

TRAVELS IN ILLINOIS IN 1819.

Ferdinand Ernst.

[The following pages are taken from a small book, printed in the German language, now in the public library of Belleville, Ill., entitled, "Observations Made Upon a Journey Through the Interior of the United States of North America in the Year 1819, by Ferdinand Ernst." It was published at Hildesheim, in Hanover, in 1823, and is now translated into English in 1903, for the first time in this country, for the Illinois State Historical Library, by Prof. E. P. Baker of McKendree College. The extracts here presented embody the observations of the traveler in the State of Illinois and vicinity of St. Louis in Missouri. The trustees of the State Historical Library contemplate publishing the entire work in the near future. J. F. S.]

Toward noon of the 29th of July, (1819), I came upon the so-called English meadow where the Englishmen, Birkbeck and Flower, have been established for three years. These men who have selected a region not remarkable for its fruitfulness and appear to show, on the other hand, but little industry in the cultivation of the land, have, nevertheless, already attracted to themselves such a colony of people that a little town, New Albion, is being built, and in spite of the very unfavorable local circumstances this region will soon be well populated.

Birkbeck's "Notes on a Journey in America, Etc.," I have at all times found to be in conformity with the truth, but his "Letters from Illinois," the accounts asserted will appear to every unprejudiced farmer not sufficiently well founded, to say nothing of a man who investigated and tested the matter on the spot for an economic purpose and found in the broad meadow lands not a single acre either of Indian corn (maize) especially necessary in the first year of culture, nor of wheat; but many hundreds of these are introduced into the accounts. Likewise there has come to my notice not a single fruit farm so essential from an economic standpoint, and in this climate so wholesome; yet the peach begins to bear fruit in the third year and can therefore be cultivated quickly and easily.

It was not possible to go from here directly across the Little Wabash to Kaskaskia. Therefore I saw myself obliged to continue my wanderings southward to the confluence of the great and Little Wabash whither a very fine road leads toward Carmi. This city lies upon the Little Wabash about 30 English miles above its union with the great Wabash. It conducts rather lively trade in wares which, on account of the shorter and very fine road, arrive here for the most part by land from Shawneetown.

Before one reaches Carmi the road leads through several very well cultivated farms where the eye is delighted by luxuriant fields of maize. Here is the strip where, in the year 1813, a fearful hurricane produced terrible devastation. The road leads through a forest in which all trees have, from seven to ten feet above the ground, been

twisted like willows, and their tops often cast to the ground in the opposite direction. Upon the Ohio this hurricane picked up a boat and threw it on land far from the bank. It traversed almost the entire continent of America, in width about one English mile and in direction from west to east.

Not far from Carmi the road leads into a meadowy expanse (Big Prairie) in which, on account of its great fertility, a considerable number of settlers have already located.

Many of these so-called prairies are found in the State of Illinois, and one could probably assume that they amount to a half of the entire area. According to the nature of their fertility they are covered with tall or short grasses and shrubs and, indeed, no more inviting thing can be imagined for a stranger than to settle here and to live and move in this abundance of nature. He needs to do nothing more than to put the plow once into these grassy plains, which are for the most part quite level, and his fields are splendid with the richest fruits and the most abundant harvests. How much easier is here the beginning of a planter than in the dense forest on the Ohio! In proof of this I venture to bring forward the fact that of all lands which till now have been offered for sale in the State of Illinois not a spot remains unsold where good water and timber are found together in fertile plains. But, alas, the good water is all too scarce in the southern part. The rivers have here no strong current, which circumstance, along with many others, produces each year many fevers; but one finds that this evil decreases in the same degree in which the land is brought under more extensive cultivation. A number of these evils as flies, mosquitoes, etc., likewise disappear with increased cultivation.

The flies become exceedingly troublesome to the traveler on horse in the great plains during the summer months of July, August and September; yes, it is even asserted that these insects in very hot weather are able to kill a horse in a short time. There are two kinds of these flies; the little green ones and the large horse fly. The first are the size of a common fly, the second often as large as a hornet. Since they almost always attack the head, neck and breast of the horse, a covering of canvas suffices to protect these parts. If one, in addition to this, uses the precaution of traveling, for the most part, before sunrise and after sunset then this nuisance is of but slight significance.

What the flies are to the horses, the mosquitoes are to man. The mosquito is probably nothing more than the European gnat; at least I have found no difference between the mosquitoes in the States north of the Ohio and our gnat. Their bite is by no means more painful; their size, form and the fact that they make their appearance only in wet places and in the night time; all these things they have in common with the gnat. They are found in large numbers upon the low lands of the rivers and in uncultivated swampy regions. Everything that I have ever heard or read, be it good or bad, concerning these insects as well as everything concerning America is, for the most part, somewhat exaggerated.

