LIFE ON THE MAIN DECK

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**Transcribed by Georgeann McClure**



Capt. Cairncross

### Chapter I

It’s a long long time to look back 60 to 70 years since many of the incidents occurred that I am about to relate.

I was born in the village of Broughty Ferry at the mouth of the river Tay in Scotland in 1829. Father was a sailor and fisherman. Our house faced the sea, and if there is any music in the waves of the old ocean, I got the benefit of it in my infancy. My early days were spent on boats and ships. We moved to Dundee when I was seven years old where my father was employed at the harbor as dock gate man, where he served for twelve years. That took me to the harbor where the ships were and where I spent my leisure time climbing and playing the rigging. Before I was ten years old I would climb to the top gallant sail of the biggest ship in the harbor, so it was natural for me to take to the water.

I received but little schooling, not quite two years, but the teacher I went to told my father that I was the most apt scholar he ever had. I never studied a lesson at home, and when I read a lesson once, I could repeat it, and hearing a song once, I could sing it.

I went to work in a large linen factory when I was twelve years old, and I have hardly had an idle day since. This work gave me a very good understanding of machinery that helped me greatly in long years after. The flax came in at one end of the factory and went out at the other the finest of linen cloth. Wages were not very high in those days. I got about fifty cents a week when I started and after working nearly three years I got to be belt lacer at about a dollar a week. The noise and the dirt began to tell on my health and I wanted to go to the sea to be a sailor, so I shipped on a bark call “The Clansman” of Glasgow as an apprentice at two dollars a month the first year, and three the next. I knew as much about a ship before I went to work on one as I did after. Having played on them for years before there was not a rope on one that I did not know by name and what it was for. I could splice a rope or tie any kind of a knot as well as I can today. I could hand reef and steer and box the compass, which were the requirements of an able bodied seaman. My father found out that **Captain Peck** was a little cranky and when he took these spells, he was a tyrant. He was a little, disarmed creature. He had fallen off the rigging some time and broken his collar bone and injured his back and the sailors called him “Humpy Deck”. Father did not know in time or he would not have let me go. I told father if he abused me I would not come back with him.

We were bound for Quebec for timber. We sailed on the 12th day of May 1845. We had a nice fair wind and it was a different sensation in climbing up to the top of the tall mast with the ship rocking over the waves than it was in the harbor when she was lying still, but I soon got used to it. After we got under way, the watches were set. There were fourteen men, three boys and a cook and a steward, a first mate, a second mate, carpenter and a boatman. The carpenter and another boy were on our watch. The first job was to fix something on the main or gallant sail, so the carpenter and I went to do it, and while we were up he asked my name and soon other things and told me he was to have me for his mate and to help him when he wanted anyone, so I was carpenter’s mate after that.

We had a nice wind off the southwest and everything went well. We sailed right along the coast until we got to the north of Scotland . We lay to at Kirkwall on the Orkney Isles and got some vegetables and fresh meat, one evening. The next morning when we came on watch at six o’clock, we were in sight of the coast of Ireland . Everything was working like a clock, the watches changed every night at six o’clock. One was from six until eight, then the next from eight to twelve, then the next from twelve to four, then the next from four to eight, then the next from eight to twelve, then from twelve to four then the “dog watch” from four to six, that that changed the watches every night. The watch from four to eight in the morning had to scrub and wash the deck before breakfast, and it did not matter if it rained in torrents or the sea was washing over her, sweeping everything clean, the deck had to be washed. The bell was rung every half hour, first one tap, then two taps and so on till four taps, which was called four bells. Then the man who was steering was off and another one took his place and then we heaved the log, which was to see how fast the ship was sailing. The officer on watch with two to help him to do this. The log was a triangular piece of board with the log line fastened on each corner and was leaded on one edge to keep it perpendicular when in the water. On one corner it was fastened to a pin that is inserted in a hole in the corner so when it is to be hauled on board again the pin is pulled out and the log turns on its flat side on the surface. The log line is about as thick as a common clothes line with knots on it certain distances apart all along the line. One person holds the reel that the line is wound on and another holds a sand glass. The officer drops the log into the water and lets the line run out as fast as the ship is sailing, until he comes to the first knot then he says “turn”. The person that has the minute glass turns it upside down and when the sand is all run out, he calls “stop”. The officer tells him how many knots the ship is sailing when he examines the log line.

A “knot” is a little more than a mile. Ten knots are approximately twelve miles. The log is heaved every two hours at four bells and at eight bells when the watch is changed and the wheel changed. When the weather was good, all hands worked from breakfast till supper except Sunday. It was then we did our washing and cleaning up.

About the third week out we were getting well on toward the banks of Newfoundland

We had a fair wind with every yard of canvas set and when we heaved the log at six o’clock she was making fifteen knots. The men were growling about carrying so much sail up till the last minute. I asked the carpenter what was the matter. He pointed ahead,

“Do you see that big black bank coming up”? We are in for a big storm tonight.” It was our watch below at eight. When we got down the carpenter told me not to take off my clothes but to lie down just as I was and to fasten my clothing tight around me and have my cap well fastened and to keep out of the way if the storm got very bad.

I was lying awake. We could hear the watch on deck working like nailers. Then the order came to us “ all hands and shorten sail” We soon got on deck. The watch on deck had the sails all taken in, and the first order we got was to let go the main royal sail and top gallant sail. The carpenter jumped up on the rigging. I was right after him, and I was up to the royal as soon as he. It did not take us long to make it fast. We had just got down on the top gallant yard when the storm of wind and rain hit us. While we were taking in the sail and making it fast the rest of the crew had changed the ship’s course and now she was broad side to the storm and every time a big wave struck her, you would think she was going to roll over. We got the top gallant sail in by hard work. That linen canvas is as stiff as a board when it gets wet. We had just gotten down then we were given the order to “Close reef the top sails.” When the carpenter got on the yard, I was right with him. When he saw me, he was surprised and he said “What are you doing here, you little rat?’ I told him I had to be with him when the men hauled the sail up and I could tie reef points as fast as any of them. Everything was in now but the main sail and the spanker. In taking in the spanker, the throat latch got foul and it looked as if it would carry the mizen mast away. A man was ordered up to take it fast. He took a line up with him and it was the worst job of all. He climbed out to the end of the boom and made the line fast then wound it around the sail, as he slid down but when he came down near the mast it was too heavy for him to hold the sail and wind the rope around it. I was ordered up to help him. There was no use in whining. I climbed up the rigging, got on the yard and climbed over his back, got astraddle of the yard and as he slid down, I wound the rope around the sail and the yard till we got to the mast; then he took the line himself and wound it around the mast and made it fast. As soon as we got down on deck all hands were ordered to take in the main sail. As soon as it was clawed up we all jumped in the rigging. The carpenter told me to stay down, it was no place for me. I jumped down on the deck. The captain was standing close by. He called out to me, “See here, I ordered all hands up.” I answered “Yes sir” and climbed up in the rigging. It was blowing so hard that it fairly pinned me to the rigging. I could hardly climb up. When I got up to the main yard and was about to get on it, the men stopped me and told me to go up on the top till they were done. They got the sail all rolled up and were about to roll it on top of the guard to make it fast when a heavy breeze tore it out of their hands. They got it up a second time. It was wet and heavy and as stiff as a board. The wind was blowing a perfect hurricane. They held on to it as long as they could, but they could not let go their hold to make it fast. They had to let it go and when it spread out it burst right in the center with a report like the cracking of a big paper sack. Some of the men wanted to cut it loose and let it go overboard. The mate called to them to try it again. They rolled it up and when about to roll it on top of the guard I took the studding sail halyard that was lying on the top and threw the bight of it over the yard, then crawled down below the yard and made it fast. I climbed up on top again and took a turn around the mast and as the men rolled it up I hauled it in and held it till it was made fast. When we got down on deck, the mate and all the men praised me for what I had done saying a boy came in good sometimes.

When we got done, we were under close reefed top sails. The rain was not so heavy, but the wind appeared to be stronger and she was lying over on her side so much that it was impossible to walk the deck without holding on to the rail. The waves were mountain high and every now and then one would wash right over us. Where were the other two boys all this time? They kept out of the way. When the rain began to pour down, one of them was on the outlook forward and when the watch changed, I took his place. I thought that the Captain was imposing on us boys. Why did he not make the men look out? I found out afterwards that a boy can hear and see quicker than a man and many a boy has saved a ship by hearing the rattle of a block or any little noise. After an hour, the other boy took my place. To say I was wet doesn’t express it. The water was running out the bottom of my trousers. About four o’clock day began to break and the weather began to clear up. The mate called out “Eight bells. Call the watch,” but the watch was on deck. “Heave the log and spell the wheel.” We went aft and heaved the log. Then our watch had to wash the deck, which was merely going thru the motions and sweeping some of the water off. When we went to breakfast, we had nothing but hardtack, a little cold salt beef and cold water. Everything was so wet the sea was so rough that the cook could not start the fire or cook anything. There was nothing done all day except to sit around.

About noon, we “put about on the other tack” In the evening, the storm began to subside and at midnight, we began to shake out the reefs of the top sails and at daylight we shook out the foresail. Then the weather cleared up and morning was warm and bright. After breakfast, we took down the torn main sail to bend on another. The carpenter and I were out at he end of the yard bending it and I was looking out over the sea. I saw something floating on the water. I asked the carpenter what it was. He called down to the captain that there was a large turtle on the port side. The captain jumped up on the rail to look at it. Then he called for three or four of the men to comedown and catch it, but when the men got down on deck the boats had all been newly painted so they could not be launched. Every one of the men said it was the largest turtle they had ever seen. It was like a large feather bed. The cook, an old sailor who had seen hundreds, said he had never seen so large a turtle.

We were running along with a southeast wind and had just got supper and were lounging around during the dog watch, when one of the men called out “A large iceberg right ahead.” All hands ran forward to see it. The captain was walking in front of the cabin door. He told the man at the wheel to lay up to it and we ran on up to about four rod of it. It was nearly as high as the ship’s mast. Just as we passed it, a piece of it slid off. It was larger than the ship and slid right into the track of the ship with the noise of thunder. The captain told the Mate that was beside him that next time he came across one of them he would give it a wider berth. If it had struck us it would have crushed us like an eggshell. We saw two ore that night, and we were ordered to keep an extra good lookout.

In the days after that, we ran along the coast of Newfoundland and next day we entered the gulf of St. Lawrence, and got a pilot. It took about two weeks to beat our way up to Quebec , as the wind was for the most of the time against us. Shaking out and taking the sails at every change of the tide for we had to drift up the river by it and beating against the wind it kept us busy changing the ship’s course across the river.

We cast anchor at the head of Orleans Island in the night and the carpenter and I came on the anchor watch at four o’clock in the morning about a mile below Quebec .

When the sun rose that morning and shone on the city I think it was the most beautiful sight I ever saw in my life. The spires of the churches were covered with tin and sparkled in the light of the sun, the big guns of the fort facing us, with the guards marching back and forward, the ships lying at anchor at the warves. I have seen many sight since during the last seventy years, but none has left the same impression on my mind as that one. We moved up to the wharf at Point Levi opposite Quebec and commenced to unload the ship.

This was three days before the great fire that destroyed the whole city in July, 1845. Saturday night the wind was blowing a gale and the chains of the rudder were making great noise and the carpenter called to me to get up and make them fast, as they would awaken the captain. When I pulled open the hatch, the light flashed down so bright that I thought the ship was on fire. In an instant, the carpenter was beside me and called out “fire.” I ran forward to the forecastle and called the men. We were looking at the fire when out came the captain and mate dressing. The captain called “fire” as soon as he got out. He asked two of the boys to get one of the small boats and take him across the river. We landed at the Queen’s wharf and he ordered me to remain there until he came back, but our curiosity was as great as his, so I went up to the top of the stairs that led to the city. When I got there all I could see was one great mass of fire. The captain came back about eight o’clock and we rowed over to the ship. After breakfast, we drew lots to see which watch would go ashore and it fell to our lot. When we got over, we agreed to meet at the wharf at five o’clock and every one was to go where he wanted. I went to see the fort. There was a line of stairs leading to the top of the rock about one hundred and fifty feet. The entrance to the fort or citadel is erect with guns on both sides with a big mortar facing down the river and pyramids of shot and shells beside them.

At the end you come to a square court that stops you and in every way you look there is nothing to be seen but guns and port holes. It would be impossible for men to enter if a war ever took place. The guns facing down the river would sweep it for miles.

I then went to see the Plains of Abraham where Wolf fought the French and saw the narrow path up which Wolf climbed the bluff. How he ever got up there with such an army in such a short time and without being detected is a wonder and in the dead of the night getting ready to meet the French in the morning. I then went down to the city to see the effects of the fire and found nothing left but chimneys. The houses were all frame or log and the city was swept clean. The streets were paved with wooden blocks and they were burned clean. We all got back to the boat in due time and as a matter of course, as sailors do when on shore, they were near all drunk, but how or where they got the liquor was hard to tell. We were in the half deck right under the cabin when some of the men and the other boys got into a wrangle about something and made a great noise. The first thing I knew down came the captain with a rope’s end in this hand. He grabbed me by the arms and whipped me unmercifully. After he stopped, I showed him he had made a mistake and that I had not drunk any and was quite sober. I could see he was angry at all the men coming aboard drunk. The only apology he made was that he had made a mistake and then went up to second deck. Then and there I made up my mind to desert at the first opportunity. The captain’s name was Peck. He was a small, deformed creature who had fallen off the mast some time and broken his back. He was a little petty tyrant. None of the men liked him, and he and the mate **David Geiltley**, had many a spat and once he had to call the carpenter and some of the men to keep the mate from hitting him.

