

## LETTER XV.

*Newport, Kentucky, October 6, 1807.*

Dear Friend,

MY last left us, I think, at Big Sandy River, three hundred and thirty miles from Pittsburgh. Twenty miles below this river we passed the French Grant, which is a tract of twenty thousand acres, in the State of Ohio, granted by Congress for the relief of the French inhabitants of Galliopolis, as some indemnification for the failure of their titles to the land they first settled on. Most of them, however, have transferred their rights, and fixed themselves on the Mississippi, very few having attempted a second settlement on the Ohio. Descending from thence eighteen miles, we arrived at the mouth of the Great Sciota River, which is said to flow through a tract of the richest land in the State of Ohio.

The Great Sciota is a very considerable river, being about one hundred and eighty yards wide at

its mouth, and navigable for a distance of one hundred and ninety miles ; it likewise affords a very easy communication with Lake Erie, approaching to within three miles of a branch of Sandusky River, which empties into that lake. The waters of this river are said to possess strong petrescent qualities ; and when the stream is low, a variety of specimens of petrefactions may be found in its bed. We had not the good fortune to arrive at such a time ; for although the Ohio continued low, the Great Sciota, from some heavy rains above, was very full, and marked its current quite across the middle of the Ohio. It lies in latitude 38. 44. N. and 82. 49. W.

Chilicothe, the seat of government for the State of Ohio, is about sixty-six miles from the mouth of this river, and is said to contain about one hundred and fifty houses, many of which are large and elegant buildings. The situation, I am told, is not very eligible, on account of the lowness of the ground, which makes it very unhealthy, and subject to periodical fevers. On the right bank of the Ohio, and about a quarter of a mile above the mouth of the Great Sciota, is the site of a small town called Portsmouth ; and on the opposite side of the same stream, another, named Alexandria, containing eight houses. Both of these towns are quite new settlements, and situated on a narrow strip of rich bottom, of only three-

quarters of a mile in depth, behind which the land suddenly rises into hills and mountains.

Vangeville is another small town, of half a dozen houses, situated on the Ohio and Salt Creek, in the State of Kentucky, about twenty-one miles below the Great Sciota. Two or three miles up this Creek are found some very good salt springs, where some considerable quantities of salt are made. The price at the works is two dollars a bushel of fifty pounds. This creek was perfectly dry at the time of my arrival, nor is it navigable at any time.

The salt springs of Vangeville bear no kind of comparison with those of Onondago, either in strength or quality, requiring three hundred gallons of water to make one bushel of inferior salt. They have about two hundred kettles of twenty-five gallons each, in constant operation, and when the brine is strongest, will make about forty bushels in twenty-four hours; but as the springs are subject to be inundated with every rise of the river, the works are frequently stopped altogether.

The land from the Kentucky line, at Big Sandy River, to this place, which is a distance of seventy miles, presents a rough and hilly country, as far as can be seen from the river, excepting some small bottoms, alternately found, first on one side and then on the other.

This country appears to be completely overrun with innumerable quantities of black and grey squirrels. The river, since we left Marietta, has afforded us an abundant supply of these animals, without any trouble on our part, as our boat had continually five or six of them on board, who clambered up the oars in order to rest themselves. I have counted no less than forty-seven at one time swimming across the river in different directions. The shores on each side of the river are literally lined with drowned squirrels; and I suppose that one third at least of those who take to the river perish in the water. They all appear to be migrating to the southward. Higher up the river we found them very fat, and they afforded us many delicious repasts; but they have now become too poor to be eatable.

Although, in one of my former letters, I described the navigation of the Ohio to be perfectly safe, yet experience has shewn me it is at least necessary to keep a constant *look out*. We were about three miles below Salt Lick Creek when our boat drifted very gently against a pointed log or snag, which was barely covered with water. The boat was under such moderate way, that we had not the least idea that she was injured, as she wheeled around and continued her course. I soon, however, perceived the water rising fast over the timbers, and at the same time heard a rippling

noise, which I at first supposed was occasioned by the current, but was soon convinced that it proceeded from the leaking of the boat. I removed some of the baggage, and perceiving the water gushing in with violence, thrust an old great coat into the hole, and directed my men to make for the shore, where we unloaded, and drew the boat out of the water. On examination we found one of the plank stove through; but by means of a thin piece of board and a few nails, we soon covered the fracture, and payed it over with some of the rich mud of the Ohio, which, on this occasion, answered all the purposes of tar, without the trouble of boiling.

