

Trinity Illinois Feb. 17. 1829

My dear Parents, I started from Louisville Kty. on the third day of this month, not doubting but I should reach St. Louis in 5 or 6 days. In this however I have been most disagreeably disappointed. The weather since we started has been uncommonly severe. So cold a fortnight has not been known on this river, the Ohio- for 10 years. The consequence is, that the Mississippi is full of ice. Under these circumstances we have remained here, at a little landing place on the Illinois side of the Ohio, nine days, without advancing a foot. We are too far from any considerable place to obtain a land conveyance, beside the roads are so bad, and the weather so uncomfortable, that if we attempted to reach St. Louis by land, it could only be on horseback. We have been daily expecting a change in the weather, and we are now almost certain that a storm is ~~in~~ brewing. Six or ten hours of rain will permit us to proceed on our journey - heaven grant it may come soon. I am sick enough of staying here.

Still our situation might be far less agreeable. Our boat is one of the best on the river, and we have about 15 cabin passengers, all of them very genteel and pleasant companions. Two boats beside ours are lying in the same situation at this place, and we visit each other often, and endeavour to kill the time by games, and the reading of such books as we have among us. There are also a great number of flat boats <sup>under</sup> way of him. These are mostly filled with Kentuckians and exhibit all those

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Date: Feb. 17, 1829  
Description: G.W. Pierce letter from Illinois

peculiarities for which the rude navigators of these western waters are so celebrated. You have heard that they hold the horse and alligator as near kindred, and claim relationship to the hooting owl and snapping turtle. Indeed their slang is the most laughable I ever heard, and it is almost worth a journey of itself to this side of the Alleghenies. Scarce a day passes without a "regular built fight," and their ludicrous slang and curious oaths bear the same part in these personal conflicts that martial music does in battles of on a more extensive scale. They are used, alike to warm the courage and drown the cries of the combatants. I cannot attempt to describe one of their fights, nor if I could do it justice, would it give you much pleasure.

There is little interesting in the country by which we are at present surrounded. It is the same that you find every where adjacent to the banks of the Ohio and Mississippi. The soil is a rich, dark, deep alluvion formed by the yearly deposits which their noble rivers leave behind them as their waters return from their wide spread overflowings. The growth of trees, of which I believe, I spoke in a former letter, is altogether different from ours. Indeed I would go walk a mile to see one of those noble pines that lie between you and the Saco. Their forest scenery is dreary enough in winter, for it is not relieved by a single evergreen, unless we except the miseltoe, which is too sparse upon the branches to which it attaches to have any considerable effect. The sycamore must, in summer, be a noble and beautiful tree. It often grows to a great height, and is found at the trunk to measure 15 ft in diameter. When very large and aged, they become hollow, and tho' it may seem a travellers story, it is a well authen-

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located just that a single trunk of this description has been found large enough to stable six or eight horses. Daniel will laugh at this story.

Most of our passengers are western gentlemen, and I have learned all about raising hemp and tobacco. If I do not return I shall send you some thoughts upon the culture of the former, which you may put in the newspaper for the edification of the agricultural public. I believe we could raise hemp in Maine, and it has the advantage over most of our crops by being a cash article.

I write this letter for the fear that if I waited till I arrived at St Louis, you would begin to be troubled on account of my long silence. I shall send it by the first steam boat that goes up to Louisville.

I am in excellent health and spirits, tho' I have just at this time enough to make me dull. I cannot bear this delay. I want to be on the ground and make up my mind. Some times it is almost made up, and indeed I rather expect now to see you sometime in April. But a few weeks more will enable me to make up my mind with certainty.

With all desire for your happiness I am your affectionate son George -

Give my love to all the family -

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