

Steamer "Florence"
Mississippi River Oct. 20/63

My Dear Friend

I wrote you a few lines on my arrival at Memphis, but owing to hurry & confusion I neglected to mail them... I write again, this time should mail this at Vicksburg, which place we anticipate reaching tomorrow noon & New Orleans Sunday.

This boat is a Missouri River boat, but still is quite comfortable. From Cairo to Helena Ark. I had to sleep on the floor, but now thanks to the Clerk I have a very good State room at present. The Mississippi styles are still kept with a great deal of poor whiskey is done away with—and poker and old sledge flourish. This last night I slept on the floor. I lay close to the Smoking Cabin—and every time I woke in the night I heard the clash of clubs spades & diamonds & saw festive youths looking at [] although a little sugar sprinkled in the bottom of their glasses as we poor spiritless (?) fellows who dreamed the happy hours away as if we were beneath their "Smallest notice."

Talk about New York seems were you ever at table where you had to "pitch in or get nothing." Imagine a table capable of seating 100 and that there are 400 passengers all entitled to a seat at the 1st table. 100 seated 300 hungry individuals anxiously watching for next chance. I enclose you a "fine picture" taken by a Special Artist on the spot. We can assure our readers that it depicts the scene on a Mississippi River Steamboat table with life like accuracy

By the way Mrs. Roosevelt seemed very much interested in the "Unknown tongue" which seemed to be what was engraved on the hotel seal. By perseverance I discovered what it meant. The letters are—o, i, c, u, r, m, t – that is Oh I see you are empty. Cupid is engaged in looking into an empty basket which of course should have had certain hearts (Queen of hearts I suppose) and is shocked by seeing it empty.

We have not yet seen a guerrilla though we have seen evidence of the destruction they have wrought. Maj. Gen'l Hurlbut commands at Memphis. Brig. Gen'l Reed at Cairo—Gen'l Buford at Helena. Gen'l Grant precedes us on his way to Cairo. We gave him three cheers & a N.Y. [] at which he bowed with grace—more particularly as the soldiers on our boat are his old Vicksburg boys who are returning from furlough or have recovered from wounds and sickness brought on when before Vicksburg.

Hours are passed away very pleasantly by good Union songs which are sung with a gusto our light hearted soldier boys among the songs sung usually round the flag when this cruel war is over – words slightly changed. The chorus was particularly comical. I'll give you one or two.

"Weeping sad and hungry

Lord how bad I feel
When this cruel war is over
Praying for a good square meal”

Again

Weeping sad & lonely
Bruised all to smash
When this cruel war is over
Wishing for a good plate of hash

There are several other good [] which on a tedious passage create a great deal of fun.

There is nothing to write of here. We all feel generally good knowing that Ohio has gone all right.

My kindest regards to your Brothers & best wishes to your self & family. I remain as ever

Yours sincerely,
Matthews

P.S. Since writing I have some recollections of mailing you one letter at Memphis. I am making good use of the Glasses. They are invaluable as I can see any one long before those who are keeping regular watch.

Yours Sincerely,
Oliver Matthews

{In the margin}

12 pm – arrived at Vicksburg are going to leave at 5 am So I send this ashore by a []
Couldn't find an envelope so I made use of one directed to your Bro.