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COLUMBUS:

Wednesday Morning, March 3, 1852.

Letter from Lieut. F. M. Maury. NEW ORLEANS RAIL-ROAD CONVENTION.

NATIONAL OBSERVATORY,
Washington, December 16, 1851.

GENTLEMEN: I am receipt of your esteemed favor informing me of the Railroad Convention to be held in New Orleans on the 1st Monday in January next, and inviting me to be present, and address the Convention upon the Southern and Western commerce, the home and foreign trade as they are influenced by facilities of intercourse and communication, by railroad or otherwise; or to prepare a report upon the subject to be read before the Convention and placed among the documents.

My official engagements put it out of my power to attend, and I regret exceedingly that present active calls upon my attention will not at this late day allow me to give as much time to the consideration of the vast subjects which are about to occupy the attention of the convention as their importance deserves.

Most of the railroads run across the ridges, and go from valley to valley. In one sense, one navigable water course may be considered as inclined planes, and the river craft as gravity cars which, taking advantage of a physical principle, convey the produce to market at a cheap rate along the natural descents of the country. Hence the very striking feature in our internal improvement system—the rail-roads and navigable rivers cross at right angles. The Hudson river railroad, and some of those which are either in contemplation or in process of actual construction in the South, are the exceptions which make that rule general.

Can the steam car on the land successfully compete in the transportation of merchandise, with the gravity car on the water?

This is one of the questions which will no doubt command the deliberation of the Convention.—Its members will be far better able to judge than I am, whether the condition of your part of the country be such that railways may run along parallel with your magnificent water courses and live.

But in considering it, it should not be forgotten that this is an age of advancement and improvement. It was but a few years ago that it was said and the world believed, that the power of steam could not compete with the free winds of heaven in propelling vessels to and fro across the ocean, and I am not prepared to say that railways may not compete with the Mississippi, in the transportation of merchandise as well as of travellers.

Times have greatly changed. You all can recollect, gentlemen, when the price of cotton depended upon which way the wind blew. If easterly winds prevailed so as to prevent the arrival of the cotton fleet in Liverpool, up went the staple. Some swift-footed packet was despatched over with the intelligence; and he who could outride the mail and reach your markets first, made his fortune. But steam and the telegraph have done away with this. There is no more room for that sort of enterprise, as it used to be called.—New York and New Orleans, with the forked tongue of the lightning, now talk daily together about the price of cotton and everything else; and there is no more chance for the merchant to display his enterprise by getting control of private and peculiar sources of information. All information now as to the state of markets is common.

Salem once had command of the sea trade.—Her merchants, ascertaining that the stocks on hand were small, and the sources of immediate supply scanty, would club together and buy up for speculation all the tea in the country.

But note a cargo of tea arrives; the fact is known. The telegraph may pass the word and aft through every State, and ask who wants? If Salem merchants may demand one farthing more than those of New York were willing to face, the telegraph would give the order to New York. And so with every article known to commerce.

Southern and Western merchants now, by reason of steam and lightning, can stay at home, send out orders and get from France and England their supplies much sooner than a few years ago, they could get them from Baltimore, New York or Philadelphia, after having gone there to order them. The consequence is, that Southern and Western merchants do this; and there are now in that section of the country, houses engaged in transporting direct from abroad.

The fact is, the producer and consumer are much nearer together than they used to be. Consequently the factor does not keep the large stocks of former times on hand. He draws from the sources of supply just in proportion as the channels of demand are checked or free.

Thus the chances of speculation are small, and profits are brought down to the smallest figure.

All these circumstances have impressed themselves upon the business of the country, imparted new features to it, and make necessary and important changes in the mode and means of conducting it.

These changes and the causes of them have powerful bearings upon the subjects which the convention is called upon to take into consideration.

They and the operations of the ware-housing system have caused men of business to establish in St. Louis, Cincinnati and Louisville, for ign importing houses. The duties collected in these three cities for the current year amount to nearly a half of a million, and the value of the foreign merchandise imported direct to upward of a million and a half. These importations and the ware-housing system are recovering back to the South a portion of the direct trade.