After repairing the boat, and reloading our trumpery, we set forward again, when, just as we turned a short bend in the river, we discovered a bear that had taken to the water, with an intention of crossing to the opposite side. We immediately manned our oars with all hands in order to come up with him, but all to no purpose, for as soon as he perceived our intention, he prudently turned about, and recovered the shore he had left before we could come within gun shot. We had better luck, however, in the afternoon: seeing a deer make the same attempt, we despatched two hands in our light canoe after him, who, after cutting him off from the shore, and forcing him again

to the middle of the river, determined not to shoot him, but give him fair play, and either take him alive or suffer him to escape : after a chase of nearly five miles, they seized him by the horns and dragged him ashore.

Eleven miles below Salt Creek I was informed we should pass a town called Adamsburgh, and, although it was noon day when we arrived at the place designated, I could not see any thing like it, unless two solitary huts were intended by our informer. Manchester lies six miles lower ; it is situated on the right bank of the river, in the State of Ohio, and contains eighteen houses. Just above this town lies an island, which divides the river into two channels. Finding ourselves nearest to the one on the right shore, we entered that, but it was with the utmost difficulty that we forced our way through it. We all jumped overboard in order to lighten the boat, when, by lifting and dragging her, and shifting our baggage fore and aft, as occasion required, we succeeded in getting through. This channel is fast filling up, and the probability is, that in a year or two more it will be altogether impassable.

You will naturally inquire why I have said nothing respecting the trade of the numerous towns already described on the Ohio ? One answer will serve for the whole, viz. they are all too new to attend to any manufactures further than their

immediate necessities require, and, therefore only serve as points for transporting the surplus produce of the adjacent country down the Ohio. This, and boat building, in which all the more considerable towns are engaged, constitutes the whole of their trade. Ten miles below Manchester is likewise said to be a town called Liberty, which, although situated on the bank of the river, cannot be seen for *want* of a few houses. This I am informed will be the case with a number of *other towns* down the river, where *town making* has been carried on with considerable *spirit*. There is only *one* difficulty they have to overcome, in order to ensure success to the whole, viz. half a dozen *houses* to each town, and half a dozen *inhabitants* to each house. After passing this intended town of Liberty about two miles, we arrived at Limestone, situated on the left bank of the river, in the State of Kentucky, four hundred and twenty miles distant from Pittsburgh. It lies in latitude 38. 36. N. and 85. 38. W.

Limestone is said to be the oldest settlement in the State of Kentucky. The town, which consists of about eighty houses, is built on a flat in a bend of the river, and commands a pleasing view of the stream both above and below; and, from the great number of boats of every description lying along the shore, must have a very considerable share of business. Ship building, I was in-

formed, is likewise carried on with much spirit, but I saw nothing of the kind going on while I was there.

The river had made very considerable encroachments upon the town, by washing away the banks ; so that in some places there is barely room between the houses and the edge of the bank for a passable road. A year or two more, especially if assisted by any extraordinary freshes, will either swallow up those on the margin of the bank, or oblige their inhabitants to remove them to some more permanent foundation.

Lexington, which is the largest town in the State of Kentucky, is only sixty-five miles distant from this place ; it is said to be nearly five times as large as Limestone, and situated in one of the finest countries in the world.

Limestone Creek falls into the Ohio immediately above the town. I understand that this is sometimes a considerable stream ; but, at present, its bed, which is at least six feet above the surface of the river, is perfectly dry. This is the case with most of the creeks which empty into the Ohio, although at other times they rush down with all the appearance of large and permanent rivers.

After leaving Limestone six miles, we came in sight of Charlestown, likewise in the State of Kentucky. This place contains about forty houses.



and makes a respectable appearance from the river. Twelve miles lower we passed the town of Augusta, situated on the right bank of the river, in the State of Ohio, and containing about thirty houses. Thirty-seven miles below Augusta, the Little Miami River puts in from the right ; immediately above which, is the site of a small town called Columbia, consisting of about one dozen scattered houses. Seven miles further down stands the town of Cincinnati, the largest town on the Ohio below Pittsburgh, from whence it is distant about four hundred and eighty miles, and lies in latitude 39. 6. N. and 84. 18. W.

