one deer in the Mississippi, and this one had been forced to the river to avoid a pack of wolves who had hunted him down. We saw no bears attempt to cross the river, nor did we find them on the many islands at which we encamped during our voyage. On the main land we frequently discovered their tracks, until we passed Natchez, after which we saw no more of them. Though deer were not so often met with as on the Ohio, yet our Canadians were but seldom disappointed when they had an opportunity of an hour's range

\* A pint of Mississippi water (owing to the quantity of mud incorporated with it) is heavier than the same quantity of the Ohio.

on any of the uplands. But I do not recollect a single instance of their ever having found any on the low wet grounds.

The Mississippi River, as well as the Ohio, is very subject to fogs, which frequently detained us for five or six hours together; during which it was so thick that we were not able to distinguish objects at the distance of one hundred feet. I have often observed that the fog was entirely confined to the surface of the river, and on more than one occasion have climbed to the top of a tree, where I saw a clear sky, with the fog beneath me; which had all the appearance of a river. These long continued and heavy fogs generally rise only to about thirty or forty feet in height.

The current of the Mississippi may be rated, in an ordinary state of its waters, at three miles an hour. By a regular log and line, we found its greatest strength did not exceed four miles an hour, not even in any place where it had acquired an acceleration of motion by the projection of a point, obstruction by an island, or contraction of the channel. Nor does its velocity, during any stage of its waters, exceed, in my opinion, an average of five miles an hour.

The navigation of the Mississippi must always be attended with difficulties and dangers, as long as twelve or fifteen hundred miles of its bank remain covered with enormous trees, which are con-

tinually tumbling into the river, and forming a succession of snags, sawyers, and planters. And even when this difficulty shall be removed by a competent increase of population, others, although less, will still remain. The channel of the Mississippi, which changes with every stage of water, is continually creating new sand-bars and islands; so that the whole channel cannot be said to be found altogether in the same place for two years together. Add to this, that the turbidness of the water is such as to prevent any thing being seen at a depth of six inches; so that those boats who use a fair wind are always obliged to have one hand standing forward with a long pole, ready to sound the bottom whenever he is ordered.

The Mississippi can scarcely be said to be dangerous to those ascending the river, as their progressive motion is generally so slow, as to render it almost impossible to receive any great injury, unless through some carelessness of their own. But in descending the dangers are great, and often so sudden and unexpected, that nothing but the greatest presence of mind and attention can save a boat from being lost.

I have in a former letter given an account of what are called sawyers, planters, floating islands, falling banks, &c. on this river; and shall now proceed to say something of the manner of avoiding those dangers.





You have already been apprized, that the sawyers and planters are generally found near the shores; that is to say, they extend about one third of the distance across the river from each side; yet sometimes are found in the very middle of the channel. Were it practicable, therefore, always to keep the middle of the river, the greater part of those dangers might be avoided; but as the channel continually crosses from shore to shore, where the current always runs strongest, and has a tendency to force you against the banks in the bends of the river, it requires an early look out, and a continued application of the sweeps, to keep the boat from being dashed to pieces against the innumerable sawyers.

Accidents of this kind happen very frequently from the inexperience of some, who consider the navigation of this river equally safe with that of the Ohio; and on finding their boat hurried on towards a sawyer, generally endeavour to set it the wrong way, and by that means meet the very danger they are striving to avoid.

One general rule for descending the river, is, never to attempt to avoid any danger by acting against the current, but always take that with you. The next is, whenever you discover any dangers of the kind just mentioned, let the oars lie still, while you take a range with the sawyer or planter, and some distant object beyond it. Keep your eye steadily fixed on the two objects, and you will

soon discover whether the current will set your boat to the right or left of the danger you wish to avoid. If the far distant object begins to appear on the left of the planter, you need not use the oars, as the boat will pass in safety on that side, and if on the right it will be equally so on that; but if you perceive no visible variation, you are in great danger, and there is not a moment to be lost, but the oars are to be plyed immediately. If the accident should happen in a bend of the river, and there is sufficient room for the boat to pass in safety, the inside should always be taken, as that is always the natural course of the current. These observations should be made before you come within half a mile of the danger, if circumstances will admit of it.

The next thing to be apprized of is the manner of receiving the shock of a sawyer, when not discovered before the danger is unavoidable. In the first place, call for assistance at the steering oar, and turn your boat in such a manner as to make her come obliquely in contact with the sawyer, and receive the stroke as near the upper corner of the bow as possible: but as this will give her a turn, should she escape going to pieces, you must calculate whether you will have room to swing on the inside if necessary.

With respect to the wooden or floating islands, the same rule will nearly apply to avoid any parti-

cular points or obstructions: but as there is always a projecting point above which turns the current directly on the most dangerous of these islands, all you have to do is to pass as near that point as can be done with safety; when a few strokes of the oars occasionally will keep you on the outside of the current.

The islands of the Mississippi present another astonishing singularity; which is, that they move up the stream. Surprising as this phenomenon may seem, it is literally true; and its seeming impossibility may be easily reduced to a simple demonstration. You have been apprized of the immense quantities of floating trees and other substances, which are constantly brought down by this river; a great part of which is caught at the head of the islands. Here they become entangled and matted together in such a manner, that you frequently may observe great lodges of an acre or two in extent, which in a few years, from the accumulation of leaves, brush, and the mud of the river, become a part of the island. It is in this manner that the head is continually progressing up the river, while the lower part is proportionably washing away.

The banks of the Mississippi, like the river, seem to differ from all others that I have yet seen, inasmuch as they are in a great measure to be equally avoided, being attended with even greater dangers than the sawyers and planters. Many

boats, from a want of judgment in selecting their places of encampment along the river, have been totally lost by being overwhelmed with large masses of the bank. These dangers are always greater in low than in high waters. This may be accounted for by the current in the former case continually washing away the foundation of the banks: while in the latter they are not only washed more equally, but even supported by the volume of water pressing against them. The falling banks are very easily distinguished during low water, but not so readily when the river is full. One general rule for knowing them is the steepness of their sides, which are nearly perpendicular, their tops covered with a growth of old timber, and their being always found in the bends of the river, where the current runs strongest. Landing at these places should be avoided at all times, but yet there are some exceptions, as, where the banks have very lately fallen, you may frequently find a good but small landing-place. It is always safe to land in the eddies immediately below every projecting point, or at the lower ends of the islands, or wherever you find the young willow or cotton-tree growing. It very often happens, however, that the New-Orleans boats are so unmanageable as to disappoint you in attaining your object. It is therefore necessary to keep the oars at work in order to retain her motion, while you pass as near to the projecting point as you possibly can, with

safety to your boat; and the moment you have cleared it, pull hard to reach the edge of the eddy below. It is never safe to defer your landing till after sunset, for, should the rapidity of the current sweep you past the point before you reach the eddy, you may incur the greatest dangers, and perhaps have three or four miles further to drift in the night, before you can find a safe place to make another attempt.

A person experienced on these waters, like our pattroon, will often find a harbour where no one else would think of looking for one. It sometimes happens, that the violence of the wind forces a boat into a bend of the river, where she is obliged to land, without having an opportunity of looking out for a willow point or island. In such a case our pilot several times pulled his boat into a place where he observed that the bank had lately fallen in; always calculating beforehand, whether the drift of the current would leave us room sufficient to get out again. Particular care must be taken, if the water is subsiding, to examine all around your boat that you have a sufficient depth of water; and, if shallow, that she does not rest on the mud with any great length of her bottom. It is likewise prudent, in some situations, to examine the place where you intend to moor your boat for the night, lest a root or snag should lie in the way, and the water leave the boat resting upon it, in which case it would probably make an end of

your voyage by staving a hole through the bottom. This, however, is only to be apprehended while the water is falling.