The duties collected at Charleston this year are greater than they have ever been. And Charleston imports largely of Havana segars for New York.

It is true that the quantity of produce coming to New Orleans in search of a market seaward, has fallen off, and consequently the number of

vessels, arriving and departing, has decreased. This is what has alarmed, and justly alarmed, the people of New Orleans. The cry is, "what is the matter?" Here is decline where there ought to be robust, vigorous health, depletion where we ought to look for habits plethoric and full. What is it that has brought our city to this state of decline? It appears to me that a satisfactory answer to this question is a necessary preliminary to the treatment of the case, to the application of remedies.

It is in the domestic trade I apprehend that the falling off has taken place, or rather I should say it is in export trade by sea, whether domestic or foreign, and not in the imports by sea, which the country has proceeded.

To satisfy gentlemen as to the correctness of these views, I am enabled by the politeness of the commissioner of customs who has obligingly furnished it, to quote the following tabular statement of the gross revenue collected at New Orleans for the last five years:

GROSS RECEIPTS FROM CUSTOMS.			
Year	New Orleans	Cincinnati	St. Louis
1847	1,621,357 08	31,792 04	8,732 98
1848	1,714,880 43	36,471 49	8,668 81
1849	1,914,742 27	41,850 65	8,663 26
1850	1,924,698 41	33,838 75	12,914 01
1851	2,296,636 08	149,187 13	211,526 19

The revenue collected at Cincinnati, St. Louis and Louisville, and other ports similarly situated, was derived, says he, from importations of foreign merchandise, via New Orleans.

The importation of Coffee here at New Orleans does not appear in this statement.

The returns since July 1st, 1851, compare favorably with last year up to the present date.

There are other places in the valley where duties are collected also, but this table shows a regular, steady and business like increase in the direct importations of foreign merchandise into the Mississippi valley by way of New Orleans. The duties upon it have increased during the five years ending with the 31st of June last, in round numbers, from \$1,715 00, to \$2,722,00, or at the average rate of nearly twelve per cent. per annum.

Now the reason that the export sea trade of New Orleans has decreased, and its foreign import trade increased, if traced back to first principles will be found depending for an explanation upon the railroads which have crossed the mountains from the east to sap your valley, upon the improvements of ocean navigation, and ship building in other parts of the country, which have opened new mouths for the produce of the Mississippi valley on the one hand, and upon the obstructions to navigation at the mouth of the Mississippi river, which have choked up old channels on the other.

In consequence of the three first of these a punctuality and a certainty have been given to commercial transactions which as before stated, have broken up almost entirely these transactions which were formerly known as "commercial speculations."

Punctuality in filling orders and delivering goods where they are required is now a vital principle to wholesome commerce. Dealers and factors are brought down to the smallest margin for commissions and profits. Merchants will tell you that profits now consist in parings made by close cutting, a little here and a little there; therefore, to have the handling of the produce of the Mississippi valley on its way to market, is profits.

Hence, all that produce which used to be shipped from New Orleans to New York, and then re-shipped thence for European markets, and all that foreign merchandise which used to be imported into New York, and sent thence to New Orleans, is beginning to go and come direct to New Orleans, in order to save the transhipment. Many of the agencies that used to be employed between the producer and consumer, have been stricken down by the lightning; and the tendency of steam and the telegraph is to bring the producer and consumer more and more into direct intercourse.

In evidence of this we may point to the importing houses that are springing up in the cities of your great valley, in St. Louis, for example; there the wholesale merchants do not, as formerly, buy of the eastern importer, and of course pay him his fees, commissions and profits, but they are beginning now to go direct to the foreign producer, as the eastern importer does and order direct; thus saving the expense of one agency or the part of one at least. Hence we account for an increase of imports.