Cincinnati is handsomely situated on an elevated bank on the right side of the Ohio, and was, until lately, the seat of government for the North-West Territory ; it contains about three hundred houses, among which are found several very genteel buildings ; it has a bank, market-house, printing office, and a number of stores well stocked with every kind of merchandise in demand in this country. The markets are well furnished, both as to abundance and variety. Superfine flour is selling at three and a half and four dollars by the single barrel, and other articles are proportionably cheap. Ordinary manufactures they have likewise in plenty ; and the country around, being rich and level, produces all the necessaries of life with but little labour. Fort Washington is situated

immediately at the upper end of the town, and although, from the increased population of the country, it is at present useless, yet, in the early settlement of this place, it was a post of considerable importance in checking the incursions and ravages of the Indians.

Immediately opposite Cincinnati is the entrance of Licking River, a considerable stream, nearly as large as the Alleghany, and navigable for about one hundred miles. On the point formed by the junction of the two streams, is situated the town of Newport, in the State of Kentucky, consisting of about thirty houses. This is likewise a military station, containing at all times a considerable supply of military stores for the convenience of the western country. Here we found two gun boats belonging to the United States, waiting for a fresh to take them over the falls; they were built at Marietta, and are about the size of large Albany sloops.

I first noticed the growth of the cane below the mouth of the Great Sciota River, which lies near the thirty-eighth degree of north latitude. There it was very small, rising to little more than three feet in height; but, as you descend, you observe it to increase in size and quantity, until the banks of the river become covered with an impenetrable growth.

I shall set out from this place to-morrow, but intend to make some stay at the Falls of Ohio, from whence you will hear from me again.

Yours,

C. S.

## LETTER XVI.

*Louisville, Kentucky, (Falls of Ohio,)  
October 10, 1807.*

Dear Friend,

AFTER leaving Newport, and descending the river twenty-four miles, you pass the mouth of the Great Miami River, which falls into the Ohio from the right side, near the line which divides the State of Ohio from the Indiana Territory. This is a large and rapid river, being nearly two hundred yards wide at its mouth, although it is said to lose much of its breadth as you ascend towards its source: it is navigable for one hundred and thirty miles. One of its branches approaches within four miles of a branch of the Miami of the Lake; while another, by a portage of seven or eight miles, communicates with the Sandusky River, which likewise empties itself into Lake Erie. The Great Miami, I am informed, becomes somewhat difficult of navigation for the last forty or fifty miles, the channel being stony,

and the current very swift. Forts Washington, Hamilton, St. Clair, Jefferson, Grenville, Recovery, Adams and Defiance, are a chain of posts, commanding a ready communication between the Ohio and Lake Erie, by means of the two Miamis. The rapid increase of population throughout this charming country will, in all probability, shortly preclude the necessity of retaining them for the same purpose. Two miles below the mouth of the Great Miami is the site of a small town named Lawrenceburgh; this is only remarkable as being the first town and settlement you pass in the Indiana Territory. Descending thence twenty-four miles, we arrived at Big Bone Lick Creek, in the State of Kentucky.

Big Bone Lick is celebrated for the incredibly large bones found in its vicinity, which have not only amazed and astonished, but likewise puzzled the learned world. Horns have been found here measuring fifteen feet in length, fifteen inches in circumference, and weighing nearly one hundred pounds; teeth or grinders from five to twelve pounds weight, and other bones in proportion.

That this animal, which has been denominated the mammoth, is now extinct, is, I believe, the generally received opinion, although, I am informed, the Indians cherish a tradition that he still exists unknown in the west.\*

\* Mr. Jefferson, in his Notes on Virginia, informs us, that several chiefs of the Delawares being asked by a Go-

You no doubt recollect the skeleton of one which was exhibited a few years since in the city of New-York; this, at that time, I thought a monster, yet it was far from being as large as those to which the largest of these bones once belonged. This unwieldy monster has been supposed; by competent judges, to have been three or four times as large as the greatest elephant, who

governor of Virginia what they knew or had heard respecting this animal, the chief speaker immediately put himself into an oratorical attitude, and with a pomp suited to the supposed elevation of his subject, informed him, that it was a tradition handed down from their fathers, “ That in  
 “ ancient times a herd of them came to Big Bone Lick, and  
 “ began a universal destruction of the bears, deer, elks,  
 “ buffaloes, and other animals which had been created for  
 “ the use of the Indians; that the Great Man above, looking  
 “ down and seeing this, was so enraged that he seized his  
 “ lightning, descended to the earth, seated himself upon  
 “ a neighbouring mountain on a rock, on which his seat  
 “ and the print of his feet are still to be seen, and hurled  
 “ his bolts among them, until the whole were slaughtered  
 “ except the big bull, who presented his forehead to the  
 “ shafts and shook them off as they fell; but at length  
 “ missing one, it wounded him in the side; whereupon,  
 “ springing round, he bounded over Ohio, the Wabash and  
 “ the Illinois, and finally over the Great Lakes, where he  
 “ is living to this day.”