Upon the other side of the Little Wabash one finds much forest and fewer settlements. The nearer one comes, however, to Kaskaskia the more the grass lands with alternating forests increase, which often form the most lovely views. If there were not too great lack of water here then these regions could be considered among the most beautiful and pleasing.

On the other bank of the Kaskaskia (Okaw), a very important river here, lies the town Kaskaskia where at present the seat of the State government is located. It was founded more than 50 years ago by the French Canadians and is nevertheless not very important; it appears, likewise, not to have a very healthy location, since it lies in the valley of the Mississippi (American bottoms) which is recognized as very unhealthful in every part. Yet, this evil which proceeds from the overflowing of the Mississippi and from the damp ground improves gradually with time. It has been observed that from year to year this valley dries out more, and at present, is very seldom overflowed by the river, and that only in the lower parts. Kaskaskia has not been inundated for 30 years. In the Catholic church at that place I found a rather large congregation assembled. The young, well dressed minister edified us in the French language with such rare eloquence and such an excellent pronunciation that I was greatly surprised because it was quite unexpected to me.

After dinner I had the honor of being invited to tea at the home of Governor Bond where I, for the first time in the new world, found myself in a company of distinguished ladies. On the whole I was shown great attention and agreeable kindness. That which stands the stranger in good stead—who is usually too little acquainted with the language of the land and its customs—is the banishment from higher and lower society of all so-called etiquette and unnecessary compliments. The American never greets one by taking off the hat, but by a cordial grasp of the hand. One steps up to the most distinguished persons with covered head. He is urged little, or not at all, to eat and drink according to the measure of his appetite. Nevertheless in all companies the greatest order and decorum prevails, and great respect and attention is shown the ladies present.

As, in a free state, the distinction of classes does not come into consideration, so is this also the case here between the Governor and his guests.

From here I took a walk to the Mississippi, $1\frac{1}{2}$ English miles distant. This powerful stream, which collects all the waters of the great interior of North America in its monstrous bed, was at that time very low; nevertheless its swiftly flowing waters inspired astonishment in me. Its water is turbid and the beauty of the stream is greatly diminished by the many tree trunks projecting here and there in its bed. By high water the stream tears these trees out of its banks and leaves them resting upon shallow places until a higher flood carries them farther. Nevertheless it often happens that the trunk with its roots weighed down with earth, sinking down to the bottom of the river, remains lodged there sticking in the mud; then

the trunks having become lighter through the loss of their branches rise and project out of the water like posts driven in. A short time ago they had an example of the dangerous effects of such a tree, pointed through the breaking off of its top, when a steamboat received one in its side and sank in a short time.

In order to avoid this danger they are now beginning to provide steamboats with a double bottom, so that when the first is penetrated the second will furnish the desired security. Those tree trunks, dangerous to navigation, the Americans call logs, or snags.

All towns founded by the French have usually a common pasturing place, as well as several other pieces of ground held in common. Upon this common pasture before Kaskaskia I saw for the first time in America that beautiful green grass plot which Europe produces so perfectly in so many varieties, delighting the eye, and the existence of which, as is well known, is due simply to the teeth of the cattle pasturing upon it.

EDWARDSVILLE, July 30, 1820.

At Kaskaskia begin the so-called American bottoms which form the valley of the Mississippi. Immediately above Kaskaskia the valley stretches out seven miles, as far as the village of Prairie du Rocher, and is shut in upon the east by steep rocky walls from which frequently the finest springs gush forth. The river is fringed completely with forests, then up to the foot of the rocks extends level grassy plains the fruitfulness of which exceeds anything which one can imagine.

Here I saw fields of maize in which grain had been grown for 30 years and that, too, without any fertilizer. They left nothing to be desired for the stalks grow luxuriantly to the height of 15 feet. This soil consists of very rich black slime mingled with sand which is at times dun colored and, on account of the superfluity of humus, very light. The hills above the steep rocks are adorned, in part, by forest, in part by beautiful green sward. The valley hereby receives a very pleasing setting as that, on the whole, it produces one of the most charming regions of the State of Illinois.

Above Prairie du Rocher the steep overhanging rocky walls lose themselves in the high hills. Here I saw the beginning of the destruction which the above mentioned tornado produced, and how it had taken its way, by Harrisonville, over the Mississippi. But its strength appeared not to have been so destructive as on the Wabash.