I have just been summoned by a party to join in an excursion up the river, and must therefore defer the remainder of this subject for my next.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXXI.

*New-Orleans, April 28, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

ALTHOUGH I had a high water to descend the Mississippi from the mouth of the Ohio, it was far from being what is called *full banks*. Yet in many places, where the banks were somewhat lower than common, the water rushed out into the swamps with considerable violence. Many who descend this river consider high water a great advantage, as it not only covers all the sawyers and planters, but likewise the sand-bars and low islands, and adds considerably to the velocity of the current. Others, however, prefer a low water, (that is within banks,) as in the former case the Mississippi becomes as it were an ocean in the woods. Trees indeed are seen every where, but land no where; and the difficulty of distinguishing the right channel is proportionably great. Boats in such a situation, especially if there is a

little too much wind, are frequently driven into the woods, where they run a risk of being dashed to pieces against the trees. Or, if they should even escape this danger, and succeed in getting a fast to a tree, yet they never can stem the current while the water remains up; and when it falls, they will probably find themselves on land, half a mile in the woods. Such accidents happen every year; so that the land may be considered as even more dangerous than the *ocean* of this surprising country.

I think Winterbotham, as well as some others, describes the ascent of the Mississippi as comparatively easy, owing to the numerous eddies which are continually found on one shore or the other. It is true there are some few eddies which carry a current for a mile or two up the stream, but the formation and extent of these always depend upon the volume of water in the river; as when the water is low the eddies are few and small, but when high they are not only more numerous, but of much greater extent. Notwithstanding this apparent help, the boatmen never choose to risk the loss of time and extra labour, by pulling across from shore to shore to take advantage of these eddies, but always confine themselves to the nearest shore. Besides, the whole extent of such aid would not, it is probable, amount to more than twenty miles in a thousand.

With respect to the ordinary rise of the river, it never exceeds forty feet; and this in many instances depends on the construction or expansion of the channel. Its height, therefore, cannot be rated on a general average at more than thirty feet above the island of New-Orleans.

In time of high water, the whole western bank of the Mississippi, for upwards of one thousand miles, is entirely inundated, and likewise a great part of the eastern shore for the same distance; except where it is prevented by the narrow bluffs and head lands. The western bank, in particular, is bounded by a swamp throughout the whole course, lying nearly parallel to the river from New Madrid to the Gulf of Mexico, and generally from a quarter of a mile to two miles from the river. These swamps, which in many places are forty miles across, serve as reservoirs for a part of the superabundant waters of the river, and form permanent nurseries for alligators, muschetoës, and diseases. What a pity that the finest and richest soil in the world, watered by one of the noblest rivers on our globe, should, throughout the immense distance of more than a thousand miles, not even afford one solitary situation exempt from diseases! Those who have been longest on this river say, that the settlers are subject to violent intermittent and bilious fevers. But some respectable physicians declare, that they have met with as decided cases of yellow fever here, as ever occurred in any

of the West-India Islands. The aborigines are wholly exempt from their baneful influence, and those born in the country suffer little from their attacks; while the northern emigrants most generally fall victims to their own imprudence, and the effects of the climate.

With respect to the alligators, I did not find them either so large or so numerous as I expected; and although commonly seen as high up as the Arkansas River, yet we saw none till we reached the Walnut Hills, upwards of two hundred miles below the mouth of that river. From thence to this city we saw them every day.

The Indians and negroes highly relish the tail part of a young alligator, and therefore never miss an opportunity of securing that delicious morsel. I was told of several methods by which they take this animal, one of which seemed to me rather dangerous, and is only attempted by a few negroes of a particular nation, who probably were acquainted with it in their own country. They first prepare a piece of hard wood about six or nine inches in length, which is sharpened and barbed at each end, and has likewise a shoulder, to prevent its entering too far. A strong cord is then fastened to the middle, one end of which is held by two or three on shore; while another takes the stick and swims out towards the alligator, frequently dashing the water with a dead

fowl, by way of lure. The alligator no sooner discovers it, than he makes in for the shore; and at the moment he has extended his jaws to seize upon the prey, the negro thrusts his stick and fowl into his mouth; when the alligator, by closing up his jaws, runs the two points of the barbed stick through them up to the shoulders of the pin, and, being thereby rendered unable to open them again, he is at length, after a violent struggle, drawn to the shore.

Another method, in use by the settlers farther up the river, is to make a kind of a triangular trap out of a large crotch of a tree, and, after it is placed in a proper situation, an ordinary black bottle is filled with as much air as can possibly be conveyed into it through a quill inserted in the cork, after which it is closely stopped. A long line is then tied to the bottle, (which passes over the trap,) and it is thrown as high and as far out in the river as possible. The bottle will make a considerable noise and splashing when it comes in contact with the water. The alligator (who is previously observed) makes after it with all imaginable haste, and as often as he attempts to seize it he disappoints himself, by emitting so strong a blast of air that it sends the light bottle continually beyond his reach. He pursues his object, notwithstanding all his disappointments, until he is drawn into the snare,

These animals are said to live at times upon the hardest substances, stones and pieces of old wood having frequently been found in their stomachs. I have never seen an instance of this kind, but have often taken sharks with stones and leaden sinkers of fishing-lines in their stomachs. I was far from supposing, however, that they must, in consequence, sometimes live upon lead and stones. The alligator, like the shark, is the most voracious of his kind; and where a stone or stick, if not too large, is fast to a piece of meat when it falls in his way, he never stops to separate the one from the other, but swallows the whole.

In descending the Mississippi you find a number of small lakes and islets along the margin of this ever-changing current. Some of these islets are of a very singular appearance, having large sturdy old trees in the middle, and diminishing in size and species as they approach the margin of what had lately been the bed of the river. From the growth of these you may with certainty determine the number of years which have elapsed since the change of the current took place. At a distance of two or three miles they have all the appearance of regular islands; but upon a nearer examination they will be found to be surrounded with trees of a young growth.

The fish of the Mississippi are not much valued either for their variety or their quality. I am unable to say whether it produces all those

which have been described as inhabiting its waters. Catfish of three different kinds, and of an enormous size, together with the buffaloe, sturgeon and perch, I have seen ; but trout, pike, eels, and turtle-fish, I have not. I have therefore very strong doubts whether the trout and pike are inhabitants of the Mississippi. Small craw-fish are very plentiful, and found in all the western waters.

I think I mentioned in one of my former letters, that my fishing apparatus was rather out of order. I have since been enabled to purchase hooks and tackling from a Kentucky boat. But after taking three or four cat-fish on as many different evenings, I gave up the sport to the hands, who had more patience to watch the lines than I had. Fishing afforded me no amusement either on the Ohio or the Mississippi, as it required too much sitting, which was always accompanied with too little biting, to please my fancy.

From Natchez the navigation of the Mississippi is much safer than above, yet far too dangerous to attempt to drift at night, unless it is sufficiently light to keep the middle of the river, or at least a sufficient distance from the shores. I found the bends of the river even here obstructed with planters and sawyers, and they continued so as low down as the Bayou Chaffalaia. From Point Coupee the navigation becomes not only more safe, but likewise more interesting, as almost every

sugar plantation has the appearance of a large settlement, interspersed with groves of wild orange-trees, many of which were still loaded with the produce of the last year. The huts of the slaves look like one of our northern villages, while the mansion-house reminds you of the church.