Col. Morgan informs us, that upon putting similar queries to a chief of the Iroquois tribe, whom he saw at the Lick, he delivered himself as follows: “ After the Great  
 “ Spirit first formed the world he made the various  
 “ birds and beasts which now inhabit it. He also made

is a graminivorous animal ; whereas this is now supposed to have been carnivorous. If so, it surely does not appear to have been well calculated for an inhabitant of this part of the globe in its present state. Quere. May they not have lived in the early part of *my twenty-seven thousand years*, and the species have been destroyed by the general deluge ? Or is it possible for the bones of any animal, in so exposed a situation, to resist the iron tooth of

“ man ; but having formed him *white*, and finding him im-  
 “ perfect and ill tempered, he placed him on one side of  
 “ the earth, from whence he lately found a passage across  
 “ the great water to be a plague to *us*. As the Great Spirit  
 “ was not pleased with this work, he took some black clay,  
 “ and made what you call a negro, with a woolly head.  
 “ This black man was much better than the white man,  
 “ but still he did not please the Great Spirit. At last the  
 “ Great Spirit, having found a piece of pure red clay,  
 “ formed of it the red man, perfectly to his mind ; and was  
 “ so well pleased with him that he placed him on this great  
 “ island, separate from the white and black men, and gave  
 “ him rules for his conduct. He increased exceedingly,  
 “ and was perfectly happy for ages ; but the foolish young  
 “ people at length despising his rules, became very wicked.  
 “ In consequence of this, the Great Spirit created the great  
 “ buffalo, the bones of which you now see before us ;  
 “ these made war upon the human species, and de-  
 “ stroyed all but a few, who repented, and promised the  
 “ Great Spirit to live according to his laws in future ;  
 “ whereupon he sent thunder and lightning, and destroyed  
 “ the whole race in this spot, two excepted, a male and  
 “ female, which he shut up in yonder mountain, ready to  
 “ let loose again, should occasion require.”

*time* during so long a period? Here is indeed an extensive field for the speculations of the curious. I have no doubt you would be highly gratified to see it as *ably* handled as my ingenious calculation on the destruction of the bed of the river by the Falls of Niagara!

Thirty miles below Big Bone Lick Creek, and on the same side, you perceive the Kentucky River, which, after having traversed the State in its widest part, and passing through innumerable tracts of the finest lands, here discharges its waters into the general receiver, the Ohio. This river is one hundred and fifty yards wide, and is navigable for one hundred and sixty miles during a great part of the year; but in dry seasons it is frequently obstructed with shallows. Immediately at the mouth of Kentucky River, which lies in latitude 38. 39. N. and 85. 2. W. is situated a thriving little town named Port William, consisting at present of about forty houses. Frankfort, which is the seat of government, although not the capital of the State, is situated on this river, about sixty-five miles from its mouth, and is said to be in a very flourishing condition, containing already about two hundred houses. Several large vessels have been launched on this river, and descended to New-Orleans. Westport is forty-eight miles below Port William, and contains only six houses. I have observed, during my whole course down this river, that the land rises and falls alter-



nately on each side: whenever you see a flat on one side you will always find a corresponding elevation on the opposite shore.

In descending the Ohio River you frequently pass what are here called floating mills; they are of a very simple construction, and consequently the more valuable in a country so destitute of mill-seats as this. The mill is supported by two large canoes, with the wheel between them; this is moored wherever they can find the strongest current nearest to the shore, by the force of which alone the mill is put into operation. You have seen a razor-grinder wheeling his machine from house to house in the city of New-York—this is exactly the case with the mills I am now describing; for they are literally floated up and down the stream, wherever a customer calls. Should I ever again attempt farming, it will most probably be in this new country, for I well remember I lost nearly one half of all my time and labour by *sending to mill*; for let me call for whom I would, he was always “gone to the mill.” Here, therefore, I may flatter myself with a better prospect of success, in that particular at least, for instead of the farmer’s *going to mill*, the mill *comes* to him.

