A Philadelphia Forty-Niner

"Then came the visits to Rio Janeiro and Valparaiso and the gale off the Horn which took us away into the Antarctic ocean with its forest of icebergs and spouting park of whales, and the final entrance into the Golden Gate and the landing in the canvas & adobe city of San Francisco!" Vividly in his trenchant style Josiah Foster Flagg a half century later thus recalled the setting of his great adventure in the golden year of 1849.

Although this adventure was to extend over a period of six years, it was but an episode in his full, satisfying life. A member of an old New England family which moved to Philadelphia in 1842, he was the son of Dr. John Foster Brewster Flagg, a dentist, and a pioneer in the use of ether. His distinguished grandfather, Dr. Josiah Flagg, was reputedly the first native-born American dentist.

In due course Josiah Foster Flagg embraced the same career. Seldom have three successive generations of a family been so closely identified with the rise and progress of a profession as have the Flaggs, for this last Dr. Flagg was to reach a unique position in the field. He is remembered as a short, thick-set man. His operating chair, a relic of a former generation, was simply an ordinary chair except for its high legs and pillow headrest. At work he looked through a lens attached to a stick which he held between his teeth. Yet for all these little peculiarities his whole life was characterized by a ready and quick perception and the development of the most progressive ideas.

Before embarking on the gold rush Dr. Flagg had attended the Jefferson Medical College and, moreover, had received instruction in dentistry from both his father and his uncle, a Boston dentist for whom he was named. After his return from California, he was graduated from the Philadelphia College of Dental Surgery and entered his father's office. Through his professional skill and gentleness in operating he soon gained a lucrative practice and became an expert gold worker and administrator of chloroform, ether, and nitrous oxide for the extraction of teeth.
In 1863, he became a member of the first faculty of the new Philadelphia Dental College and served until 1870, when the demands of his large private practice caused him to resign. He returned to the faculty in 1879 and continued with it until 1896. During this period, in 1889, Dr. Flagg relinquished the practice of dentistry to confine his activities to the College and to research. He was a teacher of marked ability, enthusiastic, witty, and inventive.

His great interest was in the problem of tooth saving. The current expression, "Any tooth worth saving should be filled with gold," appeared fallacious to him. He contended that there were cases where gold was an unsafe filling to use. The fillings which proved better tooth savers in such cases owed their efficiency, not to being more plastic, but to the fact that they were electrically more in harmony with the tooth structure. This constituted the *New Departure* which Dr. Flagg publicized in 1877. However this theory may be entertained today it accomplished its purpose in tremendously stimulating interest in plastic fillings and raising them from a doubtful position in the realm of quackery to that of reputable practice. Several years later he published his first edition of *Plastics and Plastic Fillings*. His research in this field was exhaustive and extended over a period of forty years.

On November 25, 1903, Dr. Josiah Foster Flagg died at his Swarthmore home at the age of seventy-five. It is through the kindness of his surviving daughter, Mrs. Henry V. Gummere, that we offer here excerpts from his papers relating to his experiences as a forty-niner.

N.B.W.

*Excerpts from the Diary of J. Foster Flagg*

January 1, 1849. Laid awake until after 12 o'clock saw the birth of 1849. Had a strong presentment that something which would influence my life would happen this year.

January 23, 1849. California stock high! I have determined to go if I can raise the funds.

January 26, 1849. California "fever" on the increase with Chester & self—took advertisement to "Ledger" in the afternoon.

January 27, 1849. Advertisement out this day.
[For CALIFORNIA.—TWO GENTLEMEN are desirous of going to California, who are perfectly acquainted with the process of Smelting, Refining, and Essaying, the precious metals. Also, of collecting Quicksilver, and willing to engage with any company going thither, on reasonable terms, or for their passages will obligate themselves to render the Company their entire service until satisfaction is given. Reference given. Address A. Z. No. 68 Race Street, Philadelphia (Public Ledger, February 27, 1849).]