The enterprise of Illinois has created another mouth to the Mississippi and placed it in Lake Michigan. Much of the produce which formerly touched at New Orleans, on its way to market, now goes through that canal, and for certain articles its influence is felt even in the State of Louisiana itself; for some articles even from there are turning about and flowing up instead of down stream. Sugar is one, Molasses another.

Before this canal was opened the sugar of Louisiana in order to reach the consumer in the lake country, had to go down to New Orleans, then round by sea to New York, then up to the lakes and so across by water, boxing the compass to get to Chicago. Now this canal is beginning to supply that whole region of country with sugar and molasses which it attracts by the Mississippi. This lessens the receipt of freight at New Orleans, but it benefits both producer and consumer, and it is not, I apprehend, any part of the objects of the convention to interfere with a business so legitimate and proper as this, and which all the railways in the world can no more bring back than they can stop up that canal. It is the object of the convention to assist the sugar and molasses to get to Chicago by railway, if sugar and molasses shall prefer that to water carriage.

Another case; we now buy Virginia hams here in Washington that are cured in Terre Haute, on the Wabash. By the old and natural road to market that could not be. The route of the hams would have been down to New Orleans, thence by ship to New York, and thence by a packet into the capes of Virginia, and so up the Potomac to Washington—a two or three months voyage, during which in consequence of the climates through which it must have passed and the storage it must encounter, probably would have come to life again. At any rate it would have been quite too lively for the market by the time it reached this place.

Now in consequence of these railroads which have been sapping the Mississippi valley, the "Westphalia" of Terre Haute can reach here in a week or ten days, by paying one quarter of a cent per pound. They come up the Ohio instead of going down, and cross by railroad instead of around by water, consequently so much the less pickled pork now goes to New Orleans.

The commercial history of this ham, which used to appear in New Orleans in the shape of mess pork, is that of much produce in the valley of the upper Mississippi. Here therefore, in these sapping railroads, is to be found another of the silent causes which have lessened the deliveries of produce at New Orleans.

To add to the deleterious effects upon New Orleans of this sapping of the Mississippi river at the other end of its valley, and on the eastern side, are the bars at the Balize, and the influence which the depth of water there exercises the baneful influence which the bars there exercises upon the whole economy of the ships that are built for the New Orleans trade.

It is bad for owners to be compelled to build ships that will not answer equally well for all trades. The best carriers, therefore, cannot come to New Orleans. If they could New Orleans would soon find her merchants shipping the produce that lines the levee, direct to its foreign port of destination, wherever that may be. As it is, the ingenuity of ship builders has contrived peculiar modes for cotton ships—these are immense carries and can take cotton to England at rates which a few years ago would have been considered ruinous to owners.

These vessels being once loaded and over the bar into blue water, will take cotton to Liverpool nearly as cheap as they will to New York or Boston. The voyage is short and perhaps the chance for return cargoes are better in Liverpool, therefore they go direct. Moreover, the capitalists among you, gentlemen, have not sought sufficiently to stimulate by your enterprise, lines of packets, steamers, and traders from New Orleans, and thus to extend her commercial relations by sea and make them equal to the resources of the back country. Moreover, our laws with regard to trade with the Spanish West India Islands are exceedingly prejudicial to Southern interests, and indeed the interests of the whole country. The act of 1834, with regard to the subject ought never to have existed. It cannot be too soon repealed.

In these facts and circumstances, and in this view of them, we can see the operation of certain causes which tend to increase the foreign export trade, and of others to decrease it.

These cotton ships are not good provision and assorted cargo carriers. The clippers are for that. The new models beat steam. One of them—"Flying Cloud"—has been known to sail 400 Spanish miles in one day, and upwards of 1100 miles in three consecutive days. These ships cannot come to New Orleans. The bar will not let them, and one of them can go to California and return while a cotton dragger is getting around Cape Horn. Therefore it is in vain for New Orleans to expect to keep pace in foreign commerce with other cities, when the obstructions to her navigation must keep the ships employed in it, behind the times. Besides, the winds are such that a vessel bound from New Orleans to Brazil or California has to go out of the Gulf into the Gulf steam and then steer North till she reaches the parallel of 35 degrees, or 40 degrees, so that it is not greatly out of her way to touch at New York, and if by touching her cargo can be transferred to a swifter ship, time will be saved and money gained, and therefore she touches. Hence, most of the trade with California in produce of the Mississippi valley is carried on by the way of New York, on account of the dull sailing qualities which the bar at the mouth of the Mississippi imparts to the models of ships.