After leaving Westport we descended twenty miles, and found ourselves at the head of the Falls of Ohio, before the town of Louisville, six hundred and thirty miles below Pittsburgh. This town is very handsomely situated on an elevated

bank on the left side of the river, in the State of Kentucky, about eight hundred yards above the commencement of the rapids, and contains one hundred and twenty houses ; it is the county town, and carries on ship and boat-building with considerable spirit ; several large vessels have already been built, and the many advantages which it enjoys in this respect, over all the towns above the falls, bids fair to give it all the encouragement it can wish. The country around Louisville is perfectly level for some miles, and the elevation of the town commands a beautiful prospect of the smooth and gentle stream above, as well as the rough and foaming billows of the falls below. Louisville has lately been erected into a port of entry and clearance, and lies in latitude 38. 14. N. and 85. 29. W.

The river at this place appears to have acquired a breadth of about one mile and a quarter ; and, as the passage of the falls is dangerous to strangers unacquainted with the navigation, the court appoints able and experienced pilots, who conduct you over in safety. Our pilot informed us that he received the same pilotage for a ship of three hundred tons as for a canoe, which you may carry on your shoulder, for, according to the act, “ *every boat shall pay two dollars for pilotage.*”

These falls, which may be considered as the only real obstruction in the navigation of the Ohio throughout a distance of nearly eleven hundred

miles, are occasioned by a bed of solid rocks extending from one side of the river to the other. The water was low when we passed them, and according to the pilot's account, no more than twenty inches of water over them. I have, however, seen too much water roll not to be able to form a reasonable conjecture of the quantity necessary to raise so violent a commotion as is here found, and shall therefore venture to say there could not have been less than three feet, but probably more. You will perhaps be surprised at my stupidity in not sounding the falls on our passage over them. I certainly intended it, but, by beginning too soon, I lost my pole, and before I could procure another, it being entangled under the rowers' oars, we had passed the shoalest part of the fall.

When the river is high, I am told, there is not the least appearance of any fall, except that the current is somewhat swifter at this place than ordinary; but when low, as at present, nearly two thirds of the breadth of the river may be walked over without wetting your ankle. There are three different passages or shoots over these falls, all depending, however, on the state of the water. The principal is nearest the Indiana shore; the middle is the next best; and the third, or Kentucky shoot, is only passable with the larger vessels during the highest stage of the water. Two fine large ships, of two hundred and fifty and three hundred tons burthen, were lying upon the falls as we de-

scended the river, having attempted to pass without a sufficient rise of the water; they had their keels knocked out, and were otherwise considerably damaged. Their situations were considered so very precarious that the one which ought to have been worth ten thousand dollars, was sold at public auction for fifteen hundred only.

The descent of these falls appears to have been accurately surveyed, and found to be twenty-two feet and a half in two miles. The legislature of Kentucky have incorporated a company for the purpose of opening a canal from the mouth of Bear Grass Creek, which runs in front of the town to the foot of the falls below. The ground has been bored, and every way examined for the purpose, and it is considered as practicable. The only difficulty remaining, is that of raising a sufficient capital to undertake it. When, therefore, this is once effected, the only serious obstruction in the navigation of the Ohio will be removed.

Immediately opposite Louisville, in the Indiana Territory, is situated the flourishing little town of Jeffersonville, consisting at present of forty houses; it bids fair to become a place of considerable importance. At the foot of the falls, and in the same territory, is another village, of the name of Clarksville, consisting of four or five houses only, and situated a little above the mouth

of Silver Creek, a small stream which there empties into the Ohio.

It may be of some service to you, should you ever take a *trip* this way, and become a “captain,” like myself, that I have attained that *honour* before you; for although I may not be able to instruct you what you ought to do, yet my experience will enable me to inform you what you ought *not* to do. You must never, on any account, advance money to your boatmen. One of my hands, being arrested by a constable for a debt of eight or ten dollars, at the moment we were leaving the shore, I paid the money without the least hesitation, thinking to deduct it from his wages. After descending a mile or two, I observed a fine stream of spring-water on the shore, and expressing a desire to have a keg filled with it, this fellow was ready in an instant; we accordingly landed him, and, after waiting near an hour, and receiving no answer to our repeated calls, I sent our pilot after him; but the fellow had left the keg at the spring, and escaped to the woods. Another agreed with me at Cincinnati to go the whole voyage down to New-Orleans, or up the Mississippi, as I should think proper, at twenty-five dollars a month. Just as we were ready to start, his wife came down to see him off—She had no money—she might want a little before Josey returned—and, finally, could not I

oblige her with one month's advance, as Josey would probably continue with me three or four months? I let her have the twenty-five dollars, and the second night after, the rascal ran away!

Yours,

C. S.