March 2, 1849. Was introduced to Isaac Cowan went with him to see the Barque “Warwick”.
March 13, 1849. No mind for work. No mind for nothing!
March 17, 1849. Left Burnett & Withers & Co.
April 7, 1849. Morn’g getting things. Aft aboard the “Warwick” met party—Mr Price from Prov. Introduced to Mr. Cowan of Pittsburg.
April 21, 1849. Left at 10 o’clk in the Barque Warwick for California. Eve’g anchord off New Castle all night.
April 27, 1849. Eve’g strong wind—vessel almost on her beam ends. Meeting of officers & passengers decided to go back to reload.
May 3, 1849. Arrived in Philad at 8. found the folks all well.
May 10, 1849. This morning very busy. Called on Mrs Lord & Miss Parker—made final purchases & again took leave of the folks—left in the Warwick. Anchored off Chester all night. Harder leaving home this time than at first—bed early.

Letters of J. Foster Flagg

I

Friday [off Chester, May 11, 1849]

Dear Father, Mother & Sister,

... 12 o’clk. We have just rec’d our Capt & friends—our party is now complete & we are making preparations for immediate departure. We took a sailor on, this morning that was left, he was drunk, & we had some trouble with him, but he was at last got down stairs & put to bed. We have been very busy all the aft. making
room by packing away things that we shall not need for some time & storing them below. We have no deck load at all, having only the water casks & meat. The Capt. I understand expresses himself entirely satisfied as regards the vessel . . .

... Eve’g 8 o’clk. Fine sail all the aft. & expect to be at the Breakwater by 10 o’clk where we shall lay all night & probably go to sea tomorrow morn’g. The old Barque is getting quite natural in her motion, up & down the mizen mast creaking what we all hope will now be our “lullaby” for five months.

II

Barque Warwick, Valparaiso Sept. 29, 1849

Dear Father,

Altho’ postage is so high by the steamer from this port that, as you see, three of us have joined, yet I felt it my duty to send you a line informing you of my safe passage round the Horn & arrival at this place.

We left Rio July 29th & arrived here Sept 27th having had a very good passage. We of course had gales & hard times but have escaped sickness & we are all in fine spirits. We have news from the states & California up to the middle of July & think that from Cal. quite flattering . . . The Chilians are down on us Americans on Ac/ct of our having driven them from the mines, but we only laugh at them. There are several American Californians in port now; all having had worse times off the Horn than ourselves, one having been detained 90 days. We went around with studding sails set! & in sight of land, but we caught it after getting round, no damage however. The Warwick has proved herself a very superior sea boat . . .

III

San Francisco. Dec. 18th 1849

My dear Father,

... I think that I mentioned in a letter which I sent to Mother pr last Steamer that I arrived in this place too late to go to the mines before Spring, but in the mean time I am very comfortably situated, a good tent, good stove, plenty of good provisions & good
fellows. We have, as a party, bought a skiff for which we paid $115.00!! worth in the states about 10 or 12 dollars. We got it very cheap tho, & are all embryo hunters, ducks, curlews etc being 1.00 each & geese 5.00 a pair & we expect, if we have suitable weather to pay for the boat in a week or ten days. We could probably have all got more money at other occupations but all were willing to sacrifice a little for the sake of keeping together until Spring. If a party is once separated here it is impossible to get together again...

The life we lead will surely either make or kill a man & I am happy to state that none of us as yet think of dying. I never felt better in my life.

We all have our beds raised on forked sticks, really romantic! & joking apart I never desire an easier couch, it is actually quite a French Bedstead.

There are several gentlemen of “my profession”! doing well here & I have had several serious “thinkings” about practicing, but the cheapest room that was suitable, that I could get commanded 100 dollars per month & I thought $1200. pr annum rather too mighty! However I dont know but what some opening may occur & if so I should probably not go to the mines, for the purpose of mining tho’ I wish to see them at least.