### Chapter II 8-11-17

Time went on and the ship was loading with timber and I began to fear I was doomed to stay on her, but one Saturday afternoon the Captain called me to take the boat and take him ashore. I took him ashore and carried his satchel along with him to a hotel where he was to stay till the ship was loaded, and ready for sea. The long looked for opportunity came at last. When I got aboard it was supper time and when the mate went in to supper, I got up my trunk which had been ready for some timer, and the other boy rowed me to the ferry boat. I got across the river and got on board the steamboat. “ Quebec ” bound for Montreal . She was a new boat on her first trip and was taking all the people that had lost their property in the great fire to Montreal free. Well, I was well provided with money. All I had was an English shilling (25c).

We left Quebec about 8 o’clock and I bid farewell to the “Clansman”.

Next day about 10 o’clock, we were in Montreal . I took my trunk to a saloon nearby and asked them to care for it until I could find a friend of mine. I wandered around all day. I had nothing to eat. About dark I went into a baker shop and bought a cake. I went down to the wharf and sat down and ate it. After dark I found an empty crockery grate and I crawled into it and fell asleep. I awoke about eleven or twelve o’clock and sat down on the wharf. In a few minutes a man came along and asked if a man had passed shortly before. I told him “no”. He sat down beside me and began to talk. I found he belonged to a ship called the “Royal Bride” from Dundee , and I had met him before. He took me aboard the ship and I slept there till morning. We had just got down to breakfast when along came the mate. “Hello, who have we got here?” “Oh” said my friend, “It’s a run away I picked up last night.” He asked me my name. I told him. “What” he said. “A son of Alex Cairncross.” I told him “yes” he was an intimate friend of my father, and I told him why I left the ship. Then he ordered me to go and get my trunk and go back home with him. I told him “no, I am going to stay in America .” He was bound to make me go back with him. I was at a loss to know what to do, so I made him believe I would go back and started off to get my trunk. I went up to the Lachine Canal . There was a boat there with steam up ready to start for Kingston . I asked the mate if he wanted a boy to work for him, telling him I wanted to go up the country. He said I could go and I went and got my trunk and in about two hours was on my way to Kingston .

We got to Ottowa. It was called “Bytown” at that time. There was only two or three houses where the Capitol of Canada is today. We entered the Rideau Canal and when we arrived at Kingston , there was a boat ready to start up the Bay of Quintet to Picton and Belville. I asked the mate if he could give me work. He looked at me then asked where I lived. I told him I had just come from the old country. He then wanted to know what place I came from. I told him I came from Dundee Scotland , that I ran away from the ship at Quebec and had come up to run on the lakes. He hired me for six dollars a month, a dollar and a half a week.

It was not long until I became a favorite with all hands, I was kept busy sweeping decks, splicing ropes and doing all kinds of light work. Winter was coming on and the lakes would be closed and there would be no work in the winter, but in the woods. I was not able to do that work, and it was a rough place for a boy. I was advised to hire out with a farmer.

I stopped off at Picton and stayed at a hotel. Next day some of the farmers came in. I told the landlord what I was after. He asked one of them if he wanted a boy to feed stock for the winter. He was a Scotchman. John Black. He had a large farm and a sawmill and generally had six to eight men working for him all the time, so he hired me at $4.00 a month for a year. I stayed with him until the summer of 1847, when I got word from my father that our family was in New York and mother wanted me to come there. She longed to see me so I settled up with Mr. Black and family, bade them goodbye and started for New York .

On the boat from Picton, I met one of the hands that was on the boat nearly two years before. He was surprised to see how I had grown nearly eight inches in that time. I crossed from Kingston to Oswego in one of the stormiest nights on the lake. We got there a little after daylight. In looking for a canal boat to go to Albany a man came up to me and asked me to drive a team for him to Albany . He wanted to give me twelve dollars a month. It was just what I was looking for, so I got my trunk and started. I got a pair of poor old horses that were hardly able to straighten to tow line, but they understood their business better than I did. They had been badly abused and not fed well. The stable was in the fore part of the boat. We had two teams and changed every six hours. The horses got nothing but oats so every time I got a chance to get any hay or straw I would get it for them and they would rather eat straw than oats.

By the time we got to Albany I had them in good order. The captain offered to give me $16.00 a month if I would come back from New York and drive for him. Father was working on a tow boat called the “Trojan” and had just got to Albany from New York about the same time I got there. I went aboard the boat and asked for him and was told he was below. I found him and after talking to him a minute, he seemed strange to me and when I told him who I was he was surprised,-I had grown so much. He would not wait to go back on the boat, but took the passenger boat and we were in New York next morning. We went up to the house and when I knocked on the door, mother came. I asked for a fictitious name, she did not know me.

We stayed home for a week. Then father and I started up for the lakes. When we got to Albany , we both shipped on a canal boat; father was steersman and I as driver, bound for Buffalo . The object my father had in mind was to go west and get a farm. When we reached Buffalo father shipped on the U. S. Revenue Cutter “ Michigan ” bound for Chicago and I on the propeller ‘Osego” bound for the same place. I ran on her until fall. We made one trip to Ogdensburgh at the head of the St. Lawrence river, the rest from Chicago to Buffalo .

About the end of September, I got a letter from home that father had gone back and they were to go to Memphis , Tenn. On one of the trips coming up from Buffalo we went into Cleveland for coal. I left the boat and got a chance to drive a team from there to Portland on the Ohio river . When I got there a boat called “The Comet” came in. She was bound for Cairo . I asked the mate for work. I went to work on her for $20.00 a month. This was my entrance to the rivers. September, 1847. The river was low and when we got to Cinncinnati we unloaded a lot of freight and loaded a lot more. We had freight for almost every town along the route. We went through the canal at Louisville where all hands went to the saloon and saw Big Jim Porter, the Kentucky giant, nearby seven feet high. One of the hands took my cup and plate and wanted to keep them. I told the mate and he made him give them back to me. We had some words about it. I told him perhaps I might

meet him before the devil got him. When we got to Cairo , I stayed on the wharf boat till midnight when the “Sultana” came down from St. Lewis for New Orleans and I got aboard.

There was only one house in Cairo and it was up on piling about eight or ten feet above the ground. There were two old steamboats used as hotels and that was all there was there at that time. I got to Memphis the next day and found my father there. The lady my sister worked for had a large plantation back from there on the Wolf River . After staying there for some time father, brother Alex and I started again on the river. They shipped on the “Conductor” to run from Memphis up the White River in Arkansas and I shipped on the “Harry of the West” which was named for H. H. Sibley, governor of Minnesota , to run up the Hatchie river in Tennessee in the cotton trade. We got no rest from the time we entered the river until we got back to the Mississippi . There was freight to go off at every plantation going down and it took a week to make the trip.

After we unloaded the boat at Memphis and had washed off the decks there were some of the water buckets and lines in bad shape. While we were idle, waiting for the freight to come, I got an old broom handle, made a marline spike and went to work fixing them up. While some of the men stood looking at me. The mate came along and saw what I was at and said “Hello, what is this you are at? “You are just the man I am after.” He went and got some rope and twine and I was kept all the next trip strapping buckets and fixing things.

I ran about a month on that boat. My father wanted me to go with him on the “Conductor.” When I told the mate I wanted to quit he got angry and blamed the mate of the “Conductor” for coaxing me off, until I told him that father wanted me. He was surprised. He called me his little game cock.” I went on the Conductor as a fireman and had for a partner one of the fireman on the river that that was called “ Wabash .”

The most of the freight was for settlers going up to take land or who had got land. They had their slaves, cattle, horses, hogs and household goods. There were no settlers until we got about 100 miles up the river. The amount of game of every description surpassed anything I could ever imagine could live together. The river was perfectly alive with all kinds of water fowl. The deer were so numerous they were killed just for their hides and we got the two hind quarters of a deer for a quart of whiskey. We got tired of venison and bought a four year old heifer for five dollars. We butchered her ourselves.

The Asiatic cholera was bad at this time and we had four deaths on that trip. Two men died in one day and we buried them at a place called the “Chickasaw Crossing.” A Frenchman and I were sent to dig the graves. We had two shovels and no pick. The ground was hard clay. We dug them as deep as we could. My brother Alex made the coffins. They were square boxes. We got the graves about four feet deep and put the boxes in and covered them up the best we could and went on up the river. When we came down the whole town of Chicasaw crossing was at the levee waiting for us. I thought here would be a “lynching bee” Jack and I got the blame for not digging the graves deeper. When they came at me I told them I was willing to dig it six or seven feet deep, but the boat would not wait for us to do it. The Captain was in bed so the mate got the blame for it. They had taken the bodies up and buried them in the cemetery. The Captain gave the man that buried them $10.00 and that settled it. If we had left them on the levee with orders to bury them at the boat’s expense.

[Missing]

### Chapter III 8-18-17

When we got to Memphis there was great excitement over the Asiatic cholera. Word came from New Orleans that people were dying off by the hundreds. Spring was coming on and my brother Alex and I started for the lakes. We went up to St Louis . They told us on the boat that they had buried fifty since they left New Orleans , and some said eighty. We went up the Illinois to La Salle on the “Prairie Bird” Alex went to work building flat boats to run ice down the river, and I went on to Chicago. The Illinois Canal was not opened yet so we “footed” up the tow path to Chicago about one hundred miles. Went to a boarding house that night and next morning I shipped on a boat called the “Rossiter” running to Green Bay , Wis. , stopping at all the towns along the coast. She carried no cabin passengers and only a few deck passengers.

The Captain’s name was **Capt. Hood** and the mate was **Jas. Wood.** We had a negro for engineer named **Mr. Fairbanks**. He only weighed 225 pounds. Nothing occurred on the trip. It was a fine one but when I got back to Chicago they gave me credit for bringing the Cholera to Chicago , as the house that I stopped in had the first case. I told them that I asked no honor for it, as it was a light load and I did not know that I had it or I would have left it where I got it.

On our second trip, I got it before we got to Milwaukee , and it raised some excitement. I was on the deck. No one would come near me. I was vomiting and purging and the cramps were about to come on when the captain asked what he could do for me. I told him to get me a glass of brandy and red pepper. By good luck, he had it. I drank a big glass of it and it was a hot dose. In about five minutes, I began to feel the effects of it. I soon began to sweat. The captain asked me how I felt. I told him all right that I was over it. I went to bed and when I got to Milwaukee I was all right, but a little weak. When we reached Green Bay . The whole Chippewa tribe of Indians was camped on the prairie between the Fox River and the Fort.

We got there about four o’clock Sunday afternoon and we no sooner tied to the dock than the boat was loaded with Indians. The top of the boiler extended above the hurricane roof. There were about a dozen Indians looking at it. There was a Half Breed explaining everything about it to them. The engineer was out on the wharf looking at them. I was sitting on the post where I had made the head line fast. I saw the negro smiling and when the Indians were examining the whistle the negro slipped aboard and blew it. Those poor Indians rolled overboard in every direction. Those who were on the side next to the river went into it and swam across to the other side and those on the other side jumped on to the wharf dropped their blankets and ran for dear life. When the whistle stopped, they all stopped in astonishment. Fairbanks came out on the wharf and I thought he would go into spasms with laughing. Talk of brave Indians, one negro scared a whole tribe.

There was one old Indian standing in the center of the wharf who never moved and had watched the whole performance, I could see by his countenance that he was angry. I went up to the negro and I pointed to the Indian. I told the negro if that Indian got him out on the prairie with nothing between but their guns, you would see if a negro would scare a whole tribe. I said; “You go up to him and see if you can scare him off the wharf.” When we were loading shingles next day, there were a lot of Indians standing around. I told Fairbanks he had better keep off the wharf as they looked some savage at him. He did.

On our way back, we stopped at Manitowoc to load shingles, I was storing them in the hold. We were called to supper and when I got on deck, I saw a schooner about a mile off; she lay in a dead calm. There was a mirage around her. I pointed it out to the mate and told him the sooner we got out of there the better, as there was a storm coming and there was no shelter there. We got supper and we pitched in and got away about nine o’clock. It was my watch below. I was not there long when I was called to the wheel to steer. Everyone on the boat was seasick but the mate and myself. The wind was blowing a perfect gale and the boat rolled so badly it was almost impossible to walk the deck. I was steering but a short time when the mate came up to the wheel house and asked me if I could fire; I could. He said he would steer if I would go down and keep up the steam or we would be lost. I pitched in and kept her a pounding. Oh, the fat old negro was sick. There were some empty beer kegs stowed on the forecastle which broke loose and two of them went down in the forecastle. With the rolling they bounced into the berths and were liable to kill some of the men. I heard them hollering “murder” I went down. It was dark and before I got the kegs up on deck. I thought I would have my legs broken. They soon went overboard. My fire got down a little, but I soon got it up again. We got down opposite Milwaukee. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good. There was a whole block of buildings on fire and it was as light as day. The captain was at a loss to know what to do, but there was no choice. It would be worse to attempt to get into Racine or Chicago. We could see the light on the end of the breakwater. All we could distinguish were the piers, at the mouth of the river, by the waves dashing over them.

We got in, but it was a great risk. Next morning we started for Chicago and got there in the afternoon. Chicago at that time was but a village three blocks wide and four blocks long. The houses were one and a half story high. The only house of any size was the Bartic Hotel, and it was burned while we were there. Two grain elevators and Fort Dearborn were there yet, but, the Fort was torn down that summer. There was nothing on the north side of the river but one or two small shanties with pigs and chickens running around them, and the McCormick reaping machine factory which was a small house about 80 by 30, with an open shed attached. We took six of the machines to Milwaukee on our next trip, -great, heavy machines, -enough for a team to haul without cutting anything.