Between Natchez and Point Coupee there appear to be some large tracts of ground lying along the river, entirely unimproved : after passing these the whole country appears like a highly cultivated garden. The land, from Point Coupee down to the city, is most extravagantly dear. A plantation will sell at from forty to fifty dollars an acre, exclusive of the improvements, which often exceed fifty thousand dollars, besides a stock of slaves, valued at from fifty to a hundred thousand dollars and upwards.

There is little if any difference in the growth of timber on the lower part of the Ohio, and that part of the Mississippi which lies above the Arkansas River. Those which I have noted on my memorandum below the mouth of Ohio, are as follows: Hickories, (variety,) hard maple, swamp maple, sugar maple, sycamore, black oak, red oak, white oak, chesnut oak, Spanish oak, live oak, pitch pine, yellow pine, peccan, red cedar, white cedar, cypress, juniper, willows, (variety,) cotton wood, catalpa, sassafras, locust, honey locust, gum, persimmon, holly, pepperage, dogwood, elm, poplar, black ash, white ash, black walnut, beech, black

birch, white birch, chesnut, cherry, plum, buck-eye, sumach, pimento, chinquapin, tulip, cabbage or palmetto, and cucumber.

The feathered inhabitants of this part of the country differ considerably from those in our quarter, although the most of them are seen with us during the summer months. Those which may be considered as local are, the white pelican, white king eagle, swans, sandhill cranes, great white owl, wild turkey, crested bittern, prairie hens, tufted woodcock, ivory woodpecker, great bats, parrots, yellow titmouse, rice bird, red bird, red starling, and a number of others, for which I have no names. I shot one or more of nearly all those just enumerated. The pelican is by far the largest and most difficult to approach, as it never alights within gunshot of any woods or bushes, and is equally shy of a boat. The only one I shot was by firing a rifle-ball among a very large flock at a great distance. This bird is the largest our country produces. His colour is chiefly white, excepting a few black feathers in the wing, and when extended from wing to wing will measure seven feet. It has a long crooked beak, partaking in form of both goose and eagle, but its greatest singularity is the enormous pouch with which it is provided, sufficiently large to contain a peck measure. This is used as a kind of reservoir for containing the food which is carried to its young. They do not appear to be a very active bird, as I have frequently

observed flocks of, them remain all day in the same place asleep. The white king eagle we frequently saw, but never had an opportunity of shooting more than one. This bird is highly valued by the Natchez, Choctaw, and other Indians, on account of the superior whiteness and beauty of some of its feathers, which are particularly appropriated to adorn the heads of their chiefs. We accidentally fell in with four canoes of the Choctaws, who were descending the Yazoo River, just after we had shot the bird last mentioned, from whom I learnt the above particulars. They had a hive of honey which they had found in the woods, and very freely gave us one half of it for the eagle. The swan is also a very handsome bird of a whitish colour, something larger than the goose, which it resembles, and the young ones are said to be very fine eating. Sandhill cranes are likewise of nearly the size and colour of the swan, but not so heavy. Their neck and feet are very long. I shot several of this kind, and the largest measured six feet two inches from the tip of the bill to the end of the toes, when extended. I fancy they are the same described by Catesby under the name of the whooping crane, as the moment they rise from the ground, (being always in large flocks,) they make so dreadful a noise as fairly to stun your ears, and even prevent your hearing the speech of those around you.

The great white owl to appearance is nearly as large as a goose, but when plucked of its feathers is not much larger than a duck. We saw but one of this species on this river, which one of our Canadians shot: but I have since learned that they are more common. The wild turkey has been already described on the Ohio; and as these are the same, it is unnecessary to say any thing more of it here. The crested bittern is likewise a large bird in appearance, having a large crest on its forehead. Its general hue is a mixture of blue and brown. The prairie hen is not found on the lower parts of the Mississippi, but above they are met with in large flocks in all the woods and prairies. They are a species of the quail, but something larger than the partridge, bearing some resemblance, in voice, colour, and figure, to your domestic guinea-hen. The tufted woodcock is more properly speaking a dark coloured woodpecker, but of a very large size, nearly equal to the partridge. It has a long tuft of feathers on the back of the head, and is very indifferent eating. The ivory woodpecker is nearly of the same size with the former, and the bill, which is very large and white, is said to be like ivory. The colour of this bird is black and white, the latter most predominant. Its flesh is no better than the last. Parroquets are so well known to you that any description of them would be unnecessary. One good quality they possess with which you

are perhaps unacquainted: a dozen of them make a most delicious sea-pie. The rice bird is a small species of blackbird. They chiefly feed upon rice, and are found in large flocks when that grain begins to ripen. The red bird is the Virginian nightingale, with which you are already acquainted. The red starling is about the same size with the last, but its colour neither so deep nor so regular. It generally sings while upon the wing. The yellow titmouse is a size less than the two last, and of a dull yellowish colour. This bird, I observed, was always the last that went to roost. I have frequently noticed him perched on a twig on the borders of the swamp, where he would warble for half an hour after sunset, when all the others were at roost. The great bat I am unable to describe from ocular evidence, as I never had an opportunity of seeing one nearer than on the wing. I made several attempts to shoot one, but without effect. All I can therefore say is, that they did not appear to me so large as I had been informed they were.

Wolves are very numerous along the upper parts of this river, where we were every night entertained with their horrible yells. I believe they are likewise found below in considerable numbers; but in consequence of the vast bodies of swamp along the river, they do not often show themselves in those situations. I do not recollect to have

heard any for some days before our arrival at Natchez, and thence downwards, I am certain we never heard one.

The general average produce of cotton from Palmyra and the country below, is estimated at two thousand pounds weight from each acre, which will sell in the seed, as it comes from the field, at four and five dollars the hundred weight, according to its quality; and if cleaned will command from fourteen to fifteen dollars a hundred on the spot. A prime slave, it is allowed, will attend to three acres, which will yield, at the lowest calculation, an annual nett profit of two hundred and forty dollars. The keeping of the slave is not included in this estimate; but as that cannot exceed the odd forty dollars, it will leave a clear profit of two hundred dollars on the labour of each slave.

The price of land along this river varies according to its situation, the quality being invariably of the best, although not always capable of improvement. The lowest priced bank lands may be rated at two dollars an acre, and from above Natchez at not more than ten. Swamp lands may be had in any quantities at six cents an acre, but they are in such situations as to be of no manner of use.

The common price of freight from St. Louis, St. Genevieve, or Kaskaskias, down to New-Orleans, is one dollar a hundred weight; and a return cargo to the same places is six dollars a hun-

dred. This is likewise the established price from New-Orleans to the falls of Ohio, and for any greater distance an additional charge of nearly fifty cents for every hundred miles.

In descending this river, you observe the growth of the cane to increase with every day's sail after you pass the Ohio, until they acquire a height of thirty feet, and about four or five inches in circumference ; after which they again diminish until you pass the 31st degree of north latitude, when they disappear altogether.

The cane brakes on the borders of the Mississippi are altogether impassable, unless you occasionally fall upon some old bear or buffaloe tracks. It is in vain to attempt to force your way through them for any distance. The clearing of a piece of this land is attended with as much difficulty as any other. The whole soil, after being cleared, is so firmly bound together with the roots, that it is almost impossible to drive a plow through it. When a piece of this land is first attempted, they cut down about one hundred yards of the whole front of the piece intended to be cleared, which soon becomes as dry as matches. They then wait for a favourable high wind, when the woods are generally dry, and set fire to the whole front, which creates such an astonishing large fire as effectually sweeps off two or three hundred acres at once. We very frequently heard these clearings at a distance of two miles, especially if it was a

still evening ; when the loud and frequent explosions strongly resembled an engagement with musketry between two hostile armies.