I saw a N. Y. Tribune a day since with an engraving of San Francisco. It gives one a tolerable general idea of the bay & formation of the surrounding country but when it was taken the town contained about 15,000 inhabitants & its population is now estimated at upwards of 30,000! Nobody knows where anybody lives & anybody dont know nothing about nobody! There are ridiculous paragraphs concerning the morality of this place. The gambling houses are going it day & night not excepting Sundays altho’ the city authorities have made some protest regarding the Sabbath, & one of papers were highly commending one house for closing on that day. But it it nothing now to what it has been tho’ I suppose it is only about three or four times as bad as N. Orleans at present. In these houses pistols are almost daily discharged & knives & clubs used often resulting in loss of life but the news comes to us something as you get information regarding the “awful rioting” in Southwark, & elicits much the same remarks.
My dear Father,

... For the advice contained in your last I thank you, but I have already acted as you desired, as for eating, we live as we did “on board” or somewhat better, fresh provisions are very high here, meats ranging from 25 cts to 1.00 pr pound! so that our only “fresh tack” is what we shoot, & even that commands prices which make it to our advantage to sell nearly all, but thus far I have had enough to eat which is more than half San Francisco can say. We have had almost continual rain lately, business is at a stand, the mud and slush in the streets is from one to three feet deep, almost everybody is cursing California & many are “busting” after the approved method of failing at home. Large rents are what do the mischief & one weeks lack of trade tries many of our large firms.

You say the “fever” rages as much as ever, well may you join with the multitude in calling it a fever! I suppose from what I have seen that about one in five hundred who have come so far for “Gold” is fit to be here; but it would be of no use to say so in “the States” for each would say to himself “I am the fellow.” If a man behaves himself, keep out of rows, out of gambling houses, away from liquor, keeps driving matters, takes care of his health, & far, far above all & indeed first & foremost, keeps up his spirits, he is bound to do well; he may not make $50,000. pr annum, but there is no doubt but what he has more chances than he probably would have in any of our large eastern cities.

... I dont really know what I shall do about business yet; as for following mining, I feel about as you do concerning it. I had considerable practise on the vessel & succeeded in plugging one or two very difficult places to my satisfaction. I extracted some twenty or thereabouts, one I made four attempts at and had actually wrapped the “Key” but disliking to give up the forceps (they were my pet pair!) I tried again & was much gratified by a clean removal. It was the posterior lower molar, right side & was decayed below the gum. Dr. McClintock had 2 lbs of chloroform every drop of which evaporated during the passage! I look at mine often & it is as yet just as it was. I have seen no advertisement of it here &
think I have about all in the place. I am "keeping dark." It may be of service. I was pleased to hear of your continued success with Ether. I have used chloroform twice for extracting, once by inhaling, with headache following & once by immediate application with gratifying results.

I have heard nothing of Roper & think he has not yet arrived. When he does I shall call upon him & will see what he intends doing. He will find this place not much like his fine Arch Street residence; the best houses have calico partitions & a more flimsy built town you could not imagine, we have several nights much feared a fire, which should it get started would inevitably destroy the entire place.

V

San Francisco Jan'y 8th. 1850.

Dear Father,

It is raining very hard but it is blowing worse our tent is rocking to & fro as tho' it surely would be "pi" before morning. As I watch the waving of the canvass, I think of your brick walls, as I puff out the smoke, I think of you & your segar, as I lean back against the pork barrel & luxuriantly pillow my head upon our bag of potatoes, I think of the "big rocking chair"!

I am sorry that anything which I have written regarding our food has troubled you; tis true we had hard living, very hard, but what could one expect—six months boarding & lodging & a passage for $150. & that at sea . . . I am very sorry to have to inform you of the death of Jos. Cowan, "Long Cowan" as you call him; he died after an illness of only one week, Typhoid fever was pronounced by the Dr. to be his disease . . . Miller & myself had everything to attend to, such as dressing the body, getting the coffin etc. & on the following morning with the help of one other we dug his grave . . . all seemed to feel the loss of a morally upright & dear friend, the first gone of our little party, I pray that he may be the only one.