On the 27th of July I crossed the Mississippi to St. Louis, a city situated upon the right bank of the river on elevated ground the substratum of which consists of rock. In these rocks (limestone) are found most remarkable impressions—for example, perfect impressions of feet, hands, bows and arrows of the Indians—so that one is inclined to believe this stone was in earlier times such a soft mass that it could receive such impressions, whereupon then these hard masses of stone have been formed by nature and time. There

is such a stone at (New) Harmony which the colonists of that place, at great cost, caused to be transported thither, 180 English miles, on account of its strangeness.*

A fine spring which gushed from the rocky bank, together with the elevated region free from forest, was presumably the inducement for the first settling of the city of St. Louis. Its founding falls within the period in which Philadelphia was established. Only since the mouth of the Mississippi and the surrounding region came into possession of the United States has St. Louis entered upon a period of prosperity. Therefore one cannot reproach this important place with its relatively advanced age. At present the city is expanding upon the heights of the river bank outside the district at present occupied, and this part will soon excel in beauty the older part which was a failure in the very outset. One finds here various quite handsome buildings, and the inhabitants are employed on every hand in the construction of new houses; hence, the many saw-mills in the vicinity among which is one driven by steam.

St. Louis is situated in 38° 39' north latitude, and may easily have 4,000 inhabitants. The surrounding region inland is meadow land which is, however, not so fertile as are usually the lands in the State of Illinois. This city is the seat of the territorial government of the Missouri territory. The motion to be advanced to a state and to have its own constitution met with difficulties in Congress, since Congress wished to impose the condition that slavery should be abolished in the state of Missouri. Now one finds most every day in the newspapers paragraphs concerning this subject, the majority of which are almost always zealously opposed to the introduction of slavery in the state of Missouri. Everywhere much is being written now concerning the possibility of getting rid of slavery as an acknowledged evil in the entire compass of the free states, so that people in general actually entertain the hope of seeing even the southern states soon freed from this plague.†

The left bank of the river is quite liable to cave and wash, while upon the right bank are stones and rock which ward off these effects of the swift current. This washing away of the bank often amounts to 10 or 12 feet in a year, so that not seldom whole plantations are lost thereby. Two small towns, Illinoistown and Jacksonville, which are located opposite St. Louis, run the risk of finding their grave in the Mississippi in the course of time,

In general, one may assume that all river banks in America are unhealthy places of abode, and especially the banks of the larger rivers. This year the ague is found in St. Louis more frequently than is usual. They attribute this to the great heat of this summer, because all kinds of fevers appear more frequently this year.

* Those "impressions" on the limestone ledge overlooking the river, described by the author, it has long been known, were representations of objects carved there by the Indians. They have been observed in similar outcrops of rocks along streams in several localities in Illinois, as elsewhere in the Mississippi valley. In a few instances they bear evidences of totemic significance; and some may have been records of important events; but the greater number were only evidences of idle fancy.—J. F. S.

†The Missouri bill passed the House of Representatives on the 1st of March, 1820. After much debate concerning slavery in that territory.

When I had returned across the Mississippi and found myself again in the State of Illinois, I turned up stream to travel through this valley as far as the mouth of the Missouri.

A few miles from Illinois City I found the mill of Mr. Jarrott, a Frenchman, which has in its construction the peculiar feature that the water wheels run while lying in the water, and turn the shaft which projects upward from them. It is said that through this discovery the movement of these wheels is not hindered even in the case of from 7 to 10 feet of backwater.

Several small towns are found located in this valley, which, however, are not especially prosperous, and, too, on account of the unhealthy location. For example, St. Marie, just opposite the mouth of the Missouri, has, indeed, four or five houses, but without a single occupant. It is greatly to be regretted that this region, so fruitful and so admirably located for trade, is so unhealthy. But every year the ground, here and there swampy, is becoming firmer and drier, and one may yield to the hope that even here time will remedy this evil.

In another town, by the name of Gibraltar, three miles farther up, I found a good many inhabitants, and they were employed in building.

From Gibraltar I took the road to Edwardsville. One finds between here and the bluffs some large farms, and, what was still more agreeable to me, everybody was in good health.

Towards evening of the 27th of July I reached Edwardsville, a pretty town about six or seven miles from the bluffs of the Mississippi and 25 miles from St. Louis. This fertile region is covered with fine farms, where one has opportunity of admiring the astonishing productiveness of the soil. I found the maize from 12 to 15 feet high on an average. The gardens which have sufficient age for fruit settings are luxuriant with peach trees and other fruit trees. The peach is a kind of fruit which flourishes admirably here; the seedling producing fruit in four years, and almost without exception, bears every year afterward so full that its branches have to be propped. Peach brandy and dried peaches are very common here.

