

Dec. event

When they arrived about five miles above the Yellow Banks, they moored the boat opposite the first vein of coal, which was on the Indiana side, and had been purchased in the interm of the State government. They found a large quantity already quarried to their hand, and conveyed to the shorebe depredators who had not found means to carry it off, and with this they commenced loading the boat. While thus engaged, our voygers were accosted in great alarm by the squatters of the neighborhood, who inquired if they had not heard the strange noises on the river and in the woods in the course of the preceeding day, and preceived the shores shake - insisting that they had repeatedly felt the earth tremble.

Hitherto nothing extraordinary had been preceived. The following day they pursued their monotonous voyage in those vast solitudes. The weather was observed to be oppressively hot; the air misty, still, and dull; and though the sun was visible, like a glowing ball of copper, its rays hardly shed more than a mournful twilight on the surface of the water. Evening drew nigh, and with it some indications of what was passing around them became evident. And as they sat on deck, they ever and anon heard a rushing sound and violent splash, and saw large portions of the shore tearing away from the land and falling into the river. It was as my informant said "an awful day; so still, that you could have heard a pin drop on deck." They spoke little, for everyone on board appeared thunderstruck. The comet had disappeared about this time, which circumstance was noticed with awe by the crew.

The second day after leaving the Yellow Banks, the sun rose over the forests and the same dim ball of fire, and air was thick, dull, and oppressive as before. The portentous signs of this terrible convulsion continued and increased. The pilot, alarmed and confused, affirmed that he was lost, as he found the channel everywhere altered; and where he had hitherto known deep water, there lay numberless trees with their roots upward. The trees were seen waving and nodding on the bank, without a wind; but the adventures had no choice but to continue their route. Towards evening they found themselves at lost for a place of shelter. They had usually brought to under the shore, but everywhere they saw the high banks disappearing, overwhelming many a flatboat and raft, from which the owners had landed and made their escape. A large island in mid-channel, which was selected by the pilot as the better alternative, was sought for in vain, having disappeared entirely. Thus in doubt and in terror, they proceeded hour after hour till dark, when they found a small island, and rounded to, mooring themselves to the foot of it. Here they lay, keeping watch on deck during the long autumal night - listening to the sound of the waters which roared and gurgled horribly around them; and hearing from to time, the rushing earth slides from the shore, and commotion as the falling mass of earth and trees was swallowed up by the river. The lady of the party, a delicate female, who had just been confined on board, as they

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ACCOUNT OF CHARLES JOSEPH LATROBE (continued)

lay off Louisville, was frequently awakened from her restless slumber by the jar given to the furniture and loose articles in the cabin, as, several times in the course of the night, the shock of the passing earthquake was communicated from the island to the bows of the vessel. It was a long night, but morning dawned and showed them that they were near the mouth of the Ohio. The shores and channels were equally unrecognizable, for every thing seemed changed. About noon that day they reached the small town of New Madrid, on the right bank of the Mississippi. Here they found the inhabitants in the greatest distress and consternation; art of the population had fled in terror to higher grounds, others prayed to be taken on board, as the earth was opening in fissures on every side, and their houses hourly falling around them.

Proceeding from thence, they found the Mississippi, at all times a fearful stream, now unusally swollen, turbid, and full of great danger, though they felt and preceived no more of the earthquakes, they reached their destination at Natchez, at the close of the first week of January, 1812, to the great astonishment of all, the escape of the boat having been considered an impossibility.

Comments

Latrobe, Charles Joseph (1835). The Rambler in North America, pub. by R. B. Seeley and W. Brunside, London, England, vol. 1, 167 p.