In all these circumstances are to be found levers to our feet and lights for our eyes, as we attempt to divine the way by which enterprise and energy may restore to New Orleans all the advantages which their absence from her high places has suffered to be taken away from her, or to be withheld because never enjoyed.

The objects of the Convention as set forth, in the Committee's circular, of Nov. 4th, 1851, "are, as far as possible, to bring about a concentration and unity of effort in all these States, in the extension of their rail road systems, and in bringing into more active connection their population and their industry."

But it seems to be the wish of the committee that I should confine my attention to the extension of Southern and Western commerce, the home and foreign trade, &c. Therefore, being invited out to sea, I shall let the rail-road, which is the especial object of the Convention to encourage, alone; I take my departure from the premises above stated and stand out at sea.

The apparent decline in the business of New Orleans is, as I have already intimated, due to the effects of the telegraph and rail road, and to improvements in steam-ship building and navigation, in which New Orleans has not been able to participate equally with the Northern cities.

This is the root of the matter. What then are the steps which the South and West ought to take? What are the measures which they ought to adopt in order to insure to them that degree of commercial wealth and prosperity, which their resources and geographical position entitle them to expect?

The answer to this question lies under several heads, and the principal of them are these:

- 1st. A liberal policy on the part of New Orleans, touching fees of various kinds to which the produce and shipping that come there shall be subjected.
- 2nd. Embankments to confine the Mississippi river to its channel.
- 3rd. To deepen the water on one of the bars in the passes of the river.
- 4th. The establishment of lines of Sea Steamers.
- 5th. Attention to the mineral resources of the Mississippi valley, and a free use of its manufacturing facilities.
- 6th. The opening of commercial intercourse across the Isthmus.
- 7th. The establishment in the Mississippi valley of a Navy Yard, Depot and Work Shops, which in war shall have strength, capacity and resources enough to give us command of the Gulf of Mexico and control of the commerce passing through it.
- 8th. The free navigation of the Amazon river, and the building up there of those business relations and friendly ties which hold Nations together in the bonds of peace and friendship.

Such are the questions which I propose to consider, except so far as the proposed railroads may be involved in the case, that as already remarked, I leave to wiser heads.

If the people of the south and west will be true to themselves; if they will put their shoulders to the wheel, and as one man appear in the persons of their representatives here in the halls of Congress, and insist upon fair and even handed justice in the appropriations for public works that course of legislation will follow which long ago ought to have been adopted with regard to the Mississippi river and kindred subjects.

I do not present these measures or any of them, as substitutes or rivals to the proposed system of railroads, nor do I hold them up as measures which will, ought or should divert attention from the railroads. There will be ability enough in the convention to treat all of these measures, and to present each one to the public on its true bearings upon the common weal, and there is energy with enterprise enough in that region to carry them all on together.

The drowned lands in the Mississippi valley have been ceded to the States in which they lie, upon condition that these States in reclaiming them will confine the river within its banks.

The reclamation of these lands would improve the climate of a vast region of country, and make it much more salubrious. It would add vastly to the wealth of these States, by giving value to the lands that are now useless, and greatly increase the commercial resources of these States, by bringing immense regions of these vacant lands under cultivation, and it would also vastly improve the navigation of the river.

An object of so much importance to the health and prosperity of so many States and people is certainly worth looking after, and the work when done, should be done in the most thorough and appropriate manner.

