

just out of curiosity, to find them. Of course, the squirrels, when they get hungry, will come down and hunt for them to eat. It was a pretty sight, I tell you; & I would have given a gold dollar for the sweet privilege of having my wife, and my three little children, and sisters Annie and Mary Ellen, and Aunt Lizzie, too, all there with me, for an hour or two!

We will soon be at Natchez, where I hope to mail this long letter; and from there it is about 280 miles to New Orleans - where I hope to see all of Fanny and Walter Blatterman's cousins, whom they have never seen.

I intended making this a still longer letter, but ~~was~~ am interrupted by waiting the table for dinner. So I must close in a few words.

I hope my children are all good, while I am away from them; and that they are obedient to their Mother, and never go away from home without her consent; and that they ^{every day} ~~always~~ pray for their absent Father, that God will protect him and bring him home safely.

And now, Kiss Mother, and Aunt Lizzie, and Uncle Peers, - and Mary, too - for Father, and ask them to take good care of you.

And send this letter to sisters Annie and Mary Ellen to read.

Good bye; and may God bless you, is the prayer of
Your absent Father,
Rich. H. Collins.

Tell Mother to write all letters after this is received, to Memphis, care Lock Box 480, until I direct otherwise.

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On board steamer "John H. Graesbeck,"

Near Rodney, Miss., April 17, 1864,

Sunday morning, 8¹/₄ o'clock.

To my son Lewis Collins, Jr.,

" Daughter Sue Peers Collins,

+ " son Val. Peers Collins,

} My three dear little

children at home, I will write a partnership letter, the first of the kind I have ever written to you. Indeed, I think it will be my first letter of any kind to my dear Sue and Val; and they must sit still, and listen to every word, as their Mother reads it to them.

This is the Sabbath morning; and while you are getting ready for Sabbath School, I am thinking how dearly I would love to be at home, to go with you. I love the Sabbath School, and hope my little children will always love to go it - and be good scholars, as long as ^{you} are children, and become good teachers when ^{you} grow up as big as your Father and Mother. On last Sunday morning I was in a Sabbath School at Memphis, and on last Sunday week in one at Nashville; but, this morning, I cannot go to Sabbath School, for I am on a steamboat, in the middle of the wide and deep Mississippi River.

It did my heart good, just now, to see the Church & Church steeple, at Rodney; and to think that good people would be going there, this morning, to worship God. But I could not go there even if I had wished it; for on account of this "cruel war," our steamboat would not be allowed to land me there.

And now, let me tell you some of the cruel sights along this River. You could not count the number of chimneys I have seen, on the banks of the River, ever since I left home. And they are chimneys by themselves, without any houses to them - a sight such as you never saw, except over on 5th street, between Greenup and Scott, where the fire burnt down four old houses, about two years ago. And, just so, the chimneys I saw all along on the River banks used to have houses to them - some of them, finer houses than ever you saw - and they have all been burnt down since dear little Val was born. And these were not burnt by accident, like the ones you saw burning, that afternoon; but they were all set on fire by cruel men, after they had driven the