There are no mill seats in this lower country ; yet their utility is in a great measure supplied by the horse-mill, with which most of the plantations are provided above. After descending as low as the island of New-Orleans, you find a considerable number of saw-mills, which are built a small distance from the banks of the river, from which a canal is cut large enough to admit a sufficient supply of water for about four or five months in the year. After the water has fallen below the level of the wheel they remain dry for the remainder of the year. These mills are always situated near the borders of the swamps, and the water which has served to supply them, passes off through the lakes in the rear.

Since the date of my last I have found four vessels, all of which promise to sail for New-York within ten days. I shall certainly take passage on board of the first that sails ; and in all probability within thirty days may have the pleasure of once more embracing you.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXXII.

*Fort Plaquemines, May 1, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

A FEW days after the date of my last, as I was one morning strolling along the levee in company with some friends, I was familiarly saluted by a pretty smart slap on my shoulder; when, upon turning round, I was agreeably surprised to see my friend Captain A—. I left him in New-York, but I recollected that he informed me he had purchased a plantation below New-Orleans, to which he intended to remove with his family in the spring. After some conversation he insisted upon my paying a visit to his family; and as I had already promised his lady to call if I arrived safe at New-Orleans, I engaged to go down in the packet-boat the next morning. Thus have I accounted to you for my appearance at Fort Plaquemines.

I promised you in my last, that my next should contain some account of the city of New-Orleans; but as I do not intend to furnish you with such another volume as my last, I shall avail myself of a few hours leisure and inclination, to discharge that promise.

The city of New-Orleans, which lies in lat. 29. 57. N. and long. 89. 55. W. is situated on an island of the same name, on the east or left side of the Mississippi as you descend. It is regularly laid out, the streets cross each other at right angles, and are generally about forty feet in breadth. The houses of the principal streets nearest the river, are built of brick covered with slate, tile, or a fire-proof composition. The back part of the town is chiefly built of wood. The middle of the streets are all in their natural state, unpaved, but the side walks are laid either with brick or flat stone, which renders walking through the city tolerably pleasant, except when you have occasion to cross the streets in wet weather.

The city contains at present nearly eleven hundred houses, and its population is said to amount to twelve thousand souls. Its extent along the river, from the gate of Chapitoulan on the north to that of France on the south, is nearly one mile in length. It is about half a mile in breadth from the river to the margin of the swamps in the rear. The "gates on the north," and the "gates on the south," may probably impose upon your ear, and

convey an idea of this being a walled city; yet nothing can be further from the truth; for whatever these gates might formerly have been, there is nothing to be seen of them at present.

In the centre of the town is the site of the great cathedral church and town-house; and in front a square, now inclosed and covered with grass, which was originally intended for a parade. A little below this, on the Levee, is the market-house, which however is only used for selling meat and fish. The whole Levee, for nearly a quarter of a mile above the market, is occupied as a public place for selling articles of every description. Vegetables of almost every kind are here sold in the greatest plenty and perfection; but the fish and meat are very poor. The poultry which is brought from the upper country, and the oysters from the Lakes, are both very tolerable.

The plan of a new custom-house has lately been marked out near the site of the old one, which is a miserable wooden building, long since abandoned to the negroes and Indians, and fast falling to decay. At the south-east end of the town the Ursuline nuns have a convent and chapel, which are liberally endowed. Few of its former inmates, however, chose to remain after the change in the government took place; but in consequence of their violent prejudices against the Americans, whom they believe to be a nation of atheists, most of them retired to the Havanna or to Vera Cruz.

This city was fortified, while in possession of the Spaniards, with works on the north, east, and south sides; but these, since the cession of the country to the United States, have been considered of no importance, and suffered to go to ruin, excepting at the south end, where they have been much enlarged and improved. The barracks which, are large and spacious, are situated a little above the lower fort, and are kept in very good repair.

The Levee is an embankment of earth about six feet in height, raised to prevent the river from overflowing the town and adjoining country, which lie below the surface of the river. This embankment commences at Fort Plaquemines, and extends to the head of the island, a distance of a hundred and thirty miles, making an excellent road about twenty feet wide, which is dry at all seasons of the year. It passes directly in front of the town along the margin of the river, and affords a very pleasant evening walk. It formerly was lined with rows of orange-trees, but from a want of proper care and attention, there is but here and there one remaining.

The inhabitants of New-Orleans are mostly French, and members of the church of Rome, who, notwithstanding the great influx of Americans since the cession, still compose three fourths of the white population of the city. The church service in the great cathedral, (which is accompanied with a very fine organ,) is really sublime, and

as a *form* of worship, particularly calculated to make a deep impression upon the tender minds of youth, and the fair sex in general. The Americans, although sufficiently numerous to form a respectable congregation, have no church, nor as far as I can learn, are they at all disposed to give the necessary encouragement to a presbyterian preacher, who has lately settled in the town, by way of experiment. They seem upon the whole to be satisfied that these things should remain "as they are."

The chapel of the convent of the Ursuline nuns is small, but very neat within, being chiefly calculated for the accommodation of that sisterhood. Public service is performed here regularly. The nuns are separated from the audience by a partition of lattice-work, through which they may barely be distinguished. Their whole number at present does not amount to more than forty or fifty.

A summer residence in New-Orleans must be extremely disagreeable, as even at this early season I find it intolerably hot and sultry. The evenings however are cool and pleasant, and as this city has no public gardens or promenade, the Levee after sunset is crowded with company, who having been confined all the day to their houses, seldom miss this favourable opportunity of breathing a little fresh air.

That unfortunate class of females, the mulattoes, who from their infancy are trained in the arts of

love, are far from being considered in the same humiliating light with those white ladies to whom they are nearly allied in profession. Since custom has planted an insurmountable barrier to their ever forming an honourable connexion with white men, necessity has compelled them to resort to the practice of forming temporary engagements with those whom they may fancy. Engagements of this kind are every day formed, for a month or a year, or as much longer as the parties may be pleased with each other. During any engagement of this kind, it is in vain to solicit improper favours: they are generally as strictly continent as the marriage ceremony could possibly make them. When the term is expired, or the lover gone, they accept of the next best offer that may be made to them. This class of the society of this city is so generally esteemed, that no gentleman hesitates a moment in paying his compliments to those females belonging to it, whom he may meet with in the street or elsewhere. A far greater degree of distinction prevails among this class than even among the whites. They who are so many degrees removed from the black that the connection is no longer visible in the skin, consider themselves as the "best blooded;" and so down to those who are only one degree superior to the blacks, whom they all treat with more contempt than even the whites do.

The whites, the quarteroons or coloured people, and the blacks, have each their separate amusements. The ladies divert themselves by riding in a single horse chaise, always driving themselves, accompanied by a female companion, and a slave of the same sex. You never see a coach with ladies in the inside, but you will at the same time find an equal number of female slaves behind; no lady presuming even to cross a street or visit her next neighbour, without her favourite female slave to attend her.

The season for balls is already past; of course I shall have no opportunity of saying any thing respecting them, except from information. It appears, that the fashionable part of the city is divided into two parties, who have each their respective ball-rooms. That of the whites is sacred to themselves, nor can any white lady, who is known to be in the least degree tainted with the blood of Africa, ever gain admittance there. The coloured people have likewise their separate ball-room, from which all are excluded who have not some white blood in their veins. The white gentlemen of course are freely admitted, who generally prefer this assembly to their own, which it at all times surpasses both in the elegance of its decorations, and the splendour of the dress of the company.