There were no houses on the west of the river where it turned south, right at the bend was a great marsh covered with flags. On Saturday afternoon we had nothing to do as there would be no freight until Monday. The mate and I went to an auction of lots about five blocks south of the river on a perfectly level prairie. There were perhaps fifteen or twenty people there. The lots were selling at about thirty to thirty- five dollars for corner lots and twenty to twenty-five for middle ones. The mate bought two lots for fifty-five dollars. He wanted me to buy one; it might be worth something some day. I could not see it. The lots were 20 by 150 ft. The auctioneer told us that perhaps in a few years these lots would be worth more per foot than the whole lot was selling for then, and some of them laughed at him. What are they worth today? One of the firemen, quit and the engineer wanted me to take his place I told the mate I did not like to work for a negro.

The next trip to Green Bay that negro made it so disagreeable for me that when I got back to Chicago I quit although both the mate and captain wanted me to stay. I shipped on a propeller called the “Manhattan” she ran from Chicago to Buffalo in the grain trade. She had an Indian on top of her chimney with a drawn bow and arrow that made her very conspicuous all over the lakes. It was about the nicest trade I was ever in. We ran under the elevator at Chicago. The grain ran down into the hold until she was loaded. We had nothing to do until we got to Sheboygan where we got wood. Then we got on the St. Clair River. We got enough coal at Cleveland or Erie to last us while we went to Buffalo and back. We had very little return freight mostly merchandise. We were getting $16.00 a month and board.

There was nothing of importance to speak of all the while I ran on her. In a year or two after that they took her up to Lake Superior around the Sault Ste. Marie on land. She was the first steamboat on that lake, I sailed on her to the latter end of September and left her at Toledo and went from there to Cincinnati on the Canal. There I saw the greatest fields of corn in America, if not in the world. The stalks were ten feet high and the ears over a foot long. When I got to Cincinnati, I shipped on a boat bound for Memphis where I expected to meet my family. Don’t remember the name of the boat; I think it was the “Comet.”

When I got to Memphis, I thought I was home again, but when I went to the house that I had left them in the spring, they were gone. The people could tell me nothing about them further than they left there in the middle of the summer. It created a strange feeling when I found that I was all alone in the world and did not know where I had a friend or relative, but as I was not one to sit down and whine, it was get to work and find them.

I went back to the boat and returned to Cincinnati. I remembered that we had a friend in Louisville who had kept up a correspondence with my father. He was an old shipmate of his on the sea in their younger days **Andrew Fenton** by name. We passed by Louisville at night, so I had no opportunity of finding him. I made some inquiry at Cincinnati but without finding out anything. On the way down next trip, we got to Louisville about eight o’clock in the morning. The boat could not get through the canal until near noon, so I had ample time to look around. Mr. Fenton was a ship carpenter. I went to the ship yard an after looking at several of the men, that I met, I saw a man that appeared to be foreman. I asked him and he pointed Fenton out to me. I told Mr. Fenton who I was and what I was after. He told me he had received mail from Father that they had left Memphis and had moved to Smithland at the mouth of the Cumberland River in Kentucky. He directed me to his sister, as she knew better where they were. I found her and she confirmed what he told me.

We got through the canal about nine o’clock and got to Smithland about eight o’clock next morning and before the boat landed I saw father sweeping the boiler deck of a boat called he “Countess.” When he looked over to the boat I waved my hand to him. He dropped the broom and ran down to meet me. I left the boat with the understanding that I would be ready to work again when she came back up. My folks were all glad to see me, as they had no word from me for some time. I wrote them at Memphis and they wrote to me in Chicago and neither of us got the letters. Mail was not the same as it is today.

My brother Alex Just getting over the Asiatic cholera. He had worked about a month at La Salle after I left him, when he was taken sick and had a hard tussle to get over it. They would not let him stop in the house he was boarding in and hardly anyone would go near him to wait on him. Everyone was afraid of catching it. He was not as lucky as I was when I had it. He had spent all his money he had for board and doctor bills, and they kept his tool chest and clothes for the balance. After he got home, he sent the money to redeem the chest they had shipped to him, but it had been lost after staying at home two or three days. I started to find the tool chest. I went to St. Louis and there shipped on the “Prairie Bird” going up the Illinois. When I got to La Salle, the people had got the money that Alex had sent them and had shipped the chest. I went back home but he chest had not reached there and I started right back. When I got to St. Louis I shipped on a boat called “The Planter.” She was built to run up the Arkansas River in the cotton trade. I did not feel well, still I kept to work. I went to see the parties in La sale and found they had shipped it to a forwarding house in St. Louis. They gave me the name and address.

### Chapter IV 8-25-17

In coming down the river, I took the fever and ague, and to add to the misfortune, the boat broke one of her wheel shafts and we had to lay for a week until they got a new one. I was very sick, no doctor and no medicine. I shook an hour every day and the fiver drove me crazy. I got to St. Louis and went to the forwarding house, and when I asked for the chest, found they had it and had a dozen excuses whey they did not ship it. They could not get a boat going to Smithland, was the main one, although there were boats from St. Louis passing there every day.

I went down to the river and found a boat about to start to Louisville and had the chest taken to it.

When I got home to Smithland, I found the folks ready to start for Cinncinnati, as there was no work for any of us in Smithville.

It’s a long time to look back, and I cannot remember all, the incidents that occurred at that time, sixty-eight years ago, Oh, what a change. I can’t remember the name of the boat I was taking to St. Louis was just at election time. We stopped at Shawnpoetown, and after the freight was out, the mate told all those that wanted to vote to go and vote and hurry. I had no intention of going, but one of the men urged me to go and vote along with the rest. The election was in a little house not far from the river. We all crowded in and each one gave his name, residence and occupation. Here were men handing out tickets. I got one and voted along with the others. When all had voted, we gave three cheers for “Old Rough and Ready.”-President Taylor-and started for the boat. I learned afterwards that there were boat crews going up and down all along the river that voted at every place they stopped that day. They were not so particular those days as they are now.

I suffered all winter with the ague. I broke it about every two weeks, but whenever I went to work it would come back again. I took medicine enough to start a drug store quinine, calomel, blue mass etc.

In March, 1840, father was running to St. Louis and there was a passenger on the boat who gave him a cure for thee ague that never failed. It was to eat a raw onion the first thing in the morning and twenty minutes after take a drink of whiskey. It completely cured me and I grow better everyday.

The “Dr. Franklin” was lying at Cincinnati being repaired. Father shipped on her and when she was ready to start out, I shipped on her too. Mr. Harris was captain. I don’t remember the mate’s name. We called him “Washington.” We loaded freight for St. Louis and some for towns on the upper Mississippi. We had a crew of negros and a jovial set they were.

When we got to St. Louis, we unloaded; then loaded for up the river. The river was high and we had no trouble getting over the rapids at Keokuk. When we got to Galena, we lay there two days, as it was **Captain Harris’s** home. We had some trouble getting down the fever River, as the river was too narrow for boats to turn around, until we got nearly to the mouth. We had a great number of passengers for Dubuque; and we reached Read’s Landing at eh foot of Lake Pepin about four o’clock in the afternoon. The ice in the lake was still solid. We ran into it a couple times, but it proved too strong for us so we backed down and tied up for the night in the hope that the wind might raise and break the ice up.

Having read and heard a great deal about the great prairies of the West, I wanted to see them, so I started up the bluff and wandered about the country about five miles back from the river. I was very much surprised to see such a beautiful country and not a living thing on it and to think that it extended west for thousands of miles. Would it ever be settled and cultivated like the older states?

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I went to California last summer, and when I passed through the western states. I saw the settlements, cities, towns and villages all the way west. What a change in one short life-time. It was predicted at that time that there never would be a white settlement west of the Minnesota River, as people could not exist there, as the vermin were numerous in the summer and the winter so cold that a white man could not live there. I got back to the boat at supper time and told father what I had seen.

Next morning we started up the Chippewa River with a company of raftsman about forty miles to the mouth of what was called the “Red Cedar River: where it entered into the Chippewa. We got there about five or six o’clock and tied up for the night. The woods were perfectly alive with game; in going up that forty miles, I believe I saw five hundred deer cross ahead of the boat. Several shots were fired at them, but we did not get any deer. There was a piece of prairie between the rivers about eighty acres, and some one set fire to it. There were four or five Indian teepees at the edge of the woods and as soon as the grass began to burn, the Indians started a back fire, and in a short time the prairie was burned clean. That was the first I had seen of a prairie fire.

On the way down next day, a heavy snow-storm overtook us and we had to tie up. We had not been there more than tem minutes when the Indians came out of the woods in every direction, men women and children. They all stood on the bank in astonishment, as much as to say “Where in the world did you come from? It son cleared up and we started down the river.

When we got to the Mississippi, we unloaded all the freight that was to go up the river on the bank and covered it with a tarpaulin. We left it there for the Nominee to pick up. The “Nominee” was the only boat running to St. Paul besides the “Dr. Franklin.” At that time there were four or five passengers bound for St. Paul. They strapped their satchels on their backs and started for that point on foot. At McGregor, we got fifty sacks of wheat and barley. It was the first that ever was shipped from there. At Davenport, we got a lot of onions and potatoes raised on new broken land and the finest I have ever seen. When we unloaded them at St. Louis, there were more than a hundred men came and inspected that wheat, barley and onions. They admitted that they could not be beat.

We soon loaded up the hold with merchandise and the deck with passengers and their luggage. They were settlers for the new country. The river was in a good stage and we made good time. We had no trouble in getting over the rapids at Keokuk. We had some freight for every place all the way up. We ran up the St. Croix to Stillwater. There were but two houses there then. We crossed over to Hudson which was quite a village. We stopped at Point Douglas and got wood; and reached St. Paul early in the morning and laded at a stone warehouse which I understood belonged to the Hudson Bay company. We unloaded part of one load there. I let go the head line there and walked over to the bluff. I got on towards the upper flats where there was a frame building belonging to the North American Fur Company. There was nothing between the right hand side of Third St, and the river and no houses West of where Minnesota St. now is. There was a frame building on Third St., with a double porch. On the lower porch were a number of Indians smoking; and I remember the little log church that stood near the foot of Wabasha –St. . That was about the end of May, 1849. Little did I think at that time that I would ever make St. Paul my home.

We had very little freight on the next trip up but were loaded with passengers as on the trip before. People were crowding to the country. On the down trip we were loaded with furs of every description. But mostly buffalo skins. We got more lead at galena, and when we go to St. Louis, father and I quit. We had been away from home more than two months and father wanted to go home. There was a crew of negro foreman on the Dr. Franklin from Gallipolis, Ohio, that cam with us from Cinncinnati and the most of them quit and went with us. We shipped on a boat (I do not remember her name) bound for Pittsburgh. We reached home and found everybody well. We stayed at home abut a week. Father then shipped on the “Messenger” Pittsburg to Cincinnati Packet, and I shipped on the “Dewitt Clinton” She belonged to a company at Stenbenville, Ohio; and I ran on her for over a year. We ran from Pittsburgh to St. Louis in the summer and to New Orleans in the winter. We made a couple trips to St. Louis. She laid up at Pittsburgh for a month during the low water and I was kept on her making repairs, shipping clocks, painting and other work.

About the middle of September, we started for New Orleans and took on only part of a load with the intention of loading at Cincinnati. In all the time I ran on her I don’t remember an incident worth writing abut. In the summer of 1850, when she laid up at Pittsburgh on account of low water, I shipped on the “Pilot” running from Pittsburgh to Marietta and Parkensburg, carrying tobacco. It was in large hogsheads about four feet by five. It took five men to handle them. We used a big wooden maul over a foot thick with a long handle in it. One man worked the maul (it wad called a nagger head) in front of the hogshead and we put all the hogsheads in a string and let them down the levee at one time.

On one of the trips we got about two thousand water melons at Pararsburg. They were stowed away in the hold under the boilers. We loaded at Marietta with tobacco. The boat was only decked for the boilers and engines. There were four men with the watermelons and we wanted to buy one of the melons but they would neither sell or give us one. There were two of the men on watch all the time for fear someone would steal them. We boys had all kinds of schemes to get one. I made up my mind to get one of them. I got down near the stern of the boat between two of the hogsheads and crawled forward under the hogsheads (they being so large that there was space enough for me) and I brought a big one. We each had a slice, but someone carelessly left a piece of rind lying on the guard instead of throwing it into the river. One of the men in charge saw it and gave us away. Then the fight began. How did it get there; Who stole it; How did anyone get it? The men were watching and the contract with the boat was they would not be responsible for loss or breaking. The captain, and the mate and the four men came down after breakfast to investigate. They looked the boat over, but failed to find any way possible for anyone to get down to the melons. Not only that but there was not a soul on the boat knew how I got it, and I did not tell them until long after. When we unloaded at Pittsburg, there were some broken ones, and we got all we wanted. They found out if the had not been so stingy with them, the boys would have been more careful in handling the.