If "the fever" still rages as you say, you can give what few "adventurers" there are, that will listen to advice some from me regard-
ing their outfit. Gold Washers that work, apparently perfectly, are found to be capable of making excellent sidewalks, they are all thrown away if taken to the mines. Acids & chemicals are valueless here, we sold some of our bottles after emptying & washing them, for nearly what the acids cost! The rocker which is used almost exclusively is made like this & is set upon an inclination so as to render the box A horizontal, its bottom is perforated with holes ¾ of an inch in diameter, into this the dirt is put & breaking up by motion runs thro' on to an apron. I will give you a sectional drawing. a. box, working on hinges, into which the dirt & water are first placed & out of which the large stones are thrown; B. The "apron" upon which the dirt & water falls & which directs it toward the upper end of the washer, C. Where the dirt strikes, about six inches from the end, d.d.d. cletes on the sides & bottom for collecting the sand & gold. E. open end. F. handle. After from 20 to 60 buckets full of Earth have been washed the sand & gold is drawn off, thro' the bottom by holes for the purpose which until then are stopped up, (marked as dots.) into pans and it is then "panned" as usual. This is almost the universal gold washer, & none of the Patented affairs of the States are worth anything except such as are made of boards & they will sell for lumber!

VI

San Francisco Feb'y 20th 1850

Dear Father,

Tomorrow I expect to start for the mines in company with Chester & two others; we have bought a whale boat for which we gave $300. & take our tent & provisions intending to go direct to the scene of our labours. Since we have been in this country the times have been very bad & they are particularly so at this time, money is
very tight & we have had no constant employment as wages were so low, on account of multiplicity of laborers, that it was no object for us to expose ourselves during the bad weather. We have, however, made some $400. since we arrived & that will suffice to take us to the mines well. I have made $10. pr day for a week & gave up my job to go with my friends to the mines.

We go down the San Joaquin (San Whakeen) to the Southern mines, on acct of the weather etc. & expect to be able to go as far as is necessary by water, as the river is high at present, then for a try at luck, we may make thousands & we may come back not only ragged, which we expect to do, but as bad off in pocket as we are outside, however we will try.

VII

"Woods Diggings" California, May 10th. 1850.

My dear Father,

I suppose it would be interesting to you were I to "journalise" a little concerning my adventures since my last, which informed you (if you rec'd it) of my decision to try "the mines" for a while & afterwards I shall branch out "ad libitum." therefore, having arranged all our things for a voyage in a boat we commenced loading our craft on Thursday, Feb'y 21st. 1850, notwithstanding the unfavorable aspect of the weather, as we had determined to sail on that day. Our boat was very deeply laden, much more so than we had anticipated, but with light hearts we jumped on board little "Gold Hunter" & setting sail were soon beyond the cheers of a few friends who had gathered to see us off. The bay of S. Francisco has its entrance near its center; on the southern side of which the city is located; a very rapid current exists in the bay at both ebb & flood tide, the effects of which, at the entrance, are quite different at one tide from those at the other. At flood tide the water rushes in and spreading makes an even current both up & down, but at ebb tide both currents come together at this entrance at a rate of some 6 to 8 knots. You can imagine that some boiling is the result. Thro' this we had to pass as the S. Pablo & Luisson bays empty into the S. F. bay at its N. extremity. Our plan was, to start just before low tide, as then the "rip tide" would be least
formidable & by encountering it we should have the full benefit of the flood tide, which would have been materially lessened had we waited & then battled it as far as the entrance, some 3 miles. This was all good reasoning & would have worked, & did work,—but not that day!

The wind increased fearfully & it soon began to rain, the latter we were quite certain would soon cease so we kept on, but when we struck the “rip” we saw what wind could do. Our Capt, a young German sailor, who had been a 2d mate, went forward to look out & I took the helm. Our boat swam like a duck mounting the waves gracefully & altho’ so heavily laden shipping but very little water, until we nearly reached the middle where the waves run so high that we had a hurried consultation as to whether we should proceed or not. Goat Island was distant about half a mile or more, situated about in the center of the bay & rather than put back we determined to make the island if possible. Accordingly we reefed both main & fore sail & stood for the land. I did not feel but that we should weather it, but once; just before we put about, three of the largest waves rolled upon us, our boats head burying at every plunge, the water pouring in & drenching us completely. I thought then we were swamped; at every plunge I doubted whether she would rise, & yet, what has appeared strange to me since, is, that I was not at all excited, but while I steered to give the boat every advantage in my power, I thought quicker than I ever thought before! But what I dwelt upon, was, the plans I had laid out for the future & the folly of scheming for future years when I possessed not even the “morrow.” However we made land in safety with the loss only of Jack Cowens hat which was blown overboard as he was reefing the foresail! & our boat half full of water; we had to take out everything to dry & encamped on the island until the following Saturday. On that day we again set sail but in about an hour a storm gathered & we put in for Angel Island, a little farther up the bay & past the entrance; here we awaited the eve’g tide & as it was bright moonlight started. We run finely for a few miles passing several other boats on the way, until we out run the tide & met the waves of the opposing currents; our Capt. again went forward & I took the helm, but we took in so much water that I ordered out an oar to windward. Jack Cowan took the oar & jumped into the place arranged
for rowing; great was the splash! & out he came "there's a board out of her bottom, boys, throw the things overboard!! Chester sprung aft & piled the things upon me & sure enough our boat was within one inch of being full of water, he got a bucket (one of those that Mother gave us) & used it too!

