

Lucy Wetmore Gray to her sister Harriet

Written aboard the SS *Crescent City*
off the coast of Chagres, Panama

March 24, 1849

Dear Sister Harriet,

We are making ourselves very comfortable and contented on board the *C.C.* until the Capt. (who has gone to Chagres to make some arrangements for us) returns to give us some directions about going up the river. Col. Norris has just come on board. He is one of the party of engineers surveying for the road across the isthmus. He is very gentlemanly and pleasant and has given us some information in regard to the country. He says we shall imagine ourselves in a greenhouse going up the Chagres River. The banks are a beautiful green with brilliant flowers interspersed and plenty of monkeys, some of them five feet high. He says he will do all he can to assist us in getting canoes. There is an engineer depot at Gorgona at which the ladies can probably be accommodated and the gentlemen accompanying them. The rainy season commences about the 1st of April. It is dry now and the roads are good. Col. Norris says there are a thousand persons waiting at Panama [City]. As we have our tickets, we do not feel concerned for ourselves. The *California* has not yet arrived but is expected every day. We may have to wait a week or two there. The *Oregon* sailed only day before yesterday so the Dr. had to wait a month there. It is about as warm here as some of our warmest summer days. We have a cool breeze here. I do not know how it will be on land. I am not sorry to see the green shores here I assure you. They look very inviting yet there may be some dreadful creatures there. If I see any I will let you know. I intended to have written to you sooner but there was only one day I felt well enough to write and then I wrote to Mother.

The ship has rolled so much ever since on account of the wind striking her on the side, that I could not sit up. I managed to go on deck every evening to enjoy the cool evening air, but otherwise than that, I kept my berth. To try to sit up was useless I could not do it without making myself sick, but could feel tolerably comfortable in bed and eat a little of something nice. Oyster soup and a bit of nice ___ or rock fish or chicken or something else nice for dinner with a glass of good cold ice water. I did not want tea for a few mornings at first. I drank it without milk. The

sight of milk in tea was sickening, but afterwards I drank nothing but ice water a little at a time. If Father ever comes this way, he need to bring nothing with him except what he will want while crossing the Isthmus; a piece of dried beef, a little ship bread, and a very few soda crackers, and perhaps a little cake that will keep well, not but little and ____ but little of anything to eat. A few apples. Mine I find very acceptable. I had some of them roasted and they were nice I assure you. We have to eat light food and little of it. In fact, we want but little. A few raisins and figs would be very good here. In the steamer you can have everything you wish for, and need carry nothing except what you need and crossing. We have a nice fine apple ____ which we shall find good and some dried beef and Bologna sausages and all the cakes and crackers. Sugar and lemons you do not need. You do not need lemons, unless it is one or two. A little brandy and spiced rhubarb is essential.

Tell Charles if he comes, I presume he will find no difficulty. He will want some thin clothes to wear on the way and bring a little food with him just what he would need for a day or two while crossing.

You can write by Mr. Gillman. Mr. Gray has written to him to let you know where to send to him. If he does not write to you, you can send them to Edward and ask him to give them to Mr. Gillman. He knows where he is. If any letters come to Mr. Gray send them also if of importance.

The *Orus* is coming back and I suppose we shall go off in her about six o'clock but don't know. Love to all friends. The *Falcon* has not yet arrived. The steamer *Northerner* is still here.

I hope you will do what you can to have Cornelia go to school this summer. My head swims now altho' the boat is at rest and as for walking straight, I do not pretend to. I have staggered so long that I do not know but I may always. Sea sickness and another change of climate has made me weak, but I am gaining strength today.

Your Affectionate sister, Lucy