On the other hand I have seldom in all America found the plum tree except in (New) Harmony; but there are apples in great quantities, excellent in all old orchards, and I have met with many fine varieties among them. Moreover the gardens produce melons, especially watermelons, in great quantity and of unusual size—the latter are regarded as a more healthful food than the others. That all other kinds of garden fruits will thrive here may be supposed from what has been said. The pumpkin at times reaches the gigantic size of 3 feet in diameter. Brown and red cabbage I have found nowhere in America, and the ground seems to be too rich for potatoes and many other growths. Potatoes, for example, cannot be planted until very late, often not until July; early planted ones almost never thrive. Maize wheat and oats grow excellently, barley and rye I have not found.

Here, in Edwardsville, I met again my traveling companion, Mr. Hollmann, and it may not be disagreeable to the reader to receive some report of his journey. I shall therefore give here a brief extract from his diary.

"On the 11th of July, (1819) I, in company with ten travelers on horse, crossed the Wabash and entered the State of Illinois. If the traveler from the coast of the Atlantic Ocean to this point has grown weary of the endless journey in the forests then he believes himself transferred to another region of the world as soon as he crosses the Wabash and beholds those great prairies alternating with little wooded districts. Yet, this is one of the largest prairies and, on account of the scarcity of wood, not very well adapted to cultivation.

"After a journey of 22 miles through these prairies were ached the tavern; it was full of travelers. Nevertheless each one was served well enough, the horses were well cared for, and only with respect to the lodgings was the comfort not great. Each one had to prepare his own bed upon the floor as well as he could, and even here the American shows a peculiar ease which is the result of his noble freedom. Everything is done without ado and without ceremony. This manner of living, which was to me at first very strange and disagreeable, soon received my entire approval—little one feels himself free among free, honest people. The character of the Americans, which at first was so little agreeable to me, is, nevertheless, on the whole, good. This opinion may be due to the fact that my living with them has, little by little, changed my judgment, or that the people themselves here are better than in the eastern states.

"The road leads through prairies where one all day long sees no house, no, not even a tree, so that protected from the burning heat of the sun, one could rest in its shade. In the middle of this prairie, 24 miles wide, an axle of my wagon broke, whereby I got into no small difficulty. My mounted traveling companions could not help me and had to leave me; but two pedestrians, who had made the journey afoot from Baltimore in this manner, proved friends in need. They went back three miles to get a tree trunk which we had seen lying there by the road. With great difficulty we then took the wagon to the next house. These honest Americans repaid me evil with good. They had been in our company for some time, and at the crossing of the river I did not wish to permit them to take a place in my wagon.

"When we arrived at the next tavern the remaining traveling companions had already sent for a wheelwright, and thus through the kind aid of my comrades it was possible for me to continue the journey with them on the next morning. Toward noon the heat became oppressive and the flies so intolerable that we resolved to make a halt. Not until towards 6:00 o'clock did we continue our journey. Traveling at night time in these prairies is very much to be preferred. One can, without the aid of the moon, find the beautiful level road, and the horses are not tormented by either heat or flies.

"The landlord at the next tavern received us with the remark that tavern keeping was only a secondary matter with him, and he requested of his guests that they accommodate themselves to his wishes, and whoever would not consent to this might travel on. The company of travelers regarded the words of the landlord as very strange, but resolved to put up here as the next tavern was quite a distance off, and men and horses were very tired. After supper the landlord with his family began to pray and sing so that the ears of us tired travelers tingled. Many of the travelers would have gladly requested them to desist from this entertainment if the landlord had not taken the above precautions upon our entrance. After prayers the landlord related to me that he had often been disturbed in his religious exercises, and even been shamefully ridiculed by travelers; he therefore had been obliged to make that condition upon the reception of guests. He was a Quaker.

"On the 23d of July I entered Edwardsville. The most remarkable curiosity which met me here was the camp of the Kickapoo Indians who were now sojourning here in order to conclude a treaty with the plenipotentiaries of the United States, whereby they renounced all their rights and claims to the lands on the Sangamon, Onaquississippi, and in the entire State of Illinois; ceding the same to Congress, and to immediately vacate the State of Illinois. Their color is reddish-brown; their face irregular, often horribly colored with bright red paint; their hair is cut to a tuft upon the crown of the head and painted various colors. Very few are clothed, in summer a woolen covering, in winter a buffalo skin, is their only covering. They seem to be very fond of adornments, as of silver rings about the neck and arms. They likewise carry a shield before the breast."

VANDALIA, Sept. 10, 1819.

Immediately after I had joined my traveling companion, Mr. Hollmann, in Edwardsville, we visited our countryman, named Barenbach, whose farm was about four miles from the village, to ask him to show us the lands which are to be sold at public auction, at the land office in Edwardsville, on the first of August this year. He granted our request not only with the greatest readiness, but to this excellent man we owe for many other courtesies and much information. His experience and his advice we have found at all times very helpful. So greatly is he respected in this entire region that we have almost never heard his name mentioned by the inhabitants without its being accompanied by great praise. In spite of his disinclination for every public service they have called him to the important office of judge.