The amusements of the gentlemen are very much confined to billiards abroad, and cards at

home, or at some appointed house ; and it is said they are generally too much attached to the bottle after dinner. I must confess the few observations I was enabled to make inclines me to believe there is some truth in the report.

This town, although not large, yet supports two French theatres, and both houses are in general crowded. The same distinction prevails at the theatre as in their assemblies. The lower boxes are appropriated to the use of the whites, and the upper to the people of colour. With respect to the performance, I found myself incompetent to make up a judgment, as my knowledge of the language was too limited to distinguish the merits of the respective performers. The theatres are open three times a week, but the fullest and most brilliant audience is always collected together on a *Sunday* evening. I cannot but admire the policy of such an accommodating system of religion, which, while it provides for the *salvation of the soul*, takes care it shall not interfere with the more important *pleasure of the body*.

Our Yankees feel not a little foolish upon their first arrival in this city, where the manners and amusements are so very different from their own. Their delicacy is first offended, at finding most of the billiard tables placed in the front room on the lower floor, with all the doors and windows open for the admission of fresh air, but entirely subject to the view of every passenger in the

street. Yet this is but a trifle, in comparison to the shock their piety receives on the first Sunday morning after their arrival, by finding these tables surrounded by a much larger company, and the stroke of the cue and mace resounding from one end of the city to the other.

In the afternoon, a walk in the rear of the town will still more astonish their bewildered imaginations with the sight of twenty different dancing groups of the wretched Africans, collected together to perform their *worship* after the manner of their country. They have their own national music, consisting for the most part of a long kind of narrow drum of various sizes, from two to eight feet in length, three or four of which make a band. The principal dancers or leaders are dressed in a variety of wild and savage fashions, always ornamented with a number of the tails of the smaller wild beasts, and those who appeared most horrible always attracted the largest circle of company. These amusements continue until sunset, when one or two of the city patrol show themselves with their cutlasses, and the crowds immediately disperse.

In the evening, on their return from the scene last mentioned, they may probably be attracted by the noise of a drum, which upon inquiry, they will be told is only a mode of giving notice to the public, that the performance at the theatre will commence in the evening!! I heard a gentleman

from the eastward exclaim, on returning from a Sunday tour through the city, " O where are our selectmen of Salem ?"

In attending to the amusements of the whites, the yellows, and the blacks, I had almost forgotten to mention the reds, who may likewise be said to have their own national music and dancing. These are a gang of poor miserable naked wretches, composed of outcasts from the Tunica, Alibama, Chittemaches, and Otacapas tribes, who reside in the vicinity of New-Orleans. From the facility with which they procure liquor they are constantly drunk, not even excepting their women and children ; and they exhibit such daily scenes of riot, obscene dances, and intoxication, that they are indeed a nuisance to the city, which calls aloud for the interposition of the police.

There is likewise an establishment in the city called the Public Baths, which, although constructed upon a narrow scale, yet affords all the necessary conveniences for the use of the warm and cold bath. I found myself so much invigorated after a liberal use of the former, that I neglected no morning while in that city, of enjoying that pleasure.

Boarding in New-Orleans is not only expensive, but the accommodations at the boarding-houses are at best indifferent. The tables in general are scantily served with solid dishes, and most of these are composed of such indifferent materials, as sel-

dom to excite any great degree of appetite ; especially in those who have been accustomed to a northern table. The common charge at the first-rate French boarding-houses is forty-five dollars a month ; supper and wine not included. There is not, as yet, a single *genteel* American boarding-house established in the city. The two or three that have acquired that name are mere second rates : yet these afford a table better furnished at thirty-two dollars a month, than the others at forty-five.

I have already informed you, that the water of the Mississippi was thick and turbid. It will deposit a sediment of half an inch deep in a half pint tumbler of the water. Yet no other is used for the table. It is generally taken from the river, and filtered through a drip-stone into a large stone jar, capable of containing a barrel, from whence it is again taken cool and transparent, when required, for use.

The waters of this river have the credit of being a powerful specific against sterility ; and, from the many and well authenticated facts that were cited to me, I have great reason to believe there may be some truth in the relation. Another peculiar quality ascribed to it is that of being an effectual cure for the itch, and that there never has been an instance known of that disease ever being brought down the river by the thousand boats which arrive every year ; nor even by any vessels

coming up the river, when the water of the Mississippi was used for every purpose.

The city is altogether unprovided with any regular watchmen. It is guarded every night by a patrol of the citizens, who are enrolled, and divided into regular companies for that purpose.

The river at New-Orleans is about one mile and a quarter broad, and from thirty to forty fathom deep. The Levee in front is crowded with large vessels from every part of the world. They generally lie three deep, in a line extending from near the centre of the town to one quarter of a mile below. The same distance at the upper end is always lined with one or two hundred Kentucky and New-Orleans boats, from the interior of the States of New-York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee, as well as from the Territories of Mississippi, Louisiana, Indiana, and the Missouri. Two of those at present along the Levee I recognised as my *statesmen*. One of them was loaded with wild cherry plank from Chatouque Lake, and the other with ice; the latter of which articles they sold at twenty-five cents a pound.

Notwithstanding New-Orleans is, and I fear must ever remain, an unhealthy situation, yet I do not hesitate to express as my opinion, that it will at some future period not only rival all the great commercial cities of the United States, but even of the world. With respect to its local situa-

tion, it is the best which the island affords ; and as far above the swamps as the convenience of the navigation will admit, being no more than eighteen miles above a curious bend in the river, called the English Turn ; to which place, vessels, with the prevailing southerly winds, can ascend with ease, but from thence they are ahead. Its general situation is the most eligible on the river, and perhaps unequalled by any other on the globe. Placed by nature at the mouth of the noblest of rivers, running north two thousand five hundred miles ; another arm extending to the north-west the same distance ; a third to the north-east twelve hundred miles ; while a fourth below the two last extends westwardly nearly fifteen hundred more. These again receive in their courses many navigable streams, which in any other country would be denominated rivers of the first magnitude. Thus she receives the produce of a thousand soils and climates, which have no outlet except by her port.

Another communication has lately been opened with the lakes Pontchartrain, Maurepas, and the Bayou east of New-Orleans, by means of a canal executed by the Baron de Carondelet. This extends from the Old Fort in the rear of the city, to the Bayou St. John, a distance of nearly two miles, where a considerable village has been settled ; and about five miles further, at the mouth of the

Bayou, is a fort which commands the whole communication. This canal is a beautiful and valuable improvement to the city, whose inhabitants, with a view to honour so public spirited an undertaking, have erected a monument on the old town-house, executed in the English, French and Spanish languages, purporting, that "This canal was designed, planned, and executed by the Baron de Carondelet, for the convenience of the city."

Lake Pontchartrain, which lies immediately behind the city, is about thirty-five miles long and twenty-five broad, and generally from twelve to fourteen feet deep. The south-west end of the lake is very shallow, with a muddy shore, but the opposite side in many places is a handsome gravelly beach. Lake Maurepas lies west of the latter eight or nine miles. It is about twelve miles long and eight wide. The Mississippi, below New-Orleans, has several other communications with the Gulf, both to the east and west of the river; but all of them are too shallow to be navigated except by the smallest kind of craft. Lake Wachas, which lies on the western side of the river, and nearly opposite to, and only twelve miles distant from the city, is about twenty-two miles long and six wide. This, in some short time hence, will afford a much shorter communication for boats of easy burthen, with the gulf west of New-Orleans. Besides the lakes already mentioned, there are a number of others and smaller ones,

whose names are not generally known, as they are never frequented by any person unless by accident. The tides at New-Orleans are barely perceptible, never swelling more than from twelve to fifteen and eighteen inches. Yet it sometimes happens, during a violent hurricane, that the sea rises to such a height as to cause a reflux of the river, which covers the whole country from the sea to the head of the island of New-Orleans, with a depth of from two to eight feet of water. Although these accidents are to be dreaded as incident to the country, yet they are not to be calculated upon as annual visitations; as it very often happens that they are not experienced once in half a dozen years.