### Chapter V

I was in no hurry to go down Monday morning, but expecting there would be much doing. When I got down, a big pile of freight was there already. The mate was tearing around cursing a crew of strange hands, and things were not going right. When I walked up he began to give me fits for not getting down earlier. I told him to go to- and I went away. As soon as the boat was unloaded, we got two keelboats and commenced loading, but it was all light freight mostly dry goods. The boat was loaded with passengers, the hold was filled with emigrant men, women and children and there was only two feet of water in the river and the boat was down nearly twenty inches, so there was not much to run on. Everything was made ready at night, so as to be ready to start in the morning at daylight. The two barges were made fast and we floated along down slowly, just enough power to give her steerage way. We got along down past the first island then she began to grind on the bottom. Every time she stuck the barges would float down and the sternlines would give her a jerk and with he down power she would slide along for a few rods. All the men passengers were put on the barges, but she stuck at last. We were then twelve or fifteen miles from Pittsburgh. It was expected that when we got to Beaver there would be enough water for us all the rest of the way down. We had to get the spars ready to push the boat along, but the barges were in the way, so we had to let them go and wait for us at beaver, which was twenty-five miles from Pittsburgh. I knew there was no use in getting the spars because it would take so little to move her that we could hardly work them, so I proposed to take the capstan bars and get in the river and try and pry her along or take the anchor out and set it and take the line to the capstan and pull her, as it only took a little beside her own power to move hire. The mate thought the prying would be the quickest so we got into the river, fur on a side and the mate too and when we all got ready, he gave the word and we all worked together an we hosted her right along. The men that were at the bow could tell when there was water enough to float her. They told us, then we all jumped on to the guard and sat there until she stopped again. We waded in the water half the way to Beaver, twenty-five miles. At Beaver we got barges again and we got right along.

We got to Wheeling about seven o’clock and as they were t land there, the barges were let go and the bat started to make the landing. The boiler burst a hole right over the fire with a roar that could be heard for miles.

Just then out came one of the passengers on the guard and cast off his coat and vest and shoes and shirt and dived into the river head foremost, as if the water had been ten feet deep. When he struck the bottom he kicked wit his feet as if trying to swim and he rolled over. He was so slow in getting up I thought he had killed himself, but he got up and his face was bleeding. He had struck something hard. He looked around for a second, then started for the shore, feeling with his feet as if he expected t find deep water. By that time there were four or five more men in the river after him and then out came some of the women about to get in too, but just then the noise stopped and they all looked around in astonishment, wondering what it all meant. On account of the low water, the pumps had pumped a great deal of sand into the boiler and it had settled in the boiler right over the fire and burned a hole about three or four inches in diameter. Well, by good luck it was right at the levee at Wheaton where the boat landed. There was a big crowd, there then and the hole was well inspected and as a matter of course each could tell exactly how it happened. We landed the barges a little below the boat. The captain sent for the boilermakers and four men came and measured what was needed to repair it. Two of them went to work and cut a piece out about two feet square and the others got a patch to fix it and punched the river holes in it already to put on, and by daylight next morning we were ready to start out again.

We had no stops all the way down, only to wood. The barges were let go and floated down and the boat picked them up when she got to them. When we reached Cincinnati, we unloaded the barges and dropped them down to the lower end of the levee and left them there and soon started back up the river. The word came that the river was rising at Pittsburgh and when we got to Pittsburgh the river was bank high.

The big boats were getting ready for the winter. **Washington Barr** the mate of the De Witt Clinton sent me word that he would like me to go with him again. I sent him word that if I got back in time I would, so we just got back on a Friday and the Dewitt Clinton was to commence loading on Monday; so when we got unloaded and all cleaned up she was taken over to the Allegheny side and laid up. I then went and told the mate of the Dewitt Clinton that I was ready to go along. The Empire State was laying right along beside the Dewitt Clinton. The notorious **Tom Davis** was mate, one of the most tyrannical bullies that was on the rivers at that time. I asked for work. He had enough deck hands but he would like some more firemen. I told him I could do either. We loaded part and the rest we loaded at Cincinnati. What we got at Pittsburgh was mostly iron and glass. What we got at Cincinnati was pork, lard, beef and whiskey.

Next day the engineer wanted a couple of men to help him get the boilers ready. I was picked out and went to work cleaning out the fires, fixing some of the grate bars, pumping up the boilers, etc. On the third day we were ready to sail.

Just before we started the watches were set. She was a three boiler boat. There were four men on a watch, two on each side. I got a young man for a partner, **George Taylor**.

That was his first trip on the river, and I picked the watch from four to eight. There were three watches.

We got along all right going down stream, as we did not have to crowd the fires. Geo. could not stand the heat of the fires. When we started up stream I did the firing, and he passed the wood. That was before we bean to burn coal. Wood was plentiful and easier to handle.

When we got to New Orleans, after washing out the boilers and fixing up ready to start back, I was put in the blacksmith shop, making stirrups for the wheels, so I did not handle much freight. We loaded with sugar (which was shipped in hogsheads weighing from one thousand to twelve hundred pounds each and it took five men to roll one aboard) coffee, salt and cotton. We had little to do but fire and wood up, until we reached Cincinnati. From there to Pittsburgh, we had some freight for every town. It took about a month to make the round trip from Pittsburgh to New Orleans and back. It was two thousand miles each way. Nothing happened on the next two trips worth mentioning.

In going down on one trip, as near as I can remember, it was in Feb. 1852, when way below the mouth of the Arkansas river we overtook the Oregon the largest boat on the river at that time running from Louisville. She stopped to take on wood and we went down a mile or two farther and took on wood. She passed down by us and we rounded out right after her. It was just after dinner, and the engineer of the Oregon was blowing off water. What attracted my attention was the fact that the wheels had seemed to be almost stopped and there was no force to the exhaust steam. All at once she was enveloped in a cloud of steam. I noticed a man walking on the hurricane roof and he seemed to jump off the roof about six or eight feet. I called out the Oregon had blown up and the pilot called out at the same time. We all ran downstairs and got aft and lowered the yawl. The mate and two men got in the skiff and rowed to her to take a line out and land her. We ran down to her stern and two of us got a ladder and a boat ran on to her stern to shore he got to the bank. We put the ladder up to the ladies cabin and the lady passengers came down. Many of them had to be assisted. One young lady walked down that ladder with out putting a hand on it. If it had been at any other time going ashore on the gang plank, she probably would have had a “gent” to assist her. I ran up to the ladies cabin to see if there were any more persons there, and all the sights I had ever seen, it beat them all. They were eating the second dinner at the time of the explosion. The floor had burst up and the tables, chairs, tablecloths and dishes lay in a heap and the cabin was still full of steam. As far as I could see, there was no one there. If there was anyone, they must be under the wreckage. When I got down and put away the ladder Geo. and I got some of the wounded. We ran up to the cabin, got a quilt and picked up a woman that ha torn off part of her clothes where she was scalded. We laid her on the hand barrow and threw a part of the quilt over her and carried her to the cabin of our boat. When we got there all the quilts and mattresses were brought out of the staterooms and laid in two rows the length of the cabin; everybody was busy. Our passengers, men and women did everything for them. I started on another trip. When I got to the end of the gang plank I hears someone moaning. The bank was about three feet above the water. On looking over, I saw an old man in the river hanging to the root of a tree. We got hold of him and pulled him out. He was a big stout man about sixty or seventy years of age and was badly scalded. We took off his coat and vest, which he begged us to do. He had a fine gold watch in his vest with a fine chain over his neck. I took it off and without thinking handed t to a negro who was standing looking on. When we got ready to take him aboard, I picked up the coat and vest, but when I looked for the negro and the watch, a negro girl that was there pointed to him running across the field with it. We got the man aboard our boat and helped him up to the cabin. Then we started for the next one. Just at that time the steamer Araquis came up bound for Louisville and they all pitched in to help and took all the passenger and members of the crew that wanted to go back up the river. The Oregon had both guards forward loaded with fat cattle. When she blew up, they were swept over board. As far down the river as we could see, the negroes of the plantation were fishing them out and killing them. I guess they had a feast.

We had about got things cleared up when it was discovered that the cabin of the Oregon was on fire. One of the stoves of the cabin that was among the wreckage had started it unseen. It was four o’clock then and the engineer called me to get up steam, which we did as quickly as we could, but before we got away the whole of her upper works was in a blaze. We got to Vicksburgh the next morning abut seven o’clock and carried ashore fifty bodies. We laid them in a row on the levee and covered them with sheets. We got a couple of doctors there who went with us to attend to the injured onboard. There was two or three more dead taken ashore at Baton Rouge and the rest went to New Orleans. On our return trip we got a dray load of tar and a load of rosin. When I saw it come on board I told the boys there was something up. There were two other boats bound for Cincinnati, the J. J. Chenawith and the Sparrowhawk. The Chenawith was a little boat, the fastest of the there, but she carried the mail that delayed her a little at every town. We were all to leave about the same time, but we started about two hours before the others and we did not see either of them until about noon the next day, when the Chenawith came in sight. At the first wood pile we got a wagon load of nine knots. The weather was beginning to get warm and when the wind was from the South the heat of the fires was terrible. I saw by the actions of my two partners that they could not stand it, for when they filled up their fires they would perspire and then run out on the guards to cool off. I told them it would sicken them and so it did. I had four different partners before we reached Memphis where the weather got cooler. The other watch had the same trouble. There were a lot of coal boat men and flat boat men coming up the river who took their places.

### Chapter VI

I came on watch shortly after the Chenawith came in sight and she was gaining on us. We had pretty good wood mostly cottonwood, and I piled on the pine knots and I helped the men on the other side as much as I could and we kept her singing at the safety valve right along, but I could not get the other man to stick to it. They had to go out and cool off and then the fire would die down by but by the time our watch was off we had left the Chenawith. The Sparrowhawk had not made her appearance yet. We stopped to wood about ten o’clock and everybody pitched in, including the flat boat men, and we were not over half an hour in taking on twenty five or thirty cords of wood. I went to bed and when I was called at four o’clock, the Chenawith had passed us and was about a mile ahead and the Sparrowhawk was in sight about a mile and a half behind and gaining on us. The pine knots were all gone, and they had started on the tar, having knocked the head out of two barrels and having one on each side. They dipped the end of the stick into the tar and then threw it in the fire. That I saw was a poor way as all the tar was at the back of the fire which clogged the fire and stopped the draft. I went to work and sprinkled the tar over the wood and I got along fine with it, but we were daubed all over with tar and the others could not was it off their hands. There was considerable of a kick about it, but I had been there before and knew how to wash it off. The tar lasted more than twenty-four hours. After I got the fires in good shape it was not long before we had her singing at the safety valve. When the engineer came on he came forward and said “Billie, if we pass the Chenawith before we get to Vicksburg, I will give you a new hat when we get home.” I told him all right he could hand a wrench on the valve string but I did not want him to hang the anvil on it. We did get long with the tar. When I came on watch at four o’clock next morning, the tar was about all gone, barrels and all, and then we started on the rosin. We broke the barrels all p and burned them first. When we filled the fire, threw a small shovel full on the wood, and it did not last long.

The three boats were about evenly matched. Some time one was ahead and sometimes another. They would catch up and run side by side for miles. One would stop to wood or freight and the others would pass. I think we were somewhere near Helena, Arkansas, on our evening watch, when my partner, asked me what had become of all the pork in the hogshead in a freight pile near us. He said it was more than half empty. I went and looked and found it was so. Someone had left a part of the head on the deck and Geo. Went to put it on when he saw it. I called the other men from the other side. I was certain some of the other watches had burned it. We all agree to say nothing about it. It was a hogshead and there must have been eight or ten hundred weight in it. It was the whole sides of the largest hogs and each must have weighed over a hundred pounds. There was not a speck of lean meat in it, and with a sharp knife it would only take a second to cut it up so it could be throw into the fire. When brought aboard the Cincinnati, it was put away in the after part of the deck to be taken to Memphis and when we got there it foul not be gotten out and therefore was carried past.

When the next watch came on at eight o’clock, I spoke to them about it and they admitted they had burned a couple pieces, but they did not think it would be missed. I told them it was more than half empty, they went and looked and were surprised. Some of them thought it was lost freight others thought it had been miss shipped but I told them it was for Memphis and we would soon be there. The question was what to do about it. I told them when it was found out, someone would wish he was in heaven for there would be “hell” to pay. The only thing for us to do was to make a clean sweep of it. One said to throw the hogshead overboard. I told them “No, let the hid go with the carcass”,

When we came on watch next morning everything was cleaned up. I wonder how they could get away with it without some of the engineers on watch smelling it or knowing it. When the other boats passed, they could smell it and that gave the repot that it was ham we were burning.

Next day after dinner, we could see Memphis in the distance, and I told George that we were near Memphis and we would go forward and see what would be done abut the bacon. It was a fine day and sat down on the bitts on the front. George sat down on the stage plank. When we got to the head of Pres. Island about a mile below Memphis, the mate called out “below there.” From the hurricane deck one of the deck hands answered. Get that hogshead of bacon out forward ready to go ashore.” The deck hand called a couple of the men to help him and went aft it was not long before they came back and called to the mate. He came and looked over the hurricane roof and asked what they wanted. “Can’t find it. “What can’t find it? Get out your blockhead, get a bucket and see if you can get water I the river.” Down he came with a hop step; and jump and went around in behind the wood pile. He stopped all at once and stood amazed. Then he went around to the other side of the boilers up the stairs and brought down the shipping clerk. He was sure it had not been put anywhere that he knew of. They asked the firemen if they had seen it. Yes, it was three two or three days ago, but hey did not know anything about it. Someone must have rolled it over board. What surprised me was that none of the deck-hands missed it, although we took on wood after it disappeared. When we landed, the man that it was shipped to came aboard looking for it. Well it had been put ashore somewhere in mistake, but they would look it up or pay for it. After we left Memphis an investigation was made and it was about settled that someone had thrown it overboard, as the cursed stuff was smelling anyhow. When I got off watch at eight o’clock and was going aft, the chief engineer met me. “See here, bill, you know what became of that pork.’ Do you think there is nobody on board knows but me? “Yes, but they wont tell,” “then, why should I tell?” “I believe you fellows burned it.” “Well, If you believe that, all right, but I want you to understand that I never touched it, and if burned, it was not our watch.” I think that accounts for the other watch keeping up steam some of those nights.” One made the remark that he smelled pork or something burning, but he thought it came from the cook house. Next day it was settled that we had burned the bacon and the price of it was to be kept out of our wages so that day at dinner that if we had to pay for it, we would strike and leave the boat at Cairo. It was agreed that I should tell the engineer and se what he said. I went and told him that we had agreed to quit rather than pay for the bacon when we got to Cairo “Oh,” he said, “let the boat pay for it she got all the benefit of it.” And that, settled it. In going up the Ohio, it was “which and t’other” all the way up. Sometimes one boat and sometimes the other and when we got to Cincinnati, we were not more than three hours apart.

