

AN OHIO PIONEER.

Following is a series of letters descriptive of the journey of a Vermont farmer who emigrated with his wife and family to Ohio in the autumn of 1817. These letters are a vivid picture of travelling before railroads, steamboats and canals were constructed. The letter-writer is a good specimen of the sort of men through whom New England stamped her image on Ohio—that second New England.

At the time of removal the writer was fifty years old; had an ailing wife and many children for whom he eked out, or extorted, a scanty support from what is termed a "hard farm" in Pittsford, a town of western Vermont. Preparatory to starting he sold his farm, had his whole family vaccinated, bought a new wagon, and laid in extra clothing for his household. Quitting his old homestead early on Monday, September 30, 1817, after proceeding a few miles he met in a solitary place his brother, who had come from Rutland to bid a tearful and prayerful farewell to those westward bound. The letters were addressed to his brother, from whom the emigrant now parted, to see his face no more.

Lowdon, Franklin Co., Pa.,
October 23, 1817.

Dear Brother:

Through Divine Goodness we have reached this place; all in health, no unfortunate accidents worth naming; but blessing on blessing follows us. I wish we were thankful to the great and good Disposer of all events for His mercies.

The reason of our coming so far south is to cross the Alleghany mountains in a turnpike that is very good. We have been used very well by our fellow creatures, both low Dutchmen and high. I have not found it as you once thought it would be, namely, that stage drivers would drive over me; on the other hand, I being on the right of the road as the law directs, and that being the best as it happened, they take their side at a respectful distance; and so also with the great Massachusetts wagons, with five or six great horses and great loads, who on seeing us take to their own side. Those going never overtake us, our horses being good and in good trim.

For about a week we have fallen in company with a family from the district of Maine, and the town of Gardiner on the Kennebec. They seem clever people.

I think I have some sense of my situation, and had before I started. The miserable circumstances I was in seemed to warrant the undertaking. I am happy in having a clear conscience in the affair.

We have had very good weather; but two rainy days. This state is a beautiful country with the appearance of great wealth. The greatest trouble we have is going so far from so good friends. May Almighty God show mercy on us all through the merits of Christ our Savior.

Your affectionate brother,
A. B.
Six Miles East of Pittsburg,
Nov. 13, 1817.

Dear Brother:

I wrote per mail to Montgomery, N. Y., and at Connetstown, Pa., at the east side of the Alleghany mountains. Till then we got along finely; but in crossing the mountains we had rather a tedious time, owing to rain and the badness of the roads. My wife has been almost beat out, but through the goodness of God has got well. The children are and have been well—good health myself. Some of my horses got hurt and as it were beat out.

On the 9th we reached this place. I have been to Pittsburg, and for sixty dollars bought a boat that will hold my five horses, wagons, effects, family, and the Kennebec man's family—the man I wrote you of in my last—very clever Methodist people.

All people, or almost all, that go this way do so now—that is, go down the river in boats. We have had nothing stolen yet—mercifully preserved as yet.

Our boat is to be all ready for us tomorrow at 10 o'clock a. m., at which time we expect to embark to descend the river Ohio. The boat is some like a mud-scow; it has a house, too, with a fireplace in it; three-quarters of it has a deck battened. I am told that when I am done with it I can sell it for forty or forty-five dollars; that it is fit to go to New Orleans with a load.

To tell the truth, dear brother, I am at a loss to determine whether to go to

Athens, where Squire Gilman lives, and have the advantage of his advice, or to proceed to Cincinnati, as great things are said concerning the country at from twenty to thirty miles from that place—well watered, fertile, healthy, pleasant, and New England people. Peter (his oldest son) is fierce to go Cincinnati way. Whenever I make a stop I will inform you by letter, and then shall be in hopes of the favor of one from you.

I can say for myself, I do not regret my undertaking as yet; neither from what they say do I think my wife and children do. I wish we were more thankful for all the mercies we have experienced "in all that long and terrible way." At times it looked very black, and then I found the consolations of a clear conscience in the undertaking. I will instance one: I came to Laurel Ridge, three miles up and four down, no inn for seven miles, and it rained. So I put up. Next day it rained. On the third it seemed as if it would come fair—poor accommodations, the road thronged, emigrants from Ireland and Germany flocking in. I felt a clear to start—wife unwell—rained some—had to double the team—slow work. When the sun was about an hour high, had gained but two miles; there was no tavern, and but one house for five miles except turnpikers' huts (for by the way there is about twelve or fifteen miles of as good turnpike as any in the United States, and all the way it appears to be under way). I proposed to my people and the eastern man to encamp, to cut holes in crotches, to cover them with my painted wagon cloth, to build a fire against an old log. None of the party had slept in the woods. I had fire-works, axe and hatchet; so shortly my sick wife was in a snug apartment, and rested better than for several nights. We had provisions with us, and oats for horses.

It may seem strange to you, but my wife from that time began to mend. Blessed be God for His mercy. You may well think my oldest daughters were filled with dismay when they saw the tent preparing, and to them it seemed like enchantment to see their mother so well off in so short a time. The night was of a pitchy darkness with fine rain, the two faithful dogs keeping watch. The company were in health the next morning, which was pleasant, and we left our habitation with feelings I trust of thankfulness.

You would be surprised to see the great number on the road—some very poor—swarms of old country emigrants.

The climate is very different on this side of the mountain from what it is on the other side. It is as warm here or warmer than the summer before last in Vermont. There is something very agreeable in the air.

November 13.