From New-Orleans down to the English Turn, a distance of eighteen miles, the land retains nearly the same height; but from thence to Fort Plaquemines, which is twenty-five miles lower, they decline still more, and become unfit for any culture except that of rice. From thence down to the Gulf, a distance of fifty miles, they are an entire low marshy swamp, covered with water and reeds.

About fifteen miles below New-Orleans, on the left side of the river, is a small creek running eastwardly, and emptying itself into Lake Borgne and the sea, bordered by a small body of very fine lands along its banks, on which is situated the Poblacion de St. Bernardo, or, as it is sometimes

called, *Terre aux Bœufs*. This settlement, although but small, contains at present more Spaniards than all the rest of Louisiana; as most of them removed to the island of Cuba, on the cession of the country to the United States. The markets of New-Orleans are in a great measure supplied with vegetables and poultry from this place.

I find that the expense of travelling is not the only inconvenience of the country, with which you become acquainted at this place, although one would be inclined to suppose, from the extravagance of the charges, that this department had been particularly attended to. Descending in the *Packet*, (a dirty little open row-boat,) to this place, I had to pay twenty-five cents for every league; and upon inquiry I was informed, that the price of a horse for travelling up to the city has been established by custom at one dollar a league.

Having nothing further to say with respect to the city of New-Orleans, or the country immediately around it, you will naturally expect, that, after having had an opportunity of examining this country from the mouth of the Missouri to the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, that I should have formed an opinion either favourable or unfavourable to the general character of the country.

Although the cession of the province of Louisiana is a most desirable acquisition in itself to the United States, yet I cannot forbear expressing it as my opinion, that as our country is already suffi-

ciently large to enjoy in effect all the blessings of our happy form of government, the possession of the two Floridas, with the island of New-Orleans, would have been a much more desirable object. The acquisition of these two provinces would not only have tended to consolidate our already wide-extended empire from Maine to New-Orleans, by adding a large extent of sea-coast, but likewise have furnished us with all the valuable harbours included within them, which are very much wanted in the southern extremity of our empire ; whereas at present we have only added a few more hundred miles of a shoal and useless coast to the great length we before had. Add to this, that many of the rivers, which rise and flow through the States of Georgia and the Mississippi Territory, discharge their waters through these provinces into the Gulf of Mexico, east of New-Orleans ; where, as already has frequently been the case, our citizens, while descending their waters, have been harassed by every petty officer of a foreign power who felt disposed to insult them. As Cato is said for a long time never to have left the senate-house without exclaiming, (no matter how ineptly,) “ *Delendo est Carthago,*” I think it would be well for one of our senate to adopt a similar practice, and on every such occasion to exclaim, “ The Floridas must be ours.”

As my last sheet of paper is exhausted, I shall barely have room to inform you, that I return to

New-Orleans to-morrow, where I have engaged my passage on board the ship F—, which will sail for New-York in a day or two after. Should any thing further occur in descending the river to the Balize, or on my passage to the north, I shall not forget you.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XXXIII.

*Ship F—, off Havana,  
May 15, 1808.*

Dear Friend,

MY last was confined to a particular description of the city of New-Orleans, and its vicinity. But as I know you will be anxious to receive a further account of the Mississippi from that city down to its mouth, I shall proceed with my description of that part of the river, and conclude with such observations as my memorandum may furnish.

After leaving New-Orleans, the rapidity of the current is such, that with a light wind vessels may descend to the sea in twelve hours. We did not, however, reach it so soon, as we had a head wind to beat against, besides being detained nearly half a day in weighing our anchor; which was so bedded in the mud that it was impossible to break ground. Nor do I think we should have succeeded at last, had not a large tree acci-

dentally drove broadside athwart the cable while it was tough strained, and broke the hold of the ground.

You have already been informed, that the English Turn\* is eighteen miles below the city; to which place, on the east side of the river, the improvements make a respectable appearance. On the opposite shore, however, they decline much sooner.

Fort Plaquemines, which is twenty-five miles below the Turn, is situated on the western bank of the river. It contains a small garrison, stationed there principally for the purpose of examining all vessels which pass. The land below the fort subsides rapidly into swamps, and within a few miles further the trees disappear entirely; when nothing remains, as far as the eye can reach, but an immense collection of marsh, that produces a coarse kind of reeds, about four or five feet in height, and extends down to the sea, a distance of about thirty miles.

After passing the fort about twenty-four miles, you approach the three passes, or channels of the Mississippi. These are distinguished by the names of the east, south, and south-west passes. The first of these is about twenty miles in length to the

\* So called from the first attempt that nation made on the city of New-Orleans, when the ships of war, after ascending thus far, were obliged to re-Turn.

sea, the second twenty-two, and the third, which was formerly used as the principal entrance, is twenty-five miles. Neither of the two last have more than eight or nine feet of water over the bar at present. The eastern pass is that which is now principally used, and about five miles after entering it, it again divides itself into two branches, which are distinguished by the names of the Balize and La Loutre. The former of these is that which is preferred by the pilots as containing the deepest water, which may be reckoned at sixteen feet over the bar. This bar is very narrow, and immediately after passing it you have water sufficient for a ship of the line.

Fort Plaquemines is the last of the works, or improvement of any kind, that you meet with until you come to the Balize, where there is a small fort, and a house for the accommodation of the pilots.

The passage up the river, from the Balize to the city, takes up from five to thirty days, according to wind and weather. I was indeed informed of an instance, where a Hamburg ship, which had a passage of sixty-five days from Europe to the Balize, was afterwards seventy-six days in ascending the river to the city. The shores of the river on either side are so bold, that a vessel may lie along side of the banks throughout the whole distance from the fort to the city.

I already had occasion to remark to you, that the western bank of the Mississippi from New Madrid down to the Gulf, a distance of eleven hundred miles, consists of a narrow strip of rich soil, varying from one quarter to two miles in breadth. This lies immediately upon and parallel to the river, but is rendered useless from its being annually inundated by the rise of the river, when it is covered with from one to eight feet of water. It has been generally asserted, and as generally believed, that this river runs upon a ridge throughout this country. But nothing can be more erroneous or absurd than this opinion. It has, however, the appearance of an incomprehensible mystery, which being added to the many and very respectable authorities who have advocated this belief, it cannot be wondered at that such should be the generally received opinion. It is invariably the case with the Mississippi throughout the whole distance last mentioned, (excepting where the bluffs or headlands on the eastern side approach the river,) that both its banks are always highest on the margin of the river; and during the annual inundations the water rushes over the banks with a considerable current, and descends to the swamps in the rear, which are soon filled to the general level of the river. When the inundation has attained its height, and the waters begin to fall, those in the swamps equally subside with the river, until that has fallen to a level with its banks,

which then form a natural dam, and prevent the swamps from discharging their waters that way to the main river. This vast body of water is afterwards in part collected by the several streams which intersect this country, and conveyed to the general receiver ; but a greater part is carried off to the sea by the numerous Bayous and outlets which have been formed, as so many necessary extra channels for the superabundance of the waters. Whoever will take the trouble to sound the river occasionally throughout this distance, will find a depth of from fifteen to forty fathom ; which, when compared with the elevation of the banks in front, and the lowest level of the swamps in the rear, (which do not exceed eight, ten, or twelve feet,) he will be satisfied, that if the channel of the river was laid dry, the Mississippi, like all other rivers, would be found to have traced its course through the lowest valleys.