Four of us were went to work to wash the boilers out and fill the. When that was done, I was set to work to grind one of the exhaust valves. I was working away, when some men came along carrying a piano. My back was toward them. The mate came over to me and catching me by the arm told me to take hold of that piano and help them. It was his custom when he told any of the men to do anything to catch them by the arm and pinch them and men had shown me their arms were blue with it. I had seen one young fellow nearly crying, his arm was black where pinched, and made up my mind that if ever he pinched me I would hit him with the first thing that came to hand. When he spoke to me he came up behind me and never spoke until he took hold of my arm before he spoke, I felt him pinch me. There was a big wrench, about two feet long that I had used in taking the valve apart near me. He had hardly spoken the work’s when I made for him, and I swore an oath if he pinched me I would spatter his brains on the deck. I took him so quickly that he was completely surprised, for I guess I was the first to resent his cruelty. He jumped and his lip trembled. The engineer was working at the engine on the other side of the boat. He burst out with a “ha, ha , ha,” that ain’t no country hoosier, **Tom** **Davis**, that man knows more about steamboating than you do.” The mate threw a withering glance at him that would petrify a wooden statue. I knew he would come back at me the first chance he could get, and I had my mind made up to keep an eye on him.

In about fifteen minutes he came back to the engine room, looked around and went out again. The laughing engineer went back to the wheel house where the carpenter and one of the engineers were working. In a few minutes, the mate came back, he looked around then marched over to me. “See here young man, if you can do what I tell you, I have no use for you. You go to the office and get your money.” “All right, I am always ready to do what I am told, but you can’t tell a man what to do without pinching him and abusing him.” “I did not pinch you.” “ I just felt it, and if you had pinched me as I have seen you pinch some of the men, there would be only one of us here now. I would have killed you or you would have killed me.” I picked up my jacket and went aft to get my clothes. Just as I got to the door of the wheel house, the engineer came out and asked if I was done with the valve. I told him I guess so. “Why what is the matter?” I told him I was discharged he took me by the arm. “You go back and finish the valve and I’ll see about this.” He went out forward and he and the mate had a right up and down row and nearly got to blows. He came back and said: “there is never a time that I take a man to help me, but that mate would take him away or interfere with him some way or other, and the more I put up with it the worse h is. He is getting so that one would think he owns the boat,-petty tyrant.” “Well, it is just the way, give a beggar a horse and he will ride him to hell, and give an ignorant fool a little authority and he becomes a petty tyrant.” After finishing grinding the valve and putting together again, we were getting ready to start for Pittsburg.

Just three or four days before we came to Cincinnati, there was a mate named **Ed** **Campbell**, another petty tyrant. He and the crew were up at the office getting their pay, it was dark and they were all standing on the guard and closely as they could stand. He was leaning on the side of the office windows when someone drove a knife in his heart and he dropped dead with scarcely a groan, and although there were fifteen or twenty men there who knew what was the matter with him, some of them thought he had fainted. Two of the men pulled him along the guard and left him there. It never was known who did it. The men were all talking abut it when one of them made the remark that some of the mates that abused their help would get their “medicine” if they kept on with their abuse, and I said: “You bet they will” and it was spoken so tom Davis could hear it. We started for Pittsburg and almost every town all the way up there was a little freight to unload.

### Chapter VII

At Pittsburg we were paid and Geo. And I quit and a good many of them drew also. We stayed at home for three days and then we shipped on the Diadem loading for St. Louis. Iron, glass, nails, glassware was our load. **Joe Davis,** Tom’s brother, was mate, but a far different man. He was no “bully” but a plain man; attended to his duties without any noise or bluster. We shipped as deckhands and had a fine trip’ the water was high and we went over the rapids in Louisville. At St. Louis, Joe hired a gang of Irishmen who had former a gang to unload the boats. There were about fifteen or of them. We placed two barrels on end and put a hatch on them. One stood on it and there the nail kegs on deck and the rest carried them and put them on it. I was on the hatch and we could keep the men carrying until about the middle of the forenoon. Then it got too far to carry them from the after part of the hold that we could not keep the men going who were carrying them ashore. The mate sent an extra man down to help us. The one we got was a husky young fellow. When he got down he did not want to do anything, but walked back and forward whistling. The other bys complained about it. I told one of them to take my place on the hatch and I could carry. I told him he would have to come his regulars. It was none of my business. I was not the boss. I told him I was the boss down here and if he did not want to work, he would have to get out. I took hold of him by the arm to make him get out. He caught me by the breast and pushed me back over a pile of iron and got on top of me. He tried to catch me by the. I got my foot under him and I gave him a kick that threw him up against the keelson and before he could recover himself, I pounded him right and left with all my might until he bellowed like a bull. Down came the men about half a dozen of them and wanted to know what was the matter. He told them that I had licked him. One of them wanted to know which one of us was it. He turned around to show him. There was a pile of half buggy axles lying there and I picked up one and struck the keelson with it and called to them to get out, or I would kill every everyone of them, and they got out and did not stand on the order of their going. The mate was on shore when the row commenced, and it was all over when he came aboard. He came in the hold and wanted to know what the trouble was. I told him how it was. He began to scold because I did not tell him, and he would have sent him ashore and he expected there would be more trouble, as the whole gang was on fire about it. I told him if there was some of them would be hurt.

When we went to dinner, the laborers were all out on the forecastle eating, and we deckhands were along side of the boilers. I had abut finished my dinner when a middle aged man, one of them, came along and whispered to me look out, as some of them were making threats at me. I laid down my plate and walked out forward and bean to roll up my sleeves. “I understand some of you are going to whip me.” Now if anyone of you wants to take a turn out of me either for fun or for money, either here or ashore, now is your chance; but I want you to understand that no d d man that ever walked the deck of a boat will “soldier’ on me. He will have to do his share of the work, or he will get out or he will be a better man than I am.” None of them made a move or said a word. I went back and finished my dinner. Another one came as we were about to go to work again. He wanted to know just what the trouble was all abut. I explained it to him and the other boys stated that was the truth. He said if that was the case that is the fell would have to get out of the gang.

We loaded up with bales of black hemp some bales of fur and started back.

The next day at dinner, the deckhands were along side of the boilers and the fireman were a little further aft on the guards, one was a small man and the other a big stout fellow. The big one had taken the little man’s cup and knife and plate and was eating off them. He told the little man if he made a move or fuss he would slap his mouth for him. Something struck me, and I was on my feet in a second. I walked over to them and told the big fellow to give the little fellow his cup and plate. He said it was not my put in and I should go and mind my own d d business. I looked him right in the eye and I repeated to him; “Give that boy his cup and plate.” He saw I meant what I said, and he shoved them over to him. I took hold of him under the arms and I lifted him up set him right before me. I asked him if he ever saw me before. He said he did not think he had. “Didn’t you run on the Comet from Cincinnati to Cairo about four years ago:” he made no answer. “You took my cup and plate. The same way you did this boy’s now, and when I asked you for them, just before I left the boat, you were going to slap my mouth.” “I told you then I would meet you before the devil got you and you threatened to kick me ashore. Just try it now. I told him I did not think it worth while to dirty my hands on him, but if I saw another trick like that one I would pound his head to a jelly.

At St. Genevieve we got a lot of blooms and a lot of barrels of sand. The blooms were six inches square and four or five feet long and weighed about five or six hundred pounds each. We put them on hand barrows. I got four of the boys to put one on my shoulder and I carried it aboard. The mate met me as I got to the end of the stage plank. “Hold on, hold on.” He said. “If you drop it, it will go right down thru her.” I stood there until he had another man build a crib of cord wood about two feet high for me to lay it sown in. “Don’t you do that again.” And I did not. The barrels of sand were as heavy as the blooms and it took four of us to roll one aboard.

We had nothing to do after we left St. Genevieve but wood till we got to Pittsburg. It was about the first of December, when we got ready to start from there to New Orleans, and that was the hardest trip I ever made on the rivers.

The night we left Pittsburg it froze so hard that when we reached Wheeling there was about an inch of ice nearly all over the river, so the boat had to lay up until the river was clear again, an how long that would be no one could tell. It might be a week, and it might be a couple of months. There was only one way to do, it was to go back home. We tried to get a team to haul us to Pittsburgh, but we could not get one. There was only one alternative, that was to foot it. It was only ninety-five miles.

The days were short, so we got up long before daylight got breakfast and the cook put up for each of us a lunch-crackers and meat. A kind of sandwich and we started. There were ten of us. We got to a village about noon and sat in a barroom and ate our lunch and got a glass of beer or a cup of coffee whichever each wanted. We had made over twenty miles the first half day. Did we walk? No, when we came to a good piece of road we would start a kind of a dog trot and keep it up for more than a mile, and it seemed to ease us from the steady tramp.

We reached another village about eight o’clock at night and got supper and all turned in. We told the landlord we wanted an early start in the morning, and we got it. We got breakfast and started a little after six o’clock. We intended to tackle the dog trot the same as the day before. At noon when we stopped for dinner, we were forty miles from Pittsburg, we were getting tire. It was doubtful if we could make it that day. We got dinner and kept up the old gait, and when dark came on we had ten or twelve miles yet to go. There was no place to stop until we were five miles from town, and when we got there the lights of the furnaces could be seen. Well we stopped and had a couple of glasses of beer then put out for town. When we got to the end of the bridge crossing the Monengahela we sat down to rest, but I wished we hadn’t. I was so stiff when we got up that I thought I wouldn’t get home. I got home after eight o’clock got supper and mother got a pan of hot water and put my feet into it and lathered them for nearly half an hor’ then I went to bed, but I did not walk much for two days afterwards.

We were home about two weeks, when the river opened and I got word that we were to start up again. We took a boat to Wheeling, got there about four o’clock. We had nothing to do but to wood and stand watch until we got to Cincinnati. We loaded up with whiskey, pork, lard and beef. After we finished loading about noon, the stage plank was hauled aboard and everything all ready to start, but no sign of starting. I wondered what they were waiting for, as it was something out of the ordinary. About five o’clock, the Pittsburg Packet came down and landed at Covington which was unusual. In a short time a man came aboard in a hurry and ran up to the cabin. The man and the Capt. Went to the hurricane roof and the bell tapped to start. We let go and ran across to Covington and got on about fifteen negroes, a bunch that a man was taking down to New Orleans for sale. They were all the way from eight to twenty years old. There was one girl about seventeen or eighteen years old that if she had been out anywhere no one would take her as having any negro blood in her. She was such a light mulatto. All the poor wretches seemed to be content with their lot but this girl. She would run away if she got a chance. I heard her say. We had nothing to do but wood and stand watch until we got to New Orleans. We reached here in the night time and next morning down came about 200 negroes with three white men.

When they came to the boat. The mate stopped them and they marched two and two. They counted off twenty of them and they came aboard and went to work, but they took it easy, I was working in the hold about nine o’clock when the mate came down. “Bill” he said I want to get about half a pail of whiskey” I went to treat those negroes and get them to work or we wont get loaded today.” As it would take a month’s wages to buy enough, I told him to get a pail and I rolled a barrel on to a truck and sprung the bung and filled the pail a little more than half full. The mate took it up and put it on the capstan with a little glass and told them to drink, but if any got drunk he would send them to the whipping post, and the stood back a little way and watched them. They soon began to sing and the freight began to move. The mate came down with a pail of water to fill up the barrel and when I saw him I burst out laughing, for we put that muddy water into the barrel, it would give us away; he might as well go and tell them that he took it. “Why man we never touched it; it leaked out.” We got unloaded just before dark all but two or three hours work that was left for the next day. The mate gave each of them another drink just as the gang came marching up the levee. When the poor fellows lined up on the levee and then turned in line after the rest and marched off. We finished unloading next day and commenced loading. We got about a hundreds bales of cotton which was put in the hold, a lot of salt, coffee, rice and molasses. We had no deck load, so when we got about fifty miles up stream to a plantation we got a lot of sugar in hogsheads. Each one had from twelve to fifteen hundred weight in it. It took five of us to roll one aboard. They were put in the deck room and set on end. There were holes in the heads to drain the molasses off and before we got to Cincinnati, the molasses was two inches deep all over the deck.

### Chapter VIII

A little above Baton Rouge, we met the first ice, and stopped to take on wood. There was an old negro there who said he had lived there for seventy years and that was the first time he ever saw ice in the river. There was some dispute about the price of the wood, and he sent one of the negroes for his rifle and swore he would shoot any an that would let go the head line that was made fast to a tree. I was sitting ready to let it go whenever I got the order. I untied the rope and left it wound around the tree and started on board, and as I passed the man I said, “If anyone wants to let that line go, they can do it themselves.” He looked at the tree and saw the line lying there and thought it was still fast. As soon as I was aboard they began to back out and when he saw the rope sliding past him he threw down the gun; then he and the negro got hold of it and hung on to it until it pulled them to the edge of the river, and they had to let go. Then he ran up and got the gun, but we were out in the middle of the river and we all got into shelter. The old man kept shaking his fists at us as long as we could see him.