We succeeded in "bailing out" & headed for shore. We landed on a fine sandy beach about 20 yards from a fresh spring & encamped on a knoll covered with long heath—partaking, before turning in of a nice hot cup of coffee & some of Chesters doughnuts! (by the way he's great on doughnuts) The next day being fine we got the things out to dry & afterward I took a walk & for the first time beheld the "flowers of Fremont," I mounted a hill back of our encampment & a most beautiful view amply repaid me for my toil. The country was undulating with here & there a cluster of trees, while the whole was spread with a carpet of splendour; the magnificent scarlet of the "Pride of California" intermingled with myriads of the golden "double butter cups & softened by flowers of royal purple, light & deep blue, (not forgetting a little beauty of modest dove color which most reminded me of home,) varigated the fresh green of early Spring and filled the air with perfume, while far in the distance I beheld the, even now, imposing city of San Francisco with its forest of masts, while its beautiful bay, dotted with small islands & covered with boats, tho' so lately crested with foam was now as polished as a mirror, completing this picture of a lovely Sabbath.

We concluded to lighten our load somewhat, by smoking our pork at this place & thus getting rid of the brine & barrel, we accordingly dug a long trench in the ground, from the edge of the bank near the water, into the hill swinging the pork on the staves of the barrel, covered over the whole with sods leaving an opening for a chimney & one for fire "got up steam" & smoked for four days at the end of which time we had something of a novelty viz. Hams with ribs in them! in the mean time we starved on roasted & friccaseed fowl, apple fritters, "crispy" fried potatoes—(tell Maria) etc, etc.

Thursday 28th packed up & left got nearly to the end of Pablo bay & encamped near a very polite party of Frenchmen. Eve'g had music—Chester on the violin, Frank & myself on our flutes. On the next aft. after passing everything in the sailing line we rounded N. York & went on our way up the San Joaquin river rejoicing at our
safe passage thro’ the bays. We encamped 15 miles up the river & stopped here two days. On Monday went up the river thro’ the “tulies.” These are a kind of rush which covers the country for many miles the river winds thro’ them the same as a creek in a marsh, so that altho’ Stockton is only about 30 miles from the mouth in a strait line, we had to row nearly 100. We tied our boat to the tulies for this night wondering if we could stand the current which had by this time become quite swift. We however took a supper of raw pork, raw potatoes, hard bread & water! & slept soundly in safety all night.

The next aft. we made Stockton, a very flourishing mud hole containing about 3000 inhabitants, two good houses, half a dozen bad ones & “lots of tents.” I here met Wm Doores whom you may remember left Burnett, Withers & Co shortly before I did. He was much pleased to see Chester & myself & talked much of “old Times & Philada. boys.”

We here had a season of rain & were unable to proceed before the following Saturday on which day we rowed & towed about 15 miles farther. . . . We were bound for the Stanislaus river & on the next Saturday we passed its mouth thinking it was a “sluice” & not discovering our mistake until we stopped at a “rancho” about 3 miles above; we put about & entered the river making about 5 miles this day, current about 6 knots. Having lost several days during the last week by rain, we concluded, to go on, half of Sunday altho’ it was a rule among us to keep that day—but we had not got more than 3 miles before the lower bolt of our rudder broke & taking the warning we put for shore.