Therefore, let us pray Congress for the appointment of an engineer who shall plan the work; and for the enactment of a statute requiring the States to have the work done according to that plan. This work is to last for all time. Suppose, therefore, merely for the sake of demonstration, that one of the States above Louisiana should be unfortunate in the adoption of a plan; that after having let the work, accepted it and parted with the lands, experience should prove the plan to be bad, or the work to be useless, Louisiana then is overflown in spite of herself and her works which will suppose were really sufficient, are thus in danger of being rendered of no use.

The prosperity of the valley is to be greatly effected by this work of embankment, drainage and reclamation, and therefore, the best talents that the country affords should be employed to direct it.

3. More than fourteen feet water cannot now be counted upon in crossing any of the bars at the Balize. Vessels drawing sixteen feet are sometimes dragged over through the mud.

As for the ability of New Orleans or the people who send their produce there on its way to market to avail themselves of the improvements in ship building, as long as the passes of the river are obstructed by shallow bars is out of the question. The sailing qualities of ships are according to their models. Their models are regulated by their draft, and their draft is controlled by the depth of water on the bars which they have to pass in order to reach their destination. Therefore, the people of the great valley of the west—the men whose labor and whose enterprise have placed the heart of the country where it is, and supply all those great staples out of which the business of commerce raises revenue for the Government. Therefore, I say, those people must be doomed to second and third rate ships to do business for them upon the great waters until the bars at the Balize be deepened.

The people of Missouri, Iowa and Tennessee, of Maine, Massachusetts and Texas are as much interested in this matter, as are those of Louisiana. Steam ships are the railways of the sea.

Notwithstanding there be fine navigable streams and good turnpike roads leading into a city, it is found by ample experience that a few railroads well placed and brought into the same city will vastly increase its business and enhance its prosperity.

What is singular about these railroads; that they do not interfere with turnpike nor the river trade. They create a business of their own.

So it is with lines of steamships, they do not interfere with the coasters and the sailing packets, which answer to the turnpike and river craft of the interior. But they also create a business of their own. Look what the European steamers have done for New York and Boston. So far from interfering with the business under canvass from those cities they have stimulated it and made it more active.

Ever since steamers began to ply between New York and Liverpool, the New York packet ships have been increasing both in numbers and size, and it is idle for us of the South and west to rest contented upon the great commercial advantages which nature has vouchsafed to New Orleans, and that region of country, by reason of her own geographical position, and the geographical position of the Gulf of Mexico. It is as idle I say for people to rest quietly upon natural advantages, and expect the proper lines of steamers to come to them, as it has been for them to rest quietly upon the advantages which the Mississippi river gave them, while all around them were enterprise and activity. Other cities and sections sapped the Mississippi valley and sent railroads there for their own benefit and advantage. They may also from the same motives send their steamships to ply about New Orleans.

The people of New Orleans have waked up to the reality of their position in one of those respects. The watchful are never caught asleep twice, and it is time they were beginning to be up and doing in the other. I need not name the many good openings which the Gulf ports have for lines of steamships.

5 & 6. As soon as there is a commercial thoroughfare across the Isthmus, which will unload, handle and transport, the breadstuffs with the other heavy produce of the Mississippi valley across the Isthmus, and put them on board ships in the Pacific, for less than it costs to get them as far as Cape Horn, on the way around—that moment is the Gulf of Mexico raised to the summit level of this world's commerce. All nations will then be drawn to the Gulf, and the people who inhabit the great valley of the west, and who pass its produce down through the Mississippi river into the Gulf and deliver it there to the winds of heaven or the currents of the sea, may then take their choice and go with it by down stream and fair wind navigation on any market place upon the sea shore in the wide world.

Then New Orleans instead of New York should glut the markets of California and Peru with breadstuffs and merchandise.

Then the valley of the west instead of the coal mines of England and Pennsylvania, should supply the vast demands which the Pacific ocean has, and the far greater which it will have for coal.—It will give New Orleans the command of the Costa Rica trade, and a better Coffee market than any she now has, and she can then send coffee along with Louisiana sugar up to that other mouth of the Mississippi, which Illinois enterprise has discovered in Lake Michigan.