With respect to the elevation of the banks, you may recollect I have already informed you, that the borders of this river are always higher than the interior ; and no doubt you will be as much at a loss as I myself was at first to assign a sufficient cause for so curious a phenomenon.

This, however, is very readily solved on the spot, by giving half an hour's attention to the operation of the river, while overflowing its banks. You will then observe, that the first vegetation on the margin, whether of reeds, weeds, or young

willows, equally serve as sieves or strainers to the water that passes through them. By this means they collect vast quantities of leaves, and other light substances, immediately upon the margin of the banks; which, from the extreme muddiness of the water, receive a light cement of mud and slime with every swell of the river, until at length they acquire a height nearly equal to the general rise of the river. Whilst the swamps in the rear, from the circumstance of the waters being already strained, receive no other aid towards raising their surface, than the ordinary deposit of mud and slime with which the waters abound.

Another process, but upon a larger scale, may likewise be remarked higher up the river, where the banks have already acquired a considerable height, and are covered with a large growth of timber, and underbrush or cane-brakes. There, besides the lighter and smaller substances, vast quantities of rotten wood, trees, and brush, are brought down by the freshes, part of which is collected by the trees on the banks, (when the wind or water has forced them out of the channel,) where they again serve to obstruct and collect other floating substances. In the course of a few weeks, all the smaller interstices are filled with leaves, weeds, and mud, and in a few years are buried by the repeated accumulations of mud and vegetable matter, deposited by every succeeding

inundation. You will readily perceive, that by this process the banks nearest the river must always be highest, and that they will continue to increase, until, by repeated inundations, they have acquired a height equal to the greatest swell of the river. After which, from the decomposition of the produce of their own soil, they will, in the course of time, exceed the highest rise of the river. This no doubt has been the case with the upper country from New Madrid to near the Grand Towers, where only very extraordinary freshes can rise to the summit of the banks. The same thing will probably, in the course of succeeding ages take place in all the country below.

This river originally must have flowed along the banks of the highest land ; which at so early a period, in all probability, did not extend any lower than the mouth of the Ohio on the western side ; whilst the whole lower country remained an immense swamp, like that below New-Orleans at present ; and probably the site of that city was at that period a part of the Gulf of Mexico. Indeed, when viewing the country from the mast head, and tracing out the numberless lakes, sounds, and bays, discernible on every side, I have more than once thought, that the island of New-Orleans must have composed a part of the Great Gulf, and have been gained by the encroachments of the river ; and that in time another city may arise near

the site of the present mouth of the river. But to proceed :

Supposing this, then, to have been the earliest course of the river, it will be seen, that by the means already mentioned, it would at length have formed its banks on either side, and afterwards progressed gradually down the river, until, by some obstruction of the natural channel above, the current was turned from its course. This would of course produce a reaction upon one of its banks, which being but narrow, and composed of materials incapable of making any lasting resistance, would soon be forced through by the river, thus forming another channel, and pursuing its course through the swamps. Here meeting with another obstruction of the same kind to check the current, it would then take another course, and by acting upon the opposite side of its former banks, would eventually find another passage through it, and join its former current, having formed an island by the operation. In this way have the banks and principal old islands of this river been formed ; and even the island of New-Orleans bears evident marks of having but lately been gained from the sea.

Although nature, in most of her operations, is slow, yet when we make our remarks at periods of thirty years distant, her progress seems more rapid. Witness the site of the old fort at the Balize, which at the time of its erection was opposite to the pass of the river, but at the present moment

we find it nearly two miles above it. You must not, however, understand me to mean, that this fort, like some of the islands in the Mississippi, has *marched* nearly two miles up the river; but that the mouth of the river, or land on each side, has advanced that distance into the sea, and not only left the fort behind, but has absolutely stolen so much from the borders of the Gulf of Mexico.

You will easily perceive how fast accumulations of this kind may take place, when you recollect that a half pint tumbler of river water will, in the short space of two hours, deposit half an inch depth of sediment. And when you are further informed, that immense collections of large trees are brought down by the river, and cover all the shoals about the passes of the Mississippi, as far as the eye can discern, you will be satisfied that these must form so many additional dikes or embankments to entangle others, which soon become so firmly bedded in the mud, as to bid defiance to storms and hurricanes.

I cannot take my leave of this subject without quoting a passage which I recollect to have seen in Herodotus. The volume I have not before me. The words may therefore be incorrect. In speaking of the country of Egypt and the Nile, he informs us, "that in the time of one of their ancient kings, (Menes,) the whole of Egypt, except the province of Thebes, was one extended marsh. Nor was any part of that large district

situated beyond the Lake (Moeris) at that time to be seen. This distance between the Lake and the sea was reckoned to be seven day's journey."

Had Herodotus lived at this time, and described this country at so early a period, he could not, in my opinion, have used language which would convey a more correct idea of its situation than that just quoted. A change of the proper names will make it read thus: "That in the time of their ancient kings, the whole of Louisiana, except the Upper Province, was one extended marsh. Nor was any part of all that large district situated beyond the Bayou Manchac at that time to be seen. This distance between the Bayou and the sea was reckoned to be seven days journey."

The inhabitants of Louisiana, previous to the cession of the province to the United States, were chiefly composed of French and their descendants. At present nearly one fourth may be considered as Americans. The whole population may be estimated at about fifty-two thousand, of which sixteen thousand may be deducted as the number of slaves. This small number of inhabitants is dispersed in a few settlements over a tract of fourteen hundred miles, and excepting the lower three hundred miles, which contain seven eighths of the whole number, are separated by pathless wildernesses, and generally have no communication with each other, except that afforded by the trading boats.

The upper settlements of St. Louis, Carondelet, St. Genevieve, and New Bourbon, are composed of French, and since the cession a few Americans have settled at St. Louis and St. Genevieve. The Mines are mostly settled by Americans, with a few French. Cape Girardeau, near the river, consists mostly of Americans; but at a little distance back are some considerable German settlements; at New Madrid, French and Americans; at Little Prairie, French and Canadians; at Chickasaw Bluffs, Americans; at Walnut Hills, French and Americans; at Natchez, mostly Americans, and a few French and Spaniards; at Point Coupee, French and Arcadians; at Baton Rouge, mostly Americans, with a few French and Spaniards. This last place is not within Louisiana, but belongs to West Florida. The settlements immediately below Baton Rouge consist of emigrants from Nova-Scotia, and their descendants. The next are two German settlements, intermixed with a few French. The Atacapas and Opelousas settlements west of New-Orleans, consist of French, German, and Americans. The city of New-Orleans consists of French, about one fourth Americans, and foreigners; Terre aux Bœufs, Spanish and a few French; the remainder of the island and opposite shore of the river, generally French.

You will perhaps expect me to say something before I close, respecting the various tribes of Indians who inhabit the Louisiana country. The little information I have collected respecting them

having been obtained chiefly from hunters and traders, I will not vouch for its correctness.