The 24 townships which are to be sold lie between this place and Edwardsville on Shoal creek and Sugar creek and Silver creek. There are many good lands among them, and we would certainly have purchased land at this auction if it had been possible to get anything really as good in the vicinity of the town of Vandalia, that is now about to be laid out.

According to the Constitution of the State of Illinois this town is to be the seat of the government of the State, and the lots will be publicly sold on the 6th of September of this year. In the vicinity of this town is a large amount of fine lands; but everyone is full of praise for those which lie about 60 to 80 miles northward upon the river Sangamon. The Indians have concluded their treaty with Congress, and the latter is now in full possession of these so highly prized regions. In consideration of all this we regarded it more advisable to wait, and resolved for the present to settle in the town, Vandalia, and then from here purchase land in time. In order to use the interval to as good advantage as possible, we began to build a little house here from logs, after the manner of the Americans—the logs are laid one upon another, the ends let down into grooves. As soon as the building was far enough advanced so that my companion was able to finish it alone, I started upon a journey to view the wonderful land upon the Sangamon before I returned to Europe. On the 27th of August I, accompanied by a guide, set out upon this little journey. We were both mounted, and had filled our portmanteaus as bountifully as possible with food for man and horse, because upon such a journey in those regions, one can not count upon much. A fine, well-traveled road leads thither from Edwardsville. In order to reach this we rode out from Vandalia across Shoal creek, and then northward into the prairie. We left the forests about the sources of Sugar and Silver creeks to the south, and in the vicinity of the groves about the sources of the Macoupin we came upon this road. We now touched upon points of timber on some branches of this river, and then came into that great prairie which extends from the Illinois river through the greater part of the State from west to east and disappears about the source of the Okaw (Kaskaskia) and upon the banks of the Wabash. This great prairie is the dividing line of the waters flowing southward to the Mississippi and northward to the Sangamon; but is, however, of no considerable height (elevation). East of the road are some lakes or swamps from which the two branches of Shoal creek receive their first water. The entire region south of this prairie elevation is especially distinguished by the elevation of the prairie and by the smoothness and fertility of the land; however, no spring or river water is to be found anywhere in it. In general the few springs which may possibly be there occur only in the bordering timber. The banks of the rivers are very high and hilly, upon these alone are found the patches of forest. All rivers here have but little fall and form many stagnant bodies of water, while in dry seasons the rivers dry up almost completely, and thereby are produced those vapors which make the air unhealthy.

As soon as one arrives upon the elevation and northern side of this prairie the grass of the prairie changes and the ground becomes visibly better. The river banks decline in a gentle slope from the prairie to the water, and are likewise covered with woods, which also shows the greater fertility of the soil. We find here in the State of Illinois almost the same variety of woods that are found in Ohio; and I found, in addi-

tion to the soft maple, the sugar tree which, in its leaves differs but little from it. The inhabitants regard the latter as far better for the production of sugar.

On Sugar creek, where we passed the second night, we found, right at the point of the timber, a family who had not yet finished their log cabin. Half a mile farther three families had settled near an excellent spring, and here we passed the night. Upon this little stream, which about 15 miles to the north of its source empties into the Sangamon, about 60 farms have already been laid out and indeed all since this spring of 1819. They have only broken up the sod of the prairie with the plow and planted their corn, and now one sees these splendid fields covered almost without exception with corn from ten to 15 feet high. It is no wonder that such a high degree of fruitfulness attracts men to bid defiance to the various dangers and inconveniences that might, up to this time, present themselves to such a settlement. And one can therefore predict that possibly no region in all this broad America will be so quickly populated as this. Nevertheless, one must regard as venturesome daredevils all settlers who this early have located here for they trespassed upon the possessions of the Indians, and ran the risk of being driven out, or killed during the great annual hunt of the Indians,* if that treaty at Edwardsville had not fortunately been made. But now how many will migrate hither since everything is quiet and safe here! Let us consider these present farmers in respect to their property right upon these their plantations. How extremely dangerous is their position in this regard! The land is not even surveyed, and therefore cannot be offered for sale for three or four years. And then, when offered for sale, anyone is at liberty to outbid the present settler for his farm which is already in cultivation. If now all these considerations and actual dangers could not restrain men from migrating to this territory, this then is the most convincing proof of its value and that it is justly styled "the beautiful land on the Sangamon."