From that on until we reached Cairo, we were plowing thru floating ice. It cut all the iron off the bow of the boat. Then we had to replace it with plank. We cut up the bucket plank into two foot lengths, and at every landing and wood pile we got into the yard and spiked the pieces on, This is one thing that I have often remarked; in a crew of men, a man who was always willing intelligent and handy at anything that was to be done was always called upon to do it, while the useless cuss could sit around and do nothing and get the same wages, but labor just like any other commodity It is just worth what you can get it for in striking on those planks my hands were so cold and numb that I could not tell whether it was my head or my hat I was scratching. We got out of plank before we got to Memphis. We reached there at night and had to get some planks. It was impossible to hire a team, so there was only one alternative, that was to carry them, so we had to go to the sawmill at the mouth of the Wolf River and that was nearly a mile from the boat.

We had a darkey and two lanterns to guide us for it was pitch dark. When we got there we each got a white oak plank ten feet long, a foot wide and two inches thick. Everyone carried it to suit himself. Geo. And I put ours together and each took one end and when the others saw us most of them did the same. But, if it was a lamb at the lifting, it was an old sheep at the laying down.

After we started out the carpenter and I got to work to cut them up wit a big cross cut saw, each plank made five pieces. We cut two planks up and I told the carpenter that perhaps the ice might stop running and we would not need them, so we bored holes for the spikes.

We stopped for wood before we got to Randolph and put on some of them and before we got to Cairo, the ice quit running, and I was glad of it, for my hands were swelled with the cold and so stiff that I could hardly shut them. All along the river the wood piles were a good way off from the river on account of the water being low and very often we had to wade thru mud over our shoes, although when wooding I had to help the carpenter.

On the way up before we got to Memphis, the great Swedish singer and Barnum passed us on the Talleyand, one of the Louisville fast boats. They stood out on the ladies guards, and we had a good view of them. We passed them at Memphis and they passed us again before we got to Cairo.

There is one incident worth mentioning that I have omitted. Just after leaving Vicksburg, I noticed the mate go down in the hold thru the forward scuttle, and I could not see what he went down for. That night when I was called at twelve o’clock to go on watch in feeling around for my boots, my head came over the hole where the tiller rope came thru. I smelled a strong odor of cotton burning. I pulled on my boots and ran to the hurricane roof. The mate was just coming on watch, and I told him the cotton was afire in the hold. We came down and he cautioned me to keep quiet, as an alarm would raise a panic. We got back and I took off a small hatch at the very stern and went down. The hold was full of smoke. I got down on my hands and knees and crawled along under the smoke close to the floor. I could see the light about half way to the back and I went back and told him I had found it. We got a couple of pails of water and I went down and shoved the pail forward on the floor with my hands until I got to the fire with my hands until I got to the fire and put it out. It was right between two bales. I left the pail there and got out as fast as I could and not a minute too soon, for I was nearly suffocated before I got out. I ran a great risk but I made it. When I got out, some of the deck passengers were up and only that I assure them that the fire was all out, there would have been trouble. I firmly believe that the mate set that fire in order to burn the boat and get the insurance. I spoke about it to him some time afterwards and he said it was a d—d pity we did not let her go, she was getting old anyway.

We were done nailing on the plank on the bow and now we had to repair he wheels that had been damaged by the ice every time we stopped. Above Cairo on the Ohio, there is a sand bar that extends about 18 miles. When I was on watch the bell tapped to heave the lead, and it was a bitter cold night. I commenced to heave and found two fathoms , Mark Twain, or twelve feet of water. I kept on heaving until the lead line got so stiff with the ice that I could not use it to the fire doors and the **wed** it while I used the other. I had to slap my hands around my shoulders or stick them under my vest to keep them from freezing. They kept me at it for nearly an hour and I was about giving up when the bell tapped to stop. George got a pail of water and heating the poker red hot put it in the pail and warmed it up a little. I put my hands in it until they got warm; my arms were stiff with the cold. There were five of us on a watch and none of them could heave the lead and if they could, I question very much if they could under such conditions . Before we got to Cincinnati, we got both wheels in pretty good shape. There was considerable ice coming down the river but it was so broken that it did no damage. When it came over the falls at Louisville, it was all broken up.

After we left Cincinnati, we had freight for every place until we got to Wheeling. We had been about two days and nights without rest for when we left one place, we had to get the freight out forward ready to put off at the next place. When we left Wheeling, it was out watch below and Geo. And I went to bed. I told him that we had been on watch for forty-eight hours, and I was not going to kill myself. I wanted to get some rest. Well, the captain wanted the boat cleaned up before we got into port. I told him to have the watch that was on clean up and when we came n we would do the same. He went away and in a few minutes he came back and wanted to know if we were going to get up. I told him “no” and if he called us again I would hit him over the head with the first thing I could get hold of. It was but a few minutes when he came back, and just as he began to talk, I reached over and hit him over the head with the heel of a boot he roared like a bull and ran and told the mate that I hit him on the head with a hammer. The mate came back and told us if we did not want to work to go to the office and get out money. I told him that was alright, we would get a sleep. Then we went to the office and when the clerk wanted us to sign the receipt for our wages he was short some four or five dollars. I wanted to know how, he figured it out. He said it was $25.00 between Pittsburg and Cincinnati and $30.00 between Cincinnati and New Orleans. I told him when we shipped it was for $30.00 between Cincinnati and New Orleans. I told him when we shipped it was for $30.00 for the round trip and we would take nothing less. He said we couldn’t help ourselves, and I told him I thought we could. When we got to Wellsville we got off and the mate wanted is to go on up and I could see by his friendly talk that he did not blame us. We were there about an hour when the Buckeye State came along and we got on her and were in Pittsburgh two or three hours before our boat. We went to a Justice of the Peace next day and sued the boat for full amount of our wages and the summons was served on the captain.

A day or two afterwards, we were walking along the levee and the captain called us and we went down to the boat and he was very angry that we had sued him. He would not have had it done for ten dollars. Why did we not tell him? I asked him why didn’t the mate or the clerk tell him? He said he always wanted to treat his men right; I asked if he knew when he treated his men right, was it right to make men work 36 or 48 hours when there was no need of it, and told him to tell some one that don’t know, and we left as soon as we got our cash.

George quit the river and went to his home in Detroit, Michigan. We had run together for nearly two years. I did not hear anything from him for nearly thirty years; then I heard he was captain on one of the big boats on the lakes running between Buffalo and Duluth. I then shipped on the Messenger, Pittsburg and Cincinnati packet. I ran on her for about a month with **Jim McKenzie** as mate. On the down trip we were waiting for the head clerk to come aboard. He was talking to a man on the levee just at the end of the stage planks. There were two planks out and the mate ordered us to take the after plank in. I took hold of the plank and pulled it apart and as I did so the clerk jumped on it. I did not see him and he nearly fell into the river. As he passed me on his way coming aboard, he gave my head a shove and said something, but I paid no attention to it. When I went aft he came along and wanted to know why I tried to throw him into the river. I told him I did not try to throw him into the river. He said I did. I told him I did not see him when he stepped on the plank and if he gave me any of his talk I would throw him into the river. He told me to go to the office and get my money; he did not want me on the boat. I told him he did not hire me and he had no right to discharge me. He went away and the mate came down and told me to get my pay and quit. I said that is a nice way to do to –charge a man for doing what he was told. He said he knew it, but he could not help it. I went and got what was coming to me. When he handed it to me, he said “Young man, I’ll know you again.” I put my fist up to his face and I told him if ever I got my hand on him he would know me as long as he lived. “You think you are getting on me by having me discharged. I want to go ashore as there will be mates of some f the boats after me when they know I am idle for I am no stranger on the river.”

### Chapter IX

When I got to Cincinnati, the Buckeye State” was there ready to start out for Pittsburg. As soon as I got ashore the mate called me and asked me where I was going, I told him. He asked me if I wanted to work. I said, “Yes”, he said come on here and in an hour I was on my way back up the river again.

The next trip when we got back to Cincinnati, Jenny Lind and Barnum were there giving a concert and they got the steamer Messenger to wait for them until the concert was over, to take them to Pittsburgh. This put the Captain of the “Buckeye State” on his ear, as if they had not done that he would get them next day. He told Barnum that he would be in Pittsburgh before the Messenger although the Messenger had ten hours the start of him. Next day everything was ready; the mail and express was aboard before ten o’clock, and on the tap of the clock, we backed out and she made good time wooding and coaling. Everyone pitched in’ we were delayed a little the next morning with fog, but we did not lay up. We kept along slowly and when we got in sight of Pittsburgh, the Messenger was just landing. She was only half an hour ahead of us. The next trip we went down to Louisville. I understand we were to try to beat the Telegraph N Two’s time from Louisville to Cincinnati. We got down there at night and early next morning we started up and made good there at night and early next morning we started up and made good time, but when we reached Madison, we saw we could not make the time. At Madison we took on two hundred barrels of pork.

There was one of the hands on the other watch who was a regular pugilist and whenever he got an opportunity to had to show the scientific boxing, and he often hit just to show how hard he could hit a man, and when anyone resented him he would get angry and threaten to whip them. As we were getting the pork aboard, each one had to help me to pile the barrels in the deck room. When he came along I told him to help me with a barrel. They were three feet high and when he took hold of the end of the barrel he could not lift it that high. That gave him away, he was nothing but gas.

When we got to Cincinnati, we got out the stage plank and the mate told someone to get the bolts that held the plank from slipping overboard. They were under the cabin stairs. I ran out and got the, and he met me and demanded that I give them to him. I shoved him aside and told him I could put them in myself. This offended him greatly, as all hands were there and some of them gave a kind of a laugh. The mate ordered us to dinner and when he went away the gentleman came up to me and asked whey I did not give him the bolts when he asked me for them. I told him because I could put them in myself. He gave me a little tap on the chest, saying that for two cents he would slap the mouth off me. Before he had time to wink, I struck him right under the eye and his head struck the deck, and when he got up I shot it to him right and left, until he hollered “enough.” Then one of the boys went up to him and said he would give five dollars to slap Bill’s mouth. Some of the others joshed him that the smallest man of the crew could whip him. We went to dinner, and when we came forward to start work, the mate asked about him, as he was not there. One of them told him that the fellow had struck a snag. I never saw him afterwards.

In coming up from Madison, just before we got up to the landing, one of the hands got a fife and I got a small drum and we marched back and forth playing. The only tune he could play was Yankee Doodle and I never placed a drum before, but we made a noise that sounded all right onshore. The papers came out that night abut the Buckeye State coming into port with colors flying and a bank playing on the hurricane roof.

On the way up, we landed at Steubenville, and took off some freight. She backed out and had just got headed up stream when another man and I were going aft and Just as we got to the after part of the boilers, the connecting pipe burst with a report like a cannon and the noise of the steam was deafening. I saw what it was and ran forward and got in the forward scuttle to get pails, but I could hardly get them, as there were three or four men wanting to get down there but after I had pounded their legs with one of the pails they got out and I got three or four draw buckets. I motioned to some of the men to come on, then I drew a pail of water and threw it in the fire. When I got them to putting out the fire I ran forward and got hold of the anchor, slipping the crossbar, attached one of the head lines to it and three or four of us threw it overboard. I took the line to the bitts, and soon had her checked up. I then ran up the hurricane roof to get the yawl, to get a line out ashore. When I got up, the Capt. Caught me and I told him the connecting pipe had burst. When I got on the guard of the ladies cabin, there were a lot of ladies who id not know what had happened. They thought one of the boilers had burst. I told them what the trouble was, and that there was no danger. I slipped down one of the fenders, lowered the yawl, got into it. I had hard work to keep the passengers out of it and had to threaten them with one of the oars. I pulled the yawl forward by the hold of the guards and then took out the other head line. Two of the other deckhands helped me. We got up the anchor by taking the line to the capstan; then we landed her at the bank. When everything was settled, the fires out and the steam down, I was standing talking to one of the men when the Capt. put his hand on my shoulder. I looked around, and he said, “Boy, you are worth a thousand to a man on a boat.” “Yes” I said or half the money. He said he saw all that went on, that it was bad enough, but it might have been worse, if it hadn’t been for my work. After everything got cooled off the Engineer put a plate on the end of the broken pipe and we got up steam again and started to Pittsburg with one wheel. It was slow progress, but we got there and we got ready to start on schedule time on the down trip. I worked on her until the end of July, and I went to Wisconsin to take a claim, for I wanted to go farming. When I left, both the mate and captain bade me goodbye and said if I ever came back on the river they would have a berth for me. I shipped on a boat to St. Louis and then shipped on the Galena to galena and took the stage to Madison, Wisconsin. I had some friends living southewest from there in Dane county. I went there and got a claim, a quarter section. I had oak openings and was good land with meadows and timber with boiling springs of fine water. That was in the summer of 1851. Think of Government land there at that time and look at the change since them. Where is there any government land now?

I worked there through haying and harvest, getting fifty cents a day for haying and a dollar a day for harvesting with a cradle. I went back to Galena. The fall rains had made the roads almost impassable. There were eleven-passengers, eight of them being raftsman from the Wisconsin River that had rafts going down and they were going down ahead of them to find a market for the logs. The regular time for the trip was ten hours, but on this occasion it took twenty-four. We got to Mineral Point at three o’clock and had dinner half way, and the worst part of the road yet to travel. The horses never got faster than a slow walk. We got to Squire Sampstan’s at nine o’clock for supper. From there to Galena was eighteen miles and it took nine hours. We had to get out and walk at two or three places. The cause of the roads being so bad was the hauling of heavy loads from the lead mines at Mineral Point to galena. Although it took a long time, I must say I never had as enjoyable a night’s journey. The night went by with songs and chatter. Some of the men told of comical incidents and others would sing songs and all would cheer and I sang a comic Irish song. One of theme suggested that perhaps the lady might entertain us with a song. Her husband said as the rest of s had been so good that she should sing a Scotchsong and when she had done, there was not a whisper; it seemed as though the horses had stopped to listen. The man beside me asked me if I had a pin, and I told him no. he said “I wished some one would stick a pin in me so I would know if I am dreaming or awake.” Then we all spoke out and everyone admitted it was beautiful. I was satisfied that the lady was a professional singer, and before we got to our journey’s end, she sang another just as good.