We made a little every day this week except Friday on which day it rained, the current so swift, that in places we were obliged to get into the water & wade ahead with ropes & pull up. On Saturday we reached Eislip’s Ferry & concluded to “pack” from there to the nearest mines distant 40 miles.

At this place a somewhat singular coincidence occurred. In our passage up the river we met a party in a large scow—who, when we arrived at Stockton visited our tent; one eve’g as we were encamped on the Stanislaus, we took a walk after supper; we had not gone far before we saw a party of indians (as we supposed) on horseback, curiosity prompted us to await their approach, when, to our aston-
ishment & no small gratification it proved to be our Stockton friends. Their "packer" (the owner of their mules) wished to make an agreement to meet us on some point of the river on his return, we made no bona fide bargain not knowing what might occur; but, we had not got even our things for the night, out of the boat at the ferry before an empty train passed on the opposite side, we hailed, and it proved to be our friends "packer"! We went for him in the boat & he promised to join us with his mules, the next morn'g.

The next day (Sunday) we dug a hole & buried our boat (invested $300, in the Land Bank!) in case we should need it for the ensuing Fall for provisions, if we wintered in the mines. There 'twill rest, I think, until it rots. On Monday it rained, but on Tuesday we packed. Oh! the pleasures of mule packing! I'll tell you about it when I come home! After three days of pleasure, anxiety, fun, mule driving, high times & sore legs we reached the "diggins."

We mounted a hill, "the last" as we heard with unfeigned thankfulness, & stopped—below us were "Woods' Diggings" we had finally arrived at the end of our journey, that spot for which we started nearly eleven months before—where those rivers which we had come to drain?—drained! where those mountains we came to scrape? Scraped!!—but from appearances the "drainers" & "scrapers" had not pockets enough for all the "rocks" for thousands of these lay scattered about in spirit crushing confusion. I thought that now nothing more could be done—that I had arrived too late—& my heart sank—however—up it came with a bound and on we went, navigating amidst "the thousand holes" as best we could, coming, at length, to a beautiful spot upon a plain, surrounded by high lands, covered with large trees & teeming with flowers, while within a stones throw Woods' Creek foamed & dashed, bidding defiance alike to "dams" & "races." Here we pitched our tent.

We soon saw coming from among the hills, two men, who tho' they looked pretty old we judged to be miners!! from their uniform which was rags & dirt—& their arms, which were a pick & pan—they approached us with brotherly salutations, & the usual common place inquiries of "where are you from?" etc. & informed us that they had been "prospecting" & had got a mess of greens! "Prospecting" is what a miner does when after having dug everywhere &
finding that he cannot make much more than a living starts off to see if he can discover somewhere else—a very profitable business upon which a man can starve & get "down on his luck" in a remarkably short space of time, but which every miner does more or less of! It is a finish to the profession & no one can be a miner of spirit who don't go "prospecting."

We arrived in the mines on the 29th. of March; fixed up on the 30th. Rested on the 31st (Sunday) & on "April Fools Day" went to work—another coincidence!! Chester seized a pick & assaulted the bowels of the earth bringing to light a piece of gold weighing about 1.50. You should have seen us four miners, but you probably, had you been here, would only have noticed the eight eyes, as this realization of the truth of Gold Digging bust upon us—we stood "aghast" & passed around the treasure in solemn silence—but altho' we all worked as tho' impelled by an engine of one horse power each, we found no more "big hunks" on that day—tho' since we have been favored with several—the largest however weighs only $4.65.

We have to get some money in this country as the household expenses of our party are now at the rate of from twelve to fifteen hundred dollars pr annum! & in this estimate is not included Sunday sprees on which we eat bakers bread at 50cts a loaf, drink milk at 1.00 a quart & smoke segars at a shilling apiece—extravagant dogs!! However I have been in the mines now (June 2d) two months & have got ahead about $200.—so you see that I have saved, as your last advised, enough to come home on, in case of emergency. The most that I have ever made in one day $19.—but that is, thus far, one day among seventy—tho' I have been "Hon." several times which occurs only when we make eight dollars pr diem, or, "Congress wages"!!