From Sugar creek we turned immediately westward with the intention of reaching the point where the Sangamon empties into the Illinois, and there crossing the former to the north bank. We crossed Lake creek, then the two branches of Spring creek, both of which flow in the open prairie—a thing which I had never before seen here in America. On the other side of Spring creek is a camping ground of the Indians, whence the prairie rises to gentle hills where we found two fine springs shaded simply by a few trees. The water of these brooks flows swift and clear through the luxuriant prairie,

* Every autumn the Indians within the entire circuit of their possessions hold a grand hunt. They then set fire to the dry grass of the prairie, and the flame with incredible rapidity spreads over all the country. Before it all wild game flees, having been frightened from their safe retreats, and fall victim to the fatal shot of the red hunters. This destructive custom of hurrying off the prairies is the reason that timber is confined to the banks of streams and a few other places. The heat of the fire not only prevents entirely further extension of the forests but even diminishes their area. Upon these annual hunts the Indians forcibly eject all white settlers from their territory.

the high grass of which often reaches above the head of the horseman. From these two little brooks rises a plain which extends to Richland creek.

Here we passed the night at the home of farmer Schaffer, who was just then employed in breaking up more prairie. It was a pleasure to me to see that this first plowing produced arable ground like the best clover field. I advised him to plant at least a small part to wheat, which from appearances must undoubtedly be the best and most suitable grain for this soil. He, however, asserted that maize planted upon it the next spring would be more profitable. Nevertheless, he promised to make a trial with wheat; but he had already intended this year's corn field for the wheat. Maize, turnips and melons were the products which he expected this year upon the first breaking up of the prairie.

That this region leaves nothing to be desired with respect to health was sufficiently demonstrated to me by the healthy appearance of its inhabitants.

Further on in the prairie we again found some springs, and continuing westward, about noon reached another small river * upon which we found three or four farms. The timber on this river bank consisted almost exclusively of sugar trees, and gave those people the most promising prospect of a harvest of sugar the coming spring. From all reports which we gathered it appeared to us that no one upon the bank of the Illinois river had ever been to the mouth of the Sangamon; prevented from doing so by the difficulty of penetrating the intervening woods and underbrush; but they estimated the distance at about 25 or 30 miles.

Since the heat was oppressive and the flies unendurable we were obliged to give up further progress to the Illinois river, we therefore turned again to the Sangamon, and toward noon reached its forests. Here, also, we found three farms, but we could not pass the river as it was very high. This river (the Sangamon) is rather large, and must be navigable the greater part of the year for medium sized vessels. It differs very advantageously from all the other rivers of western America in that its clear water even in this dry time maintains a moderate height, and it is uncommonly well stocked with fish.

We were now obliged to proceed farther up the river, and between the mouths of Sugar and Spring creeks we found a crossing where there was a canoe in which we crossed and let the horses swim alongside. The bank of the river is here about 50 feet high, measured from the surface of the Sangamon, where a broad plain is formed—a grand spot for the founding of a city. Below, upon the river bank, I found a very good clay for pottery and tile work. As soon as we had left the timber of the Sangamon, upon the other bank we came into another large prairie where a not insignificant hill covered with timber attracted our attention. It was the Elkhart (Grove.) This

* Richland creek, in Cartwright township, in the northwestern part of Sangamon county.—J. F. S.

place is renowned on account of its agreeable and advantageous situation. A not too steep hill about two miles in circuit provided with two excellent springs, is the only piece of timbered land in a prairie from six to eight miles broad. Its forest trees show the great fertility of the soil.

I found on it sugar trees from 3 to 4 feet in diameter, and the farmer settled here, Mr Latham, had 30 acres enclosed by the wood of the blue ash. This hill is lost toward the Sangamon, as well as northward toward the Onaquispasippi in alternating hills without forest, which, to me, judging from the kinds of which grass they bore, seemed very well adapted to sheep grazing or vineyards. Eastward, at the foot of the hill, is a level, rich prairie. Here Mr. Latham had planted 30 acres of corn this spring which thrived beyond all expectation. From this soil I took a small sample which seems to consist of loam and an insignificant admixture of sand. In the surrounding prairie the two springs reappear which were lost in the ground at the edge of the forest.

Towards the south there are several springs in the prairie, some of which form little waterfalls often three or four feet high. All these circumstances make the Elkhart not only a beautiful, but—from an agricultural point of view—a very valuable possession. For whoever owns the woodlands of the Elkhart controls at the same time the greater part of the large and rich prairie surrounding it, where, on account of the scarcity of wood, it would be difficult to establish a farm. This farm is, up to the present time, the one situated farthest north in the whole State of Illinois—except, perhaps, in the military lands on the other side of the Illinois river. However, it will not remain so much longer, since 15 miles farther, where formerly stood the Kickapoo Indian capital, some corn fields have been laid out, and a farm will be established there towards spring.