Therefore let the people of the South and West take time by the forelock, and wake up Tennessee and Kentucky, and other parts to their duty in that great manufacturing and mining region which nature has fitted them to be.

The people of South America and California, and the Isles of the Pacific, will depend on them for merchandise; for the ports and outlets to market of the western people and southern States, will then be the halfway house on the great market ways of the earth. England and Europe, to reach the "Grand Ocean," as the French navigators style the Pacific, will have to pass our very doors as they go—and come within call as they return.

A magnificent future is that which commerce, by the laws of trade and the decrees of nature, holds in store for the people of the south and west. If we of this generation will only do our part, the prize is won, and the wealth and the power are ours also.

7. Should there ever be—and doubtless there will be—more than one high way across the Isthmus, and should war ever again occur among maritime nations, is it to be supposed the belligerents be they who they may, will look on and see us

quietly enjoying all the advantages of these thoroughfares, and becoming thereby a head and shoulders taller than all the nations in the world? No, never.

Moreover we are bound by that golden cord which never has and which as far as it depends upon the people from my part of the country, whom I now address, never can be tarnished or weakened, by the faith of this great nation are we bound to maintain the neutrality of those high ways.—That we may do this, that we may be true to ourselves and rest secure in the possession of that great edifice of commerce, of wealth, grandeur, and power, the very keystone of which you have assembled to put in—the naval supremacy and command of the Gulf of Mexico, a *mare clausum*, and an American sea, is a *sine qua non*.

It will never do to let Great Britain or any other power, command that sheet of water with her ships in war.

To whom shall its defence be entrusted but to the people of the south and west who have so much to stake there?

Therefore fortify the Tortugas and build up the Navy Yard at Memphis. The south and the west have been *thinker rigged* out of that work. The law has made it a naval depot or dock yard. It has been converted into a rope-walk—and thereby it has become a byword and a reproach, if not an eye-sore.

I repeat here what I have recently had occasion elsewhere to say upon the same subject: "The enterprise of American citizens is about to open one or more commercial highways across the Isthmus. The access to them lies through American waters. They will be the channels of communication between the distant shores of the nation, its great highway from one part of the Union to the other. The faith of the nation has been pledged touching the neutrality of some of these communications. The country will expect its navy to keep them open in war, and to preserve unscathed the national faith."

The way to these thoroughfares, and the road to market from the Mississippi Valley run side by side through the Gulf of Mexico.

No system of measures for providing for the common defence, can be considered either complete or effective, unless it secure the command to us of this *mare clausum*. Its commercial importance already great will in a few years more be paramount.

Already the natural outlet for millions, it is destined to surpass all other arms of the sea for its commerce, its wealth and its national importance.

The currents and winds at sea are such as to unite in the Florida Pass, the commercial mouth of the Amazon, with that of the Mississippi.

The market way across the seas from the valley of the Amazon, the Orinoco, the Magdalena, the Ataró, the Coatzacoalcas, the Rio Grande, and the Mississippi, passes through or upon the borders of this work.

The works are projected which will turn in that direction the commerce of the East; and all the ships engaged in it, whether from Europe or America, will sail through the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean sea, passing by our door both coming and going.

Through the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean sea the country will require safe conduct in war for its mails, its citizens and their merchandise, as they pass to and fro from one part of the Union to the other.

The natural outlet to a system of river basins that include within their broad dimensions, 70° of latitude, the most fertile lands in either hemisphere, and an area of them exceeding in extent the whole continent of Europe—this arm of the ocean that is spread out before our southern doors occupies that position upon which the business of commerce is to reach its fullest development.

Here is to be the scene of contest between maritime nations in war. Here are the gateways of the ocean; and the power will hold the keys thereof, that has the naval supremacy in the Gulf of Mexico. The great sea lights of this country are probably to take place here.

In the valley of the Mississippi nature has placed the means, and our free institutions the men for defending that Gulf and the interests connected therewith. Unless we avail ourselves of these resources now it will be difficult and expensive to command it in war.