The first tribe of Indians I have noted is the Mandane nation, who reside up the Missouri, about fifteen hundred miles above the Mississippi. This is one of the most powerful tribes on the river, consisting at present of about seven hundred warriors. Nearly two hundred miles below these are situated the Aricaras tribe, who have about the same number of warriors. These two nations are generally said to be in alliance with each other, and always at war with the Sioux, who inhabit the north side of the Missouri, and commit depredations throughout the whole country down to the Mississippi. The Sioux are a powerful and warlike tribe, consisting of about eleven hundred warriors. About two hundred and fifty miles below the Aricaras are settled the Pancas tribe, consisting of two hundred and fifty warriors; and one hundred and fifty miles lower the Mahas tribe of two hundred warriors. These two nations are connected, and probably are descended from the same stock, as it is said they speak the same language. About six hundred miles from the mouth of the Missouri is the river Platte or Panis, the lower part of which is inhabited by the Otos tribe, who have about two hundred warriors. Towards the head waters of this river are found the Panis tribe, whose towns extend to the waters of the Red River. This tribe can muster seven hundred warriors, and are said to be generally at war with the Spaniards. About three hundred

miles above the mouth of the Missouri are situated the Kansas tribe, chiefly settled along a river of the same name. Their strength consists in about two hundred and fifty warriors, and they are a daring and warlike little band, who are always in alliance with the Great Osage. One hundred and twenty-five miles below the Kansas is the Osage River, whose borders are inhabited by a powerful and warlike tribe of the same name. This tribe, whose strength may be rated at about one thousand warriors, are always at war with the Shawanese and Delawares, who are settled in the vicinity of the Mines, of Cape Girardeau, and of the mouth of the Ohio.

Although there may be other tribes residing on the waters of the Missouri, yet the above contains all that I have been enabled to collect. The following are those found on the Mississippi above the Missouri.

Two hundred and thirty miles above the mouth of the Missouri, the river De Moine falls into the Mississippi from the west side. The banks of this stream are inhabited by the Ayoas tribe, who have emigrated from the Missouri. Their strength is rated at one hundred warriors.

About six hundred miles higher are situated the Sacs and Renard tribes, the former consisting of about three hundred warriors, and the latter of about two hundred and fifty. No doubt there are other tribes both above and below these last mentioned; yet as my information extends no further in that direction, I shall proceed with those below the Missouri River.

At St. Genevieve are settled the small remains of a once respectable tribe called the Piorias. Their whole number at present amounts to no more than forty-two souls. These are in friendship with the Shawanese and Delawares. At Kaskaskias are likewise found another small remnant of the once numerous and powerful tribe of the same name, who, previous to the American war, were rated at one thousand warriors; but wars, rum, and diseases, have almost wholly extirpated the race.

The Shawanese and Delawares, who are cousins, have several towns on the western bank of the Mississippi, in the vicinity of Cape Girardeau. Their whole force consists of about one hundred and thirty warriors. They are always at war with the Osage nation, of whom they stand in great fear.

The Osark or Arkansas tribe are settled on the borders of the Arkansas and White River. They seem to be quiet and peaceable. Their whole number is rated at eight hundred souls. Large parties of Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, and a few of the ancient tribe of the Natchez, have lately incorporated themselves with the Osark tribe.

There are considerable numbers of Indians settled along the Red River, the names of whose tribes I never heard before. The following is all the information I have been able to obtain respecting them.

Near Avoyellos are found a small tribe called the Belones, consisting of no more than one hundred souls. The Beloxas are another small tribe

on the waters of the same river, and are said to consist of about four hundred souls. The Cadoquies are situated above Natchitoches. They are more numerous, and rated at about four hundred families, and said to be an active enterprising nation. The Conchtos are situated near the Sabine River, and consist of about one hundred families. The Choctaws, who have emigrated from the east of the Mississippi, and settled on the Red and Washita Rivers, are estimated at five hundred families. The Tunicas, a remnant of a peaceable nation on the Mississippi, have twenty families. The Alibamas have a small town near Manchac, of about thirty families. The Beloxas, who have already been mentioned, have another small town on Crocodile River, west of New-Orleans, containing fifteen families. And lastly the Chittemaches and Atacapas, amounting in the whole to about fifty families, are dispersed about the same neighbourhood.

*Gulf of Mexico, May 16.*

HAVING at length gone through with my description of the Mississippi River and country, I shall be at leisure to note what trifling occurrences we may meet with on our voyage to the north. At present we are in sight of the Havanna; and during the whole of yesterday we ran down along the coast of Cuba so near that we could distinguish the gulls upon the shore.

The Island of Cuba is the largest of all the West-India Islands; being not less than eight hundred miles in length, and nearly one hundred

in breadth. The land is high, and from the sea has the appearance of being rough and mountainous, yet we frequently could discover what appeared to be gentle and extensive glades. The Havanna is reckoned to be about five hundred and twenty miles from the mouth of the Mississippi, across the Gulf of Mexico.

*May 19.*

YESTERDAY evening we saw a brig far to leeward, apparently standing in for Pensacola Bay; and at sunset we lost sight of the island of Cuba. The next morning we discovered two sail on our weather bow, one of which was very large, and appeared to be coming down before the wind. As the air was light and baffling, it was not until one o'clock at noon that we were enabled, even with the help of our glasses, to discover, that she was a large English frigate, called *Le Guerrier*, commanded by Captain Skene. The first lieutenant soon came on board, and after an examination of our papers, informed us, that their ship was a French built frigate, captured the preceding summer, and that they were ninety-two days from England, and brought out the Duke of Kent, who had been appointed Governor of Jamaica. They had received a file of New-York papers from some vessel they had boarded, which they readily exchanged for another file of New-Orleans. As we had a good stock of poultry on board, and were politely asked to sell them a few pair, we authorized the captain to make them a present of a

dozen. While lying to, a full band with Turkish music, on board of the frigate, struck up " God save the king," and " Rule Britannia ;" and before we parted we were likewise complimented with " Yankee Doodle."

*Gulf of Florida, May 22.*

LAST evening we made the Double Head Shot Keys, where we discovered two wreckers lying at anchor, waiting for business ; but as we had none for them, we started a point or two of sheet, and sped our way through the Gulf of Florida. This day, after we had cleared the last of the Bahama Keys, we discovered a large vessel about fifteen or eighteen miles astern, which threw out constant signals to speak with us ; but as we had a fair wind, and there had been no bad weather to give us any reason to suspect she was in distress, it was determined in a general council not to lose any time, but to improve the present opportunity. Our captain judged her to be the ship C—, which sailed from New-Orleans about ten days before we did.

*Off Cape Hatteras, May 27.*

NOTHING has occurred since my last memorandum, except a trifling thunder-gust, which, as it came from the South, did not last long enough, or blow quite hard enough, to keep pace with my impatience to be wafted to the north.

*Off Little Egg Harbour, May 31.*

**STILL** barren of incident : for although at that point which distinguishes the vessels sailing for and out of the ports of New-York and Philadelphia, yet we saw nothing, as the embargo has left nothing to be seen.

*Off Sandy Hook, June 4.*

**HAIL** to the Highlands of Neversink, and to my friends still living under its brows ! And hail to yon smoky columns to the north, who in playful circles are travelling to the skies ! Ye rise from the cradle of my birth, the storehouse of my friends ; and in imagination can I already trace the curling volume as it ascends from their respected roofs. And hail, thou the friend and companion of my youth, all hail ! Yet a little while, and we meet once more to enjoy a renewal of those happy hours, which have so often witnessed our social intercourse. May the friendly breeze which now gently swells our sails, and drives us through the tide, waft my impatient wishes to your ear, and whisper “ Your friend is astern,” and “ ere to-morrow’s flood shall pass your castle’s walls, you may enfold him in your friendly arms.”

Yours,

C. S.