We continued our journey northward and soon reached the charming banks of the Onaquispasippi.* (Satz) Alas! this river was likewise too high to be crossed on horseback. Here a rather passable road runs northward to Fort Clair, (Clark) on Lake Peoria. The soil northward on (of) the Sangamon has far more sand in it than in the remaining part of the State; and the only thing that might be feared would be that, on that account, its exceptional fertility in time might decrease. But this point of time is certainly very far off. The Onaquispasippi is still a more beautiful river than the Sangamon, for it has all the characteristics of the latter but in a higher degree. It is likewise navigable for medium sized vessels.

In this prairie I found many rattlesnakes; but all small, of gray color, and of one species. During my entire journey I have heard of no fatality produced by their bite. Unable to get across the river we were obliged to forego examination of the locality of Kickapoo town, and we started on our return journey. We had, however, seen enough to be able to assert that this region is one of the most important in the State of Illinois; or rather, will become such in a

* Salt creek in Logan county.—J. F. S.

short time. One of the greatest obstacles that may retard the rapid population of this district is the scarcity of wood; yet, there is sufficient timber for a moderate population, and the stock of forest will soon greatly increase now that the destructive prairie fires will be stopped. Likewise the rivers Sangamon and Onaquispasippi can greatly facilitate the importation of this article. These two rivers will not only open up a market for all produce in the direction of St. Louis and New Orleans, but their proximity to the Illinois river will in time furnish this region with another very promising prospect by the lakes to New York City by means of the canal now in progress connecting that city and Lake Erie.

It is, also, a very easy thing to unite the Illinois with Lake Michigan by a 12-mile canal--even now, in the case of high water, the transit there is now made. By means of this canal then, inland navigation would be opened up from New York to New Orleans, a distance of 3,000 English miles. Such an internal waterway not only does not exist at the present time in the whole world, but, it will never exist anywhere else. Besides, this State enjoys the navigation of its boundary and internal rivers amounting to 3,094 miles, and all are placed in communication with each other through the Mississippi. In short, I do not believe that any one State in all America is so highly favored by nature, in every respect, as the State of Illinois.

The entire length of the Sangamon is still unknown; yet we know that it is navigable for at least 300 miles from its union with the Illinois. About 60 miles from its mouth it separates into two arms, of which the southern one bears the name Mooqua, which, in the language of the Kickapoo Indians signifies "wolf's face." This arm is up to the present time the best known, and its borders are already rather well occupied with farms. Above the source of the Sangamon is found a rock 50 feet high which has a fissure in its middle. In this fissure the Indians placed tobacco, maize, honey and other products of the land as a thanks offering to the Great Spirit.

The Indians, for the most part, cultivate some maize, and are great reverers of this useful grain. As soon as the first ripe ears of maize are brought to the chief he institutes a grand feast where music and dance delight the company, and where the pipe of peace is industriously smoked. The benefits of the maize to the white settlers are manifold. As soon as the ears have attained some maturity it furnishes a good healthy food. The ears are either boiled in water, or roasted by the fire. From its meal, bread is prepared, and they make a porridge from it which with milk is an excellent dish. Besides this it is fed to all cattle, especially horses and pigs. Even its dry stalks are carefully preserved in stacks to serve as fodder for horses and cattle during the winter. * * *

After an extremely tiresome day's journey we reached, about 11:00 o'clock at night the first farms on Shoal creek where we spent the night. Here the ague was raging, especially among those who had come here this year from the eastern states. This sickness is owing very much to the manner of life of these people; for they live in part

upon dried venison, water melons, etc., and often expose themselves to wet weather. Such a manner of life must of necessity produce sickness. The wholesome effect of quinine is striking in the treatment of these fevers. I had brought a quantity of it with me from Baltimore, and this remedy very soon helped everyone to whom I administered it.

On the 5th of September I arrived at Vandalia. This place, in accordance with the Constitution, is to become the seat of government of the new State. It is 50 miles from Edwardsville, and about 60 from the Wabash; so that it is located about in the middle of the State. Its situation is well chosen, upon a bank of the Kaskaskia, 50 feet high, and richly provided with wood for building, and with good spring water, as well as with a vicinage of excellent land. The river, which is navigable to this point, here describes a sharp curve which amounts very nearly to a right-angle, coming from the east and going to the south.

The plan of the town is a square subdivided into 64 squares, and the space of two of these squares in the middle is intended for public use. Every square, having eight building lots, contains 320 square rods; each building lot is 80 feet wide 152 feet deep. Each square is cut from south to north by a 16-foot alley; and the large, regular and straight streets, 80 feet wide, intersect each other at right-angles.