About six o’clock that evening there was a boat came in on her way to St. Paul, and I shipped on her. I was surprised how the country had settled up in three years from the time I came up in the Dr. Franklin in forty-nine. On the down trip, we got a lot of lead at Dubuque, and some at Galena. I became sick before we got to St. Louis, and was hardly able to do anything. I stayed in St. Louis a few days with an old friend, and started there as a passenger. After we started, the crew was all forward and they were choosing the watches. After they had settled about the watches, the mate asked who was to have the lead. No one spoke, “What, no one.” Well, I am in a h—of a fix.” I spoke up and told him I would tend to it for him. All right, if I would he would not ask me to do anything else, and would pay me the same as the rest of the men. I had my hammock with me and I hung it under the cabin stairs and had no trouble in getting from it when the bell tapped. I had three of the deckhands taught to cast the lead before we got to Cincinnati, so I had nothing to do nearly half the trip.

As soon as I got well, I took the contract to take the engines and boilers out of the Mohawk and put the chimneys up again. I made out pretty well on it. I then shipped on the new telegraph No. 3, which was just built. The engine wand boilers were aboard, but were not set up. She had six big boilers and the chimneys were five feet in diameter and seventy feet high above the hurricane roof. We had to prop up the cabin floor and the hurricane roof to keep it from breaking down with the weight of the. The derrick was fifty feet long, eight by eight and it took some work to set that up. Then we had to put two rings inside the chimney to keep them from breaking. When we got everything ready we started in the morning, took the tackle to the capstan and four men hoisted the chimney up. When it got two blocks, it wanted about six inches of being high enough to set it on the breeching, by tipping it over to one side we got the edge of it and by hard work we got it on they had figured too closely. We got the guy rods all made fast and it was a big job to move the derrick over to the other side without taking it down. We got both stacks up and got the guy rods on. It was a hard job to get the braces between the two chimneys up and put them on. There was a small block hooked on the top of each with a line thru it in order to get the rings out of the chimneys. I was hoisted up the top and sat on the top of the stack and changed the blocks to the inside and was lowered down inside. With a hand ax**,** I broke first the lower one, then the upper one and let them fall down, so they could be taken out at the flue caps. I was hoisted up to the top again, turned the block and tackle to the outside and was lowered to the deck. We had none of the fine asbestos covering for the connection pipes we have today. We covered them with old carpet and then sewed a canvas over that. I was kept at work fixing the rigging, strapping blocks, strapping buckets and splicing lines until she was ready to start out.

When we started. We made two or three trips to Louisville, We thought we were to stay on her, but one rip when we got to Louisville, we were transferred to the Telegraph No. 2 to run between Louisville and St. Louis. That formed a line of boats. After a couple of trips, I was put on as second mate, but only made a couple trips. When going up the Ohio, we got a wood boat in tow and afterward the wood was out, we let the barge go and in letting go the head line it got around the mate’s leg and jammed it in the cleat and broke it. Then I was first mate, I got, I got along all right and the men said that I did better than when the mate was with us. We got along all right for two or three trips. It was pretty hard, but I made no kick. I had to be up nearly all the time, but I got a night’s rest at the end of each trip. Well, the first thing I knew **CaptainTucker** put his father-in-law on as first mate. He knew as much about steamboating as a man that had never seen one. He would walk around and look wise and I did the work, and he, as a matter of course, got the pay. In going up the river one trip, we got a wood boat in tow and after we got started one of the planks in the stern broke out and the mate called out to stop. When I saw what had happened, I knew as long as we went ahead the boat would not sink, as the water was being drawn away from the stern. I called to the captain to go ahead and he did until we got the wood all out. After the wood boat was gone he came to me and said “Bill, if it hadn’t been for you, that wood boat would have sun and all the wood would have been lost: I wanted the boat to stop.” Well I told him he hadn’t steamboated as long as I had yet, and he had a good deal to learn.

That night when I was walking along the deck, looking after some freight, the bells rang to stop. I ran forward and which I came alongside of the boilers, I saw the tiller rope hanging down broken. I got on top of the boilers and found there was one strand still holding. There was considerable slack to it, but I sent one of the men to let it go from the rudder. I pulled up enough to make a long splice. The captain tapped the bell for me, but I paid no attention, until I had the work all done. Then I called to the man to haul it aft and make it fast. I then ran to go upstairs and I met the captain coming down, as angry as a “wet hen” “Where were you” I was splicing the tiller rope. The what? Splicing the tiller rope. He went away and I ran upstairs to the boiler deck and out forward on the hurricane roof and up to the pilot house and told the pilot what the trouble was, but he could not believe I could have spliced it so quickly. The last trip I made on the Telegraph No. 2 we got five hundred pigs of lead at St. Genevieive and when we got to St. Louis, we got all the freight out but the lead before supper. We got supper and all the men got ready to g ashore. When I got up from the table, the captain told me that the lead had to be taken ashore. It was dark and when I went down on deck, the men were dressed ready to go ashore. There was some kick about it. But we all pitched in and I carried as much as any of them and it did not take much more than half an hour to get it off. When I went up to the cabin the captain was reading; he looked up “Hello” he said what’s the matter? I said nothing was the matter. “Aren’t you going to take that lead ashore?” I said the lead is all ashore sir.” He put down the paper and went down to se for himself. When he came up, I was sitting talking to one of the cabin boys. He came up and said “I could hardly believe you had that lead out so quick.”

Next morning, a soon as we had breakfast we got to work and washed the decks and cleaned up and made everything as nice as possible. When I told the boys I was one, as I would not be a slave to any man and I was quitting. I told the mate that I wanted to settle up. I had quit and wanted my pay. He was surprised and said he would see captain Tucker. He came back and told me that the captain said if I wanted to quit he would not pa me what was coming to me. I told him I guessed I could collect it. The clerk came and wanted to know what was the matter, I told him I had quit. I did not give them any satisfaction. Then a lot of the men quit too because I had . I told them not to quit on my account. I brought my clothes out forward ready to go ashore. The mate came to me and said “Well, Bill if you are determined to quit, I don’t see how I can get along without you. I can’t do all the work alone.” I told him I could do it all alone.” Well you have had more experience that I have had. I told him that was so and that was the trouble. He began to see where the shoe pinched. The

[End missing (chapter nine)]

### Chapter X 10-6-1917

From Louisville to St. Louis and back I didn’t get but an hour’s sleep but Mr. Mate goes to bed whenever his watch is out, and I had to be up at every wood pile and every landing. He admitted that what I said was true and said he was going to see the captain, but I told him he need not, as I was quitting and I wanted what was coming to me. He came back in a short time and told me the captain would make everything right if I would stay. The captain did not know anything about my wages; that belonged to the mate and head clerk. I told him when I came to work where I was and what I was doing; and that I had quit and wanted what was coming to me. I went up to the office and the clerk tried to persuade me to stay, saying that I was taking a back step; that if I would keep on I would soon get to be captain, as I was smart, etc. he paid me and I bade the boys all goodbye.

My partner and I walked up the levee and shipped on the Lamartine bound for Dubuque and St. Paul. **Hosea Montgomery** was mate, and he was a nice a man as I ever ran with and we had a fine crew. The river was high and we had a nice trip. There were six deck hands on each watch; and we had an old man on watch named **John Maher**. He had been a soldier at Fort Madison in his young days, and he ran the ferry boat between Fort Madison and Nauvoo and was well acquainted with Joe Smith and all the Mormon men, who were there before they went west. He escorted Joe Smith from the ferry to Nauvoo one night a few days before he was killed. He called him “Mormon John”. John would get a lot of the passengers around him and give them a whole history of the Mormons.

One of the stories “Mormon John” used to tell of Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet, was Joe was great in the faith that could move a mountain; with faith he could walk on the water as Christ did. There was a mill pond near Nauvoo and to prove what he said he was to walk on the water, so he went to the mill pond one night with some of the confidential friends, and with stake and boards made a platform so when the dam was full, the water would cover it about five or six inches. On Sunday morning he got a boy and a yoke of oxen to take a tree top and drag it up and down the creek, so the water was s muddy that the boards could not be seen. When the congregation met that forenoon, Joe gave them a lecture on faith, and to prove it, Joe was to walk on the water, so taking off his shoes and rolling up his trousers, Joe went over the mill pond and back. The news spread all over of Prophet Smith walking on the water.

Next Sunday everything was ready and all the neighborhood was there to see the miracle. After Joe had given them a lecture of faith, he started to prove it. He got half way across, when his faith gave out an down he went, up to his waist. A lot of heretics in the congregation sent up a yell and hooted and laughed at him. “Old Nick” or some of his imps had been there and moved Joe’s faith and that let him down.

We had freight for every town above Keokuk to St. Paul and he deck room was full of movers mostly going to Iowa. We got no freight at St. Paul. We loaded mostly with lead at Dubuque and some barely and wheat.

Next trip we took two barges in tow, the most of the freight being in them. The boat was loaded with passengers and their movables. I was stowing the freight in the hold, when down came a musty old barrel. We could hardly read what the contents were, but could not make out “Port Wine.” Well, nothing would satisfy the boys, and I had to tap the barrel and sample it. I always had the tools to do it with , as I had to do all the repairing of freight that was broken. We all had a drink and I had two, and we all decided that it was the richest wine we ever tasted. A lot of boxes of raisins came sown and before they were removed from the end of the slide, they sent down a barrel of vinegar, and that broke one of the boxes of raisins and the wind got to working the first thing I knew I was so intoxicated that I could do nothing. The mate called all hands out of the hold to load the barge. He soon missed me and he asked where I was. They told him I didn’t come out of the hold and he came out to the hatch and called and I answered him. He came to me and said, “Well, Bill, are you hurt?” I told him “no”. Then he saw where I had vomited a little and said: “Why Bill, you’re drunk.” I told him I guessed I would let up and go to bed. And he helped me up and put me to bed. I slept until about four o’clock and got up and started to go where the men were working. He met me and said, “Where are you going?” I told him I was going to work if he wanted me. He told me to go to bed again, that I was as drunk as ever. I went to bed and did not get up until next morning.

We finished loading next day and started out about six o’clock with two barges, but the current was so strong we could make no headway, so we left one of the barges for the Alton to bring up to Alton. I was left on it. The Alton took it in tow the next day about four o’clock. When we started, she ran so fast I thought she would run the barge under. We had to stop and take several hogsheads of sugar off the barges and put them on the boat and roll some to the stern, so as to raise the bow of the barge nearly out of the water. That was all right and we went ahead and we got to Alton nearly a soon as our boat which had nearly twenty-four hours the start on us. .

The Alton was the fastest boat on the western rivers and challenged anything to run against her. She belonged to the Chicago and Alton R. R. Company and was built by Jos. Brown and sold it to the Railroad Company. He then built the Mayflower, the most splendid boat on the river. The cabin was like a palace, but she was not as fast as was intended.

We made good time after leaving Alton, as there was no current above the Missouri river. After we got under way, the mate met me. “Why, Bill, what happened to you; thought you never drank any?” I told him, how it happened and he burst out laughing. “Why you fool, didn’t you know better than that?” I told him I knew better now.

We got to Keokuk about four o’clock in the afternoon and commenced to lighten up into flats that were towed up over the rapids with horses, about thirteen miles. We worked all that night and the next day until dinner time. When we got out dinner, it was not fit to eat; the potatoes had been boiled and left in the water to soak and were not fit for a hog. The beans were not half cooked and the meat was scraps taken from the cabin table. Mormon John said, “I am going down to the hotel to eat, I can’t stand this.” I said: “Well, John, I’ll go with you. “ So I told the rest of the boys to come along and if any of them did not have the price of a meal I would give it to them.. Away we all went, twelve or fourteen of us. It was nearly a mile from the foot of the rapids to the hotel, and when we got there, John went in first as he and the landlord were old acquaintances. The landlord went behind the counter expecting we had come for something to drink, John told him we did not want any drink’ we came down for dinner. He asked if the boat sent us and John told him no. We came of our own hook, and we would pay for it ourselves. All right, and in fifteen minutes he rang the bell and we all marched in and had a splendid dinner. We all settled for it and each one got a fine cigar and started for the boat, and on the way everyone of the boys dropped back and I had to lead. When we got to the barges, the mate, the engineer and all the officers were rolling freight on to the flats. The first one I met was the mate rolling a barrel. I came up behind him, and when he started up I could see he was just ready to fight. “Where in H—have you fellows been?” I just said quite unconcerned like, “We were getting our dinner.” Your dinner, didn’t you get your dinner on the boat?” “We got something that a hog would not eat; come and look at it.” Before we went out I put the pans under the boiler. I pulled them out and showed him the potato and the bens and the rice and told him the meat was the scraps from the cabin table. He took the pans under his arm and walked back to the cookhouse, and as he entered the door, there was a big butcher knife on the table he picked it up and as he made a rush at the negro cook, he swung he knife around. “You black so--- is that the way you feed my men after they have been working all night, while you lay in your bed?” I’ll cut the black heart out of you.” I caught the mate or I believe he would have cut the negro. Mormon John got hold of him on the other side, and we got him out of the cookhouse. That poor darkey turned as blue as indigo. I heard of negroes turning blue, but that was the first time I had seen it. The captain came back when he heard the racket and said he was sorry, as he thought we were getting the same as the men in the cabin. Well, we all pitched in as if noting had happened. There was no occasion for any kick about the grub after that.