Therefore, in providing a system of national defenses for our interest in that quarter, one of the first steps is to complete the Navy Yard at Memphis, and make of it an establishment worthy of its object and capable of giving force and effect in time of war, to the immense naval resources, power and strength of the great Valley of the West.

To Memphis, Pensacola, and the fortifications at Key West and the Tortugas, out to be entrusted the defenses of the Gulf of Mexico.

It has been said "it is too expensive to build a Navy Yard at Memphis; piles will have to be driven at the edge of the river," yet it would seem it is not too expensive to drive them in the bottom of the sea at New York, and build there a dock which the Secretary of the Navy, in his last annual report tells the country has cost \$2,146,256 36.

I do not comprehend the logic which makes it too expensive to provide for the common defence in the Gulf of Mexico, the most vital part in our whole system, when it has been by no means too expensive to provide defenses for the Atlantic. Provide as effectually, or as ineffectually, we care not which, for the common defence of the Gulf of Mexico as for the common defence of the Atlantic. All we want is justice.

According to the report of the Secretary of War just presented to Congress on the subject of fortifications, the amount expended upon the Army and Navy, exclusive of Dock Yards, in providing for the common defence since 1816, has amounted to upwards of \$75,000,000. How much of this has been expended upon Gulf defenses, or for the benefit of the people whom I address? Precious little. We all know the Atlantic States have enjoyed a double benefit from this expenditure; first of having the works in them and secondly of drawing the money from the south and west and spending it in the north and east.

To me, gentlemen, it is immaterial whether a proper naval establishment Memphis will cost one or twenty millions of dollars to found it; if we have it I say, if it be necessary. If the country wants it, and if great interests of State demand it, shall a nation like this expose itself to injury and insult because it cannot afford to supply the necessary means of defence to any part of it? Let us have an establishment there worthy of its object, of the people whose purpose it is to subserve. It should be the pride and the boast of the entire Mississippi Valley. In times of peace it would stand up in the place of a great University for teaching the higher branches of the mechanic arts to your young men.

The work shops connected with such an establishment would be filled with apprentices whom the Government pays while they are learning their trade. These workshops would draw to your section of the country many of the most skillful mechanics. They could stimulate the industrial pursuits of that region, and assist in the development of its mineral resources. These are some of the

incidental advantages which such establishments carry along with them in peace, and make their presence so greatly to be desired along the Atlantic borders.

You have assembled to plan foundations for your future commerce. To provide means for defending that commerce appears to me to be intimately and necessarily connected with the subject of your deliberation. Hence the reason for calling your attention to a suitable Naval establishment at Memphis, and for pressing it upon your consideration, with all the earnestness that is admissible.

8. The free navigation of the Amazon is the greatest commercial boon that the people of the South and West, indeed that the people of the United States, can crave.

That river basin is but a continuation of the Mississippi Valley.

The Mississippi takes its rise near the parallel of 50° N. Latitude, where the climates are suited to the growth of barley, wheat, and the hardy cereal grains. The river runs south, and crossing the parallels of latitude, and changing every mile its climate, and the character or quality of the agricultural staples which are produced on its borders.

Having left behind it the region for peltries, wheat and corn, for hemp and tobacco, for pulse, apples, whiskey, wine, oil and cotton, and having crossed the pastoral lands for hogs, horses and cattle, it reaches, near the latitude of 30°, the northern verge of the sugar cane. Hence, expanding out into the Gulf with all these staples upon its bosom, to be exchanged for the produce of other climes and latitudes, it passes on to Key West and the Tortugas; and then, at that great commercial gateway to the ocean, which opens out upon the Tropic of Cancer, it delivers up to the winds and the waves of the sea, for the distant markets, the fruits of its teeming soil and multitudinous climes.

