

Fargo. Dakota.

May 28. 1873

My Dear Maama

It is a long time since I have had anything like a good chance of writing home & as I am here for a day or two I must tell you how I have been getting on & when we are likely to reach ~~Red River~~ ^{Peubinda}.

In the first place Fargo is much the same as Warhead but being on the W side of the Red River is in Dakota instead of Minnesota. We came across the river in the train, which makes this place its real terminus at present as it possesses a better hotel.

Yesterday while at Duluth I sent a telegram to Papa announcing my arrival there, as I had promised to telegraph you must have wondered at not receiving one before. The ice on Lake Superior however has been the cause of all the delay, & we were fortunate to get along as soon as we did, coming into Duluth the second boat of the season.

After our return to Prince Arthur's
Landing we had a whole weeks wait
for the next boat for Duluth. We did
not know what time the boat might make
its appearance & so were in constant suspense.
The St. Francis Smith appeared on Wednesday
night but decided not to try Duluth. The
"Algonia" which should have arrived before her had
got ashore down in Lake Huron & did not
get up till Thursday night. Finally we got off
Friday night, lay all night & till twelve on
Saturday at Silver islet & then steamed
away for Duluth. Sunday morning we took
the ice about breakfast time & when some
fifteen miles from Duluth. The ice was
pretty rotten, but in great masses, & every now
& then we came across a hard lump or a
place where it had piled up into ridges, &
was 10 or 15 feet deep below water, such
spots were troublesome, & not always

passed without several times backing up & pushing on again, to the great discomfort of the engines, & jarring & shaking the vessel from stem to stern. The paddle floats also kept reducing their size by casting large pieces. About dinner time we got in an extra firm place, the ice broken by the paddles closed up behind & we were unable to advance or retreat. Steam was cut down & the prospects seemed to be that we should have to wait for a change of wind.

Here we remained all Sunday night. Monday morning, Russel (who joined us at Thunder Bay) the freight agent of the Company & a man, tried to gain the shore, from which we were only about a mile distant, with the

intention of walking to Duluth which was about 10 miles away. They used two planks, & standing on one pushed forward the other, &

so on alternately. However when they were about

Quarters a mile from the boat they were obliged to return, the ice becoming more & more treacherous. It rained heavily all day, & this softened up the ice a good deal. About 3 o'clock the Ste "Manitoba" appeared making her way in good style through the ice towards Duluth. As she belongs to a rival company the Captains ire was roused, so he got up steam again & after a severe struggle got loose & proceeded again ploughing through the mushy ice.

The Manitoba presently got jammed up & so we passed her with much satisfaction. By dint of perseverance & by keeping close along the shore where the ice was more decayed we crept on toward Duluth. The Sounding lead going whenever an opening occurred to ascertain how near the shore we could safely run. At dark a thick fog came on & shortly after we got into the harbour. After whistling & poking about in ice for an hour or so, we

managed to get around the breakwater & into
the pier.

While at Prince Arthur's Landing we made several
small fishing excursions, which were uniformly
unsuccessful, & I visited two young ruins which
are close at hand. I was unfortunately not able
to see the Silver islet ruins, from the state of
uncertainty as to our time of starting. The scenery
about Thunder Bay is very fine but immediately
round P. A. Landing the woods are all burned for
miles. We got several times through one
or two of trained windfalls, or Tamarac Swamp
of the worst description, & this has pretty much
used up my suit of clothes, including my hat
called hat at the time of my leaving home.

I found a very neat jasper arrowhead in
the "street" a day or two before leaving.

The population of the Landing is of the roughest
description, very few women & fewer children.
The normal state of the majority of the people

is to be half seas over, & about every
second building is a saloon.

From Duluth we were to start yesterday
morning's train at 7 o'clock. The custom house
people came down & examined our baggage
about 6 o'clock. I had no trouble about getting
my things through. The "transit" obtained in
practical working wonders. We thought we
would be late enough for the train & so hurried
over only to find that on account of the heavy
rain the track was covered by a landslide
about 20 miles in advance & the time of
leaving was quite uncertain.

We had breakfast & took a walk round
the town, & as soon as the wires were
repaired, (they being also damaged by the slide)
I sent off the telegram which I hope you
received in due course.

Duluth is a happy combination of solid rock
& bottomless swamps. Part of the town being
built on a low sandy spit, & the rest,

constituting the better part of the town on the
face of a steep hill of solid rock, covered in
some places with a considerable thickness of a
tenacious red clay of which the streets are
also composed.

Everything is exceedingly new & the place is not
much as yet, though two very handsome cut-
stone blocks are going up.

The train got off at last about 1 P.M. but
only after running some 20 miles to find
another train which had been stopped by the
slide, & was proceeding toward Duluth, blocking
the way. As two trains were accompanying
us from Duluth, this gave rise to a considerable
mix up, & ended by our backing up a good
many miles to a siding. This together with
time lost crossing the damaged part of the
-track got us still further behind.

The first 20 miles of this road are wonderfully
picturesque, the railroad climbing up by side

Cuttings in the river bank, some 400 feet.

The track winds round most impossible looking corners, & crosses side ravines over trestle bridges of immense height. The river beside which we run being one continuous rapid, & in many places showing very respectable waterfalls.

After gaining the Summit we passed into a region of dreary Tamarac Swamp & Hackberry barren interspersed with small ponds & lakes & almost altogether uninhabited.

This continued ^{almost} to Brainard where we got about 9 o'cl. Here we had supper.

The streets of this city are cut out of pine woods. It has a very good hotel belonging to the Railroad company & some small stores &c otherwise it is not much built over.

They show you a tree in the square where two Indians were hung last September for some murder which roused popular fury against them. Just West of Brainard the Railway crosses the Mississippi, here quite a narrow

river but deep, & navigable for small
steamers.

The train being when on time expected to
arrive in Moorhead about 8 P.M. had of
course no sleeping car, & being crowded by the
passengers from the "Algonia" it was precious
little good sleep that any of us obtained, &
we did not get here till a little before 5 this
morning. The latter part of the way lies
over a prairie as boundless to all appearance
as the sea, & as flat as you can suppose
land of any possibility to be, not a swelling
of any kind to be seen even at the horizon, &
only here & there a grove of trees. There is hardly
a habitation of any sort on it yet.

Moorhead & Fargo are two little towns of shanties
more or less pretentious, with one very good
hotel (wonderfully good for the place) belonging
like that at Bismarck to the Northern Pacific

R. B. Coyle & depending almost altogether
on the Railway. The country all around
is perfectly flat with the exception of the
winding tree fringed valley in which the
Red River runs.

It is expected that the N. P. R. R. will reach
the Missouri in 8 or 10 days.

It seems probable that we will be able to
get the boat for Plumbina tomorrow evening
& will be there in two days or so if all
goes as well. The American party on the
Boundary Commission have telegraphed
in & taken up all the sleeping accommodation
which amounts to some 40 berths. There
will be about 120 passengers altogether &
so I fancy we will be more or less
crowded.

I am anxious to get on to get letters &
know how you all are. It seems an
age since I left home, having been in so

many places & seen so much.
I hear that a letter for me was lying at
Collingwood with the Steamboat agents.
I did not think of enquiring for one, but
have now taken measures to have it sent on.

I was quite surprised on the Steamer
"Chicago" to find that the news agent had
Papas new books on sale. What-it-is
to be popular!

I will write again when I get a chance but
you must not be anxious or surprised if
long periods go by without news.

With best love to all

Your affectionate son

George.