After sealing my letter I thought I would add the following: I am credibly informed that the navigation to Cincinnati in such a boat as mine is safe and healthy; that after about fifty miles any man that ever steered a boat could do it. I have a journeyman of sober habits recommended to me as a pilot, who wants to go to Cincinnati for a trifle over his living. The distance by land is three hundred and by water five hundred miles. I am almost determined to go to Cincinnati—that is, to try to; then go twenty or thirty miles up the Miami river, hire a small farm for a while, and look around. The people here say the Miami country is the best in the United States. I think of these lines: "The world was all before them where to choose their place of rest, and Providence their guide." I am told that on the swell the Ohio has now, a good pilot will take my boat to Cincinnati in six days.

Your affectionate brother,
A. B.
Fort Hamilton, O.,
Nov. 30, 1817.

Dear Brother:

Through the goodness of Divine Providence we reached this place a few days ago in health—not a child sick or hurt in the way.

We have heard dismal accounts of misery, death and broken bones that some people experienced on the land—or of those that were drowned in the river Ohio. We were witnesses to some distress.

It is thought by some that one or two families perished in the Ohio about a week before we descended—as they were seen last upon deck—men, women and children—calling for help when none could be afforded. They soon

turned a point, were out of sight, and have not been heard from since.

Presuming you have received my previous letters, I go on with a short abstract of our adventures. In the neighborhood of Pittsburg I got acquainted with the man at whose house I put up, and showed him the certificate that Captain Lord handed me from the Royal Arch chapter. After he had been to Pittsburg, he told me that if I was in distress there was \$300 at Pittsburg and quarters for myself and family at some of the best houses in town. I answered that I thanked him and them, but through the goodness of God was not in distress, and had spending money enough to carry me where I was going—that all I wanted was civil, honest treatment for my money, and that I felt grateful to the gentlemen of Pittsburg. This man's name is John Grove. He went about Pittsburg, advised me what boat to buy, helped us in with our horses and other load, and is very friendly. Said he formerly had followed the river business, gave us all the information he could, that for eight miles (that is as far down as Wheeling) there was some danger of getting aground, so that we ought to have a pilot so far; then from Wheeling to Cincinnati the safest navigation in the world; so safe that he had many times gone to sleep in the night and let his boat drift with the stream without accident. He looked about for a pilot, but could not find one he knew; advised us to start as the river was falling fast; to stop nights and inquire which side of islands to steer.

We shoved off, after taking a farewell of our friend Grove, who would take nothing for his assistance; he very soon called to us that a stranger who said he was a seaman wanted to go to Cincinnati and would do the best he could for his passage. He being a decent-looking man, I went with my skiff and took him on board; the bargain was made in a minute. He turned out to be a very civil man of about 40 years—looked 35—born in Cambridge down by Boston, a ship-carpenter and seaman, had been round the world and helped take the Jura. I put him in pilot and bade the others mind him. With great skill and faithfulness and civility to myself and family was his behavior till we parted, so that on Monday about noon, the 24th of this month, we, through the goodness of God, safely landed in Cincinnati—a trip of 500 miles; thence we proceeded to this place.

I have been in situations both by land and water which one would think would awaken seriousness in a wretch. The descent of the Laurel Ridge, four miles down the hill, fills me with horror whenever I think of it; the road bad in common times, but owing to heavy rains uncommon bad—the loose rocks worn by wagon-wheels and horses ten or twelve—perhaps fifteen feet—the path of one horse three feet lower than the other—at times the horses growing frantic with rage; but we got down safely and to a tavern before eight. We were also in danger of smallpox, for Peter went into a tavern where a man had it badly; it aiso was thick at Pittsburg; when we were there I saw a little child green with it in the street not forty rods from where we got into the boat.

On the water we were sixteen souls; not one of us had ever been on the river before; after leaving the village of Wheeling, having head winds in the day time—but calm, bright moonlight—we sailed by night. I had some serious hours while at the helm, my little ones locked in sleep—afloat five or six miles an hour down a current I knew not whither. But out of all danger we have been delivered.

As yet I can tell you but little about the state of Ohio. In the southerly part little but rocky hills is to be seen from the river. The twenty-five miles I have travelled from Cincinnati to Fort Hamilton is like the garden of Eden. I have seen some farms I should rather have than half of Pittsford—or, indeed, the whole—and be obliged to live in Vermont. Peter is charmed. He will stand and gaze at them, and say he hopes we shall have one some time. Hence I believe not one of us wants to come back.

Still gratefully remembering the many kindnesses I have received of you, I remain, your affectionate brother,
A. B.

This letter was mailed near Cincinnati, December 5th, and was almost a month in transit to Rutland, Vermont.

Kipling's Impressions of Yellowstone Canon.

Of the Grand Canon of the Yellowstone, Rudyard Kipling writes: "All I can say is that without warning or preparation I looked into a gulf 1,000 feet deep, with eagles and fishhawks circling far below. And the sides of that gulf were one wild welter of color—crimson, emerald, cobalt, ochre, amber, honey splashed with port wine, snow-white, vermillion, lemon and silver gray in wide washes. The sides did not fall sheer, but were graven by time and water and air into monstrous heads of kings, dead chiefs—men and women of the old time. So far below that no sound of its strife could reach us, the Yellowstone River ran, a finger-wide strip of jade green. The sunlight took these woodrout walls and gave fresh hues to those that nature had already laid there. Evening crept through the pines that shadowed us, but the full glory of the day flamed in that canon as we went out very cautiously to a jutting piece of rock—blood-red or pink it was—that overhung the deepest deeps of all. Now I know what it is to sit enthroned amid the clouds of sunset as the spirits sit in Blake's pictures."

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