Only four weeks ago the Commissioners advertised the sale of these lots (it will take place tomorrow), and there is already considerable activity manifested. Charles Reavise and I were the first who began to build. How difficult it was at that time to penetrate the dense forest which embraces the entire circuit of the future city. At present there are several passable roads leading hither. Now the most active preparations are being made for the construction of houses, and we are daily visited by travelers. But how it will have changed in 10 or 20 years! All these huge forests will have then disappeared and a flourishing city with fine buildings will stand in their place. A free people will then from this place rule itself through its representatives and watch over their freedom and well-being.

ST. LOUIS, ON THE MISSISSIPPI, Sept. 26, 1819!

When the lots in Vandalia were sold I purchased four of them, and after I had made the necessary arrangements for completion of my house, I set about preparing for my return to Europe. When I arrived in St. Louis the steamboat "Harris" had been gone several days, and another was not expected for eight days yet. To avoid passing the time uselessly here, I took a seat upon the post-chaise to St. Charles on the north bank of the Missouri river. * * * I here (Portage des Sioux) entered a canoe in which a Frenchman took me up the Mississippi. The further banks of that river, in the State of Illinois, consist of rocky walls in which are found some large caves, two of which I visited. We reached the Illinois river

towards evening and ascended it about three miles, where we passed the night with a Frenchman who lived upon the military land on the right bank of the river.

There is certainly no river in North America better adapted for navigation up stream than the Illinois. Its quiet water has everywhere sufficient depth and is clear of snags which make the Missouri and Mississippi so dangerous. From its mouth up stream the Illinois receives the following rivers: From the east (1) the Fouche, (2) the Marais, (3) the Maconpin (navigable nine miles), (4) Negro, (5) the Sangamon (navigable 250 miles), (6) the Mackinaw (navigable 90 miles). Nineteen miles above this last river the Illinois forms Lake Peoria, 20 miles long and one and one-half miles wide except in the middle where the banks approach each other within a quarter of a mile. This lake is deep, its water clear, and it has an abundance of fine fish. Above this lake the Illinois receives (7) the Vermilion, (8) the Manon, (9) the Fox (or Du Page), (10) the Riviere des Plaines, and (11) the Kankakee.

In the level prairie where the Kankakee rises is a little lake about five miles long and 40 paces broad whereby the Kankakee is united with the Chicago river, which is really a bay of Lake Michigan. From this lake it separates into two arms, of which the southernmost empties into Lake Michigan six miles from its separation, the northernmost joins the lake 30 miles farther west, and on the way takes up some small streams. This union of the lakes with the Illinois through the little lake or canal at the source of the Des Plaines appears to have been made by the French and Indians in order to get into the Illinois river with their boats during high water. With very slight trouble this passage could be established for larger vessels. The Indians and French have to carry their boats only 12 miles during the driest time, and just on that account this distance is called a portage.

On the west the Illinois receives (1) the McKees creek, (2) Crooked creek, (3) Spoon river, and the Kickapoo. These rivers are of no particular significance, and all rise in the military lands. This land embraces the entire region between the Illinois and the Mississippi from $38^{\circ} 47'$ to $41^{\circ} 47'$ north latitude. It is said to contain close to 15,500,000 acres.

On the following day I returned to the Mississippi and Portage des Sioux.

The Missouri river may possibly at some time become the channel through which the Americans will carry on their commerce in the Pacific ocean towards China. There is already much talk about the government putting in shape the not very long road between the sources of the Missouri over the White mountains to the headwaters of the Columbia which empties into the Pacific ocean. Even this year the government has sent a military detachment in two steamboats up the Missouri to establish military posts there for the security of nav-

igation. In any event this road to the Pacific will be the shortest and, in the future, the safest and most passable. What flourishing cities St. Louis and New Orleans will become!

The hazel nuts were ripe here, and bear with astonishing abundance. They mature here about a month later than in Germany. The pawpaw is also now ripe and is found here especially frequent. This fruit resembles a large kidney potato, very delicious and healthful, often grows like a bunch of grapes upon the ends of the branches. Before maturity it is green in color, and as it ripens changes to a greenish yellow. As we were crossing the Missouri we often saw mud turtles sunning themselves on logs, but dropped into the water as soon as they perceived anyone.

Opposite the ferry lies Jamestown, a place in which, however, only two or three houses have yet been erected. What is commonly related about the extremely healthy climate of the Missouri I found to be by no means confirmed, for upon the banks of that river I found the ague as prevalent as on other rivers. * * * * *

On the next morning I, with my hospitable host, went to St. Louis in a pirogue. To my great disappointment I there learned that the steamboat had arrived but would not at present proceed to New Orleans. To hasten my return as much as possible I purchased a skiff, and in company with a Pennsylvanian, started down the Mississippi from St. Louis on the 27th of September. [They reached New Orleans in safety on the 24th of October.]