Then comes sailing in the great valley of the Amazon. Taking up climes produce and staples, which the Mississippi had just reached, and pushing the variety upon the Equator, far down into the other hemisphere, it increases and diversifies the great assortment to a wonderful extent, adding drug after drug, spice after spice, and staple after staple, until sugar and coffee, rice and indigo, all manner of nuts, balsam and spice, bacon and cotton, cochineal and tobacco, indiarubber, dye wood, peltries, flax and wool, ornamental woods, mines of gold and silver and precious stones, many of them of new varieties, kinds and virtues, have been reached and added to the countless, treasures, boundless commercial capacities and dazzling resources of these two magnificent water spaces.

Saving and excepting tea, which midway between the two valleys, is indigenous to the mountains of Casta Kira, and which is the only article of commerce that is gathered from the field, the forest or the mine that is not to be found in one or the other of these two river basins, everything that is grown or cultivated upon the face of the earth, is to be found in equal, if not in greater proportion and abundance in one or the other of these valleys than in any other part of the world. One of them is in the rear of New Orleans; the other is in its front. It is for the Convention to say whether these two rivers shall be united in the bonds of commerce or not.

The Amazon with its tributaries, is said to afford an inland navigation, up and down, of no less than 70,000 miles. The country drained by that river, and the water courses connected with it, is more than half as large as Europe, and it is thought to contain nearly as much arable land within it, as is to be found on that continent. It has resources enough to maintain a population of hundreds of millions of souls.

The navigation of that river is at present such that the people of the upper country can make but one trip in the year. They have there, in their delinquent climate of an everlasting spring, the calm season and the trade wind season. The trade winds flow up the river. In the calm season, the natives, in their rude bongoas, loaded with the produce of the upper country, drift down with the current, arrive with their stuff at Para. They sell almost for dollars what they procured for cents at the place of production.

Having completed the business of the season, they wait for the S. E. trade winds to set in; with them they return and complete the business and trading for the year.

A friend who has crossed the Andes, and is now on his way home down the Amazon, informs me that parts of the puna country of Peru and Bolivia, and in which the waters of the Amazon take their rise, are already over populated. That portions of the Amazonian water shed over which he passed, are rich in flocks of sheep, and all that is wanted is a close market (which the free navigation of the Amazon would give) to induce the shepherds to raise millions. No other part of the world grows wool like this. It is peculiar.

He reports fine sugar and cotton plantations there with cotton growing wild; also, there are cinnamon groves and forests of the tree from which all the Peruvian which efforts quinine to the world is taken and being put upon the backs of these sheep and asses, transported from the head navigable waters of the Amazon 600 miles among the clouds and snow-capped mountains ranges to the Pacific.

This drug now goes west, and when it arrives at the sea port-town of Africa, it is worth annually a half million. With the right to send an American steamboat up the Amazon, all this stuff would come east and flow down that river.

With the free navigation of the Amazon, a steamer might load at St. Louis with the products of those high latitudes, and deliver its cargo right at the foot of the Andes, where the Amazon leaps down from the mountains into the plains below; with a portage easy to overcome by the hand of improvement, she could then ascend the steepes of the Andes stream several hundred miles further up, and deliver her cargo within hail of Cuzco and the mines of Peru. Nay, the country about Lake Titicaca would look to her for supplies.

The navigation of that river is included, I conceive, among the subjects with regard to which the committee has invited me to express my views to the convention; and I hope the convention will deem it not unworthy of their careful consideration.

Considering the softness of its climate, the fertility of its soil, and the lavish hand with which nature stands ready there to fill for the husbandman the horn of plenty—and when man is thus surrounded—considering that his industrial energies are for the most part addressed to the tillage of the earth—and considering moreover that the character of the people who inhabit that valley of the South, and the character of the people who inhabit it is of the North—we are struck with the fact, and it is a physical fact of moment, that the valley of the Amazon is but a commercial appendage to that of the Mississippi; and that it rests with us and course of policy which we may pursue, whether this physical fact shall be converted into a commercial one, and whether the South will suffer the geographical advantage of its position with regard to that region to go by default, as it has similar advantages in other cases.

Attention to this subject cannot be given too soon or too earnestly.