### Chapter XI 10-13-17

We got over the rapids all right and loaded everything on the boat and barges again.

At New Boston, one of the barges was left to be loaded with bulk pork. That was the sides of hogs,-just the side cut in two. There was not a speck of lean meat on it. This was hauled down to the levee in wagons and thrown on a canvas cover and then taken aboard in wheelbarrows. The pork was shipped to Pittsburgh. To be manufactured into lard oil as that was the only thing it was fit for. We had the barge all ready before the boat came down again. The boat and the other barges were loaded with lead. When we got to St. Louis, there was a boat ready to take the barge of pork to Pittsburgh.

After making another trip to Dubuque and Potosi I went home to Cincinnati. I wanted to go to my claim in Wisconsin to finish my house and get some breaking done, and the best time was in the harvest time when I could get, work haying and harvesting. When we started, there was five of us in the company, my brother Alex and three others, who wanted to see the country. At Madison, Indiana, a man with his wife and daughter dame on board bound for Wisconsin too. They were from Scotland, and as a matter of course we soon became friends, and as they were strangers, they were glad of out assistance in helping them to transfer at St. Louis, and I liked to talk to him about the old country and about Bobbie Burns as he was acquainted with him. He said that the people around Ayre and Kilmonick said he was just a plowman who made poetry.

After we got started from St. Louis there were three young men passengers, one of whom seemed to be under the influence of liquor and was annoying the girl. Her father told her to keep away from him and said to me: “That chap, I think, is rather impudent. I took the hint that he was rather displeased with the fellow’s conduct, so I went up to him and told him to let that girl alone. He said it was none of my business. I said, “Let that girl alone and keep away from her.” I went out forward and was sitting on the wood pile reading when one of the passengers came up to me and told me to look out as that fellow said he would give anyone five dollars to whip me. I put the book in my pocket and went back to where the three were sitting and asked if he found a man to take that job. He said what job? The other two began to put in, so It seemed I had all three on my hands. It did not take half a minute to smash his face, and when I looked for the other two they were gone. I told the fellow I would give another five dollars and that would make ten dollars if he would get a man on the boat to whip me. He went and told the mate. The mat met me and asked what was the matter. I told him that fellow was a little too fresh, that was all. He told me if I kicked up any row with any of the other passengers, I would be put ashore, I told him I thought not. He went aft and met one of the deck hands, who was an old acquaintance and he had run with me before. He told the mate who I was and when the mate met me again, he said s he passed. “I guess you can take care of yourself.” I told him I was no stranger on the river. He said, “I should say you are not.” The girl and I were together pretty much all the way up to galena, and as I was making ready to go farming, she thought I ought to have some help to milk the cows and feed the chickens and keep house and I thought so too. I gave her my address before leaving Galena, so she could write me. I went two or three times to se her and when I got to the river, as I wanted a span of horses, wagon and things to start with, and the river was the only place to earn money to get them. There was not a dollar for anything after, working thru haying and harvest at a dollar a day. I could not get money to pay my stage fare back to the river, she was to go and hire out and I came to the conclusion as there was many a slip twixt the cup and the lip, I had better make sure so we were married and I left her with a neighbor until I could find something to do. I had to work for a neighbor nearly two weeks to get him to take me to Galena, about eighty miles.

When I got to Galena, the Asia was in there. I asked the mate if he wanted any more men. He gave a look at me and said “no” I was dressed in a suit of overhauls made of striped bed ticking and a straw hat. I took it for granted that was the cause, and had made up my mind to stay there for a few days until some other boat came up. In a few minute, out came one of the deck hands running, “Hello bill, what are you doing here?” I told him that I had and he said he did n need any more hands. “Well, we are short handed, but he doesn’t have any use for huskers.” He told me to wait a minute and ran aboard of the boat, when out came the mate laughing. I thought when I looked at you that this was the first boat you had seen.” He told me to get my clothes and go to work. We went to St. Paul.

There was little to do but wood until we got to Dubuque, where we loaded with lead which was about the only freight in those days. There was nothing to mention on the down trip.

On the next trip we took two barges with us. We had not much freight out; we were taking them up to bring down lead, as it would be the last trip before laying up for the winter. We left one at galena and the other at Dubuque, and went up to St. Paul, and when we came down, the Barges were loaded and ready to be taken in tow. When we came to head of the Rock Island Rapids the two barges were let go to float down to Davenport. They each got a pilot and the other one started down ahead of the one I was on. They had got out of the channel about half way down opposite them, they called to us to stop. We cast anchor and the pilot on the other barge asked if there was nay way he could get on our barge so he could go down to Rock Island and get the steamboat to come up and pull the barge off the rock. There was an old dugout of an old pine log, and was all worn on the outside. We were on the east side of the river apart. There was a good deal of floating ice in the river and I told them I would take a canoe and bring him over. Our pilot objected, as he thought it was risky, We launched the canoe and I paddled over to the barge, but when I got there, the pilot declared he would not get into that dug out, under any circumstances. I told him that was nice after I had come over, and that I would not go back without him. I told him to get in or I would get up on the barge and throw him in. Well, the men held the canoe and he got in, but he way he sat in the bottom, of the canoe showed he did not feel comfortable. It took all my strength to paddle against the current and around the bi cakes of ice, but I made it all right. We landed at Davenport and the pilot took the ferry over to Rock Island to the steamboat and just as the boat got out into the river to go up after the barge, we could see the barge coming down the river; the men that were on it had rocked it and worked until it slipped off the rocks.

There was another incident that happened on our down trip. There was a young man shipped on the boat as fireman, and he was put on as wood passer. He went on the watch from four to eight and when the next watch came on at eight they told him he was on the wrong watch and he had to pass wood on that from eight to twelve. Well, he did and when the twelve o’clock watch come on they tried to make him work on that watch from twelve till four. I had just got on watch and he was kicking about not getting any sleep as he had to work all the time. I went over to him and put my hand on his shoulder and told him to go to bed. One of the fireman tried to stop him and make him work, and said it was not my put in and tried to shove me out of the way. In an instant, my coat was off and they let the man go, and I told him to go to bed and told any of them to stop him, but none of them made a move.

About five years after that I was hauling freight from Madison, Wis. Portage City. I stopped one night at a place called Token Creek, where there was a hotel. After supper, I was sitting on the porch reading the paper. The stage driver was sitting near me with a few friends and was telling his adventures on the river. Making him work without any rest. When we got through. I turned to him and I said to him “and you nearly threw the mate into the river at Burlington.” He turned around and asked if I was there; and I said I guessed I was, as I was the man that sent him to bed. He was s so overjoyed that if I had drunk all in the saloon, I could have had it.

### Chapter XII 10-20-17

We laid up the boat when we got to St. Louis and I shipped on the Altona running in connection with the Chicago and Alton rail road and of which bill Wallace was mate and Captain Adams was captain. After washing the decks on Sunday and finishing the work, I went ashore with one of the men to get some tobacco and see the town. When we aboard, the mate was complaining that he had twenty men and not one could splice a rope. The man with me said, “Here is one that can do anything with a rope you want.” The mate asked if that was so, and I told him I thought I could. He kept me at work at that until the boat sank on New Year’s Eve, 1854. We lay at Alton nearly every night, so I sent for my wife to comedown and we would live there until we could go on the farm well fixed. So she came down and we went in a boarding house to stay for the winter. We were going down to St. Louis day before Christmas and eight miles above St. Louis we struck a snag. As soon as I heard the crack, I pulled off the hitch and took it down. I saw the plank driven up and the water rushing in. I jumped down and stepped on the broken plank and pressed it down nearly to its place between it down nearly to its palace between two of the timbers. There was a sack of Oakum hanging on the keelson. I grabbed it and put it on top of the hole. The captain and mate came and called down and wanted to know ifit was much of a hole. I told them about two feet square. I told them to start the pumps and get me a piece of plank and a piece of four by four for a brace to drive between the deck and the hole. By the time the water was nearly to the top of my boots. I got the piece of plank and I wanted the carpenter to come down and cut the studding the right length but he said he was not going down in the cold water. I cursed him for being the carpenter when there was nothing to do, and the very time he was needed he would not do it. So he got on a pair of boots and came -----------------------------------------------

Was standing over the whole all this time. He got the studding cut the right length and we drove it under the deck and about stopped the leak. By the time we got to St. Louis, we had the water nearly all out again and the leak so well stopped that the pumps at the end kept it down. The captain came down and told the carpenter that he was in a bad fix, he could not get on the dry dock for four days and the insurance would not let him go until the hole was properly repaired. It would cost fur hundred dollars to do it. I said “Why captain, get a side dock and they will put a plank in there in two hours.” “Why, what is a side dock?” he never had heard of such a thing, I explained it to him and I jumped to my feet and said “Come on, we can get one and be ready to start on time.” Away we went down the levee and on our way. I told him if they knew ho it was they would want four hundred dollars. “Just tell them that you can go without it. Being fixed.” When we got to the foot of the levee, I heard a carpenter caulking a barge and I told the captain to wait and I went aboard of the barge. The carpenter was sitting on a raft working away as easily as you please. I called down to him: “Say have you got a side dock?” I had hardly spoken when he dropped his hammer and was on deck beside me before I had time to say another worked. I told him the captain of the Altona wanted him to put in a plank for him. When I showed him the captain he did not wait for me. When I got to where they were he said he would go and get his partners. Well when they came nothing less than for hundred dollars, and they would have it done by four o’clock time for the boat to go out. The captain pretended he was not very particular whether he got I fixed or not, as he had the leak stopped and could go as it was until he could get on the dry dock, but they knew what it would cost to get on dry dock. The captain told them that two hundred dollars was pretty good for two hours work, so they said, “All right, send a crew of men down to get the dock up. The captain told me to go to the boat and send down Bill Wallace and eight or ten men, so I “hoofed it” as fast as I could and told Bill, and in no time they were towing the dock up stream.

It was a hard job, as it was around the stern of about fifty boats. It did not take long to sink it and put it under the boat and pump it out by the time the men had the broken plank out, the new piece was ready to spike on and caulk the seams. It did not take long-I don’t think it took two hours. The mate got a small cannon somewhere and we loaded it so as to let everyone know the Altona was still afloat. We put a plug in the priming hole so no dirt could get into the powder, and some one had stepped on it and broke it off, and when I went to fire it. I had to take my knife and dig it out and by that time we were way above the city, and when it went off it rolled nearly over to the other side of the boat.

Just one week afterwards we struck a snag again nearly the same place as the first tie, and it held the boat fast and she sank to the bottom in about ten minutes. As I had done in the first time I jumped down in the hold but before I could find the hole, I was nearly up to the waist in the water. When I got on deck again, I found that the boat had swung right across the river with her stern toward the Missouri side, and they were throwing all the freight overboard. I told them it was no use, as the boat could not sink any farther, but the officers thought by doing so they could float her again, by pumping the water out. They started all the pumps and got all the pails and baled the water, I got a big vinegar barrel and made a jigger as the sailors called it, I fastened a block on the stringer under the cabin floor and put a line on it, and eight of us men would hoist it up and I stood down in the water and dipped as fast as they lowered it down. It was nearly two hours before we got the water but, so that the boat began to float, but it was no use. As soon as she rose off the bottom, she would sink again, so we had to give it up. I had been in water up to my waist for nearly four hours and the ice floating by. When I got on deck, my body was as red as blood. The captain was there and he asked if I felt cold and wanted to know if I did not want something to drink to warm me up. I told him I would like a cup of coffee or tea, if I could get it. I went and put on my dry clothes and by that time the coffee was ready for me. We all turned in and the next morning the Kate Kearney came up and took all the passengers off and down to St. Louis. The crew was all discharged and all of us that lived in Alton went up with the Kate Kearney. She took the place of the Alton in connection with the trains on the Chicago & Alton R. R.

The next day I was ordered by **Captain Adams** to go down and take care of the boat until the Diving Bell boat was working on the Cornella, the sister boat belonging to the same company. She was snagged about a mile farther up the river two weeks before us. I had a boy with me for company. The weather set in cold and the river froze over, so that teams and everything crossed the ice. It was eight inches thick and we had nothing to do but to read, eat and sleep. I saw there was no salvation for the boat and I knew when the warm weather came and the river would rise, it would tear her all to pieces. We had taken everything that we were able to move out ashore on the Missouri side-all the cabin windows and other things. I told **Dan Keefe,** the boy who was with me I would go up to Alton and se the captain and see what he thought of striping everything that we could before the ice broke up.

It was a fine day and I started on foot. It was eighteen miles, and I took the west side of the river. I walked on the ice until I came to the mouth of the Missouri river, which I had to cross. I had not the least suspicion but that the ice was good. It is over a mile across the Missouri where it enters the Mississippi. I had not gone a quarter of the distance across when I saw several air holes ahead of me and upon examining the ice, I found I was walking on dangerous ground. The ice was not more than two inches thick and in many places not an inch and in some places none at all, and away down the river from where I was as far as I could see, the river was clear altogether. I saw wherever the ice had formed first by the snowstorm it was the strongest, so I followed that as much as possible. I made up my mind if the ice broke I would throw myself flat on my face and roll over to shore, although it was a long way to roll. When I got to where I could see the bottom, the perspiration was rolling off my face, and when I reached Alton, I went to the office and by good lunch captain Adams was there. I told him what I had come up for, and he said all right, he would go to St. Louis the next day and come up to the boat with some men and they would take everything off that they could move. He asked how I came up and I told him I came across the frozen Missouri. He whirled right around on his chair and said “What across the Missouri?” “Why boy, I would not have done that for the best boat on the river.” I told him I would not go back again either for the best boat on the river.

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