I like this life very well, it is so independent, dress as you please, go where you please, work when you please, & loaf when you please, tho' as the last don't pay very well, we don't "please" to do much of it. The country is as beautiful as hills & dales, creeks & rivers, trees & flowers & birds can make it, while day after day the sun traverses an unclouded sky—in mid-day it is quite hot but every afternoon at about three o'clock a cool breeze—fans the brows of the miners.
(Added on June 9, 1850) I have recd all your letters up to March 9th. & have sent to Francisco for more which I expect now in a few days. We pay 50 cents to have a letter taken from here to San F. & 1.50 for one from there if the postage is paid, if not 2.00. Altho' five or eight dollars is something of a postage bill, I invest no money with more pleasure, a letter from home is like an oasis in a desert.—

By the way we have many friends who come from a province of Mexico called Sonora. These “Sonoranians” are generally the best hearted men that I have ever met & in Gold hunting I think they are valuable. I have one friend in particular among them, by name, Jose Necarsio Soto Mayor who is quite intelligent . . . He often talks of his home & wishes me to go there with him in the Fall; he is “engaged” to one of his dark eyed country women and holds out to me the inducement of “un otra senorita, muy bonita”!

You wish for the names of our party. When I left San F. it was in company with Chester, Jack, & Frank Rutzer, of whom I have spoken, in this, before. But since our arrival in the mines Frank has left us to try try [sic] the Northern rivers, we preferring the Southern on acct of health tho' the others have generally a reputation for greater richness. But we have been joined by a young New Yorker, a fine fellow whose name is Frank Bingham (Francisco Binghamco!) with whom I expect we shall work some river this summer.

We had a little “fracas” here among the French & Mexicans against the Americans, to opose the heavy tax of twenty dollars a month which is levied by the state government from them for mining. I cannot speak of the legality of the “Act” by which a state takes taxes from Uncle Sams lands but I suppose it is as well to get some money from the foreigners until such time as the Hon. Gentlemen of the American Congress shall decide in some manner regarding the Southern Niggers & have an opportunity to glance at the petty affairs of this portion of the Country. However—The Mexicans & French gathered in strong force about two weeks since on Sunday, at Sonora (about 4 miles from here) & determined to resist the law; what few Americans were in that town could effect nothing against the crowds which were flocking in all that day until
they numbered by noon, from 1500 to 2000, news was sent over all the Diggins, and at about the middle of the aft. 500 of "Murphys Diggers" marched in covered with the National Arms of Americans, viz Rifles, Six Shooters & Bowie Knives! They took several of the Frenchmen prisoners, (the leaders) told the Mexicans to "vamose" which they did, & restored quiet in very short order. One of the Frenchmen was sentenced to the "Chain Gang" for six months . . . Another it is thought will be hung.

VIII

June 17, 1850

Dearest Father,

Tomorrow I expect to leave here for more northern diggings but I think the "Mokelomies" river will end my journey. Chester & I have bought a beautiful bay horse & our two companions have an equally good grey—we shall pack our bedding, tools etc. on these . . . We are now in what is called "dry diggings" & the water which runs in the ravines is now entirely gone—for the last two weeks we have not more than made expenses—but Chester & Frank have reported favorably & we are off. We shall stop at every good place on the road & dig & shall therefore probably be some two weeks going 40 miles . . .

I have just put an American coined five dollar piece in my bag for extracting a tooth; my business is improving!

IX

Mokelomies River. July 27th. 1850

My dear Father,

Since my last I have been, as far as money making is concerned, laying on my oars for now is the "dull season" of Gold digging. During the months of June & July the water is failing constantly in those ravines & gulches which constitute the "dry diggings" but the rivers do not fall enough to allow of being worked before the middle of August; thus very little more than a living has to satisfy the diggers & many cannot make this, but I have been thus fortunate that I never have wanted for as good food as the mines could afford & that without touching the little sum I made in the Spring.
However the dull times are now fast drawing to a close & I look forward to the “Fall business” with much confidence.

You may remember that I brot: two bottles of Chlofm. with me. One of these I left in my trunk at San F. & the other is now in my valise nearly as full as at first. I have used it on several occasions of extracting teeth & for two or three deep splinters, I have also my kreosote, alum, etc. with me, but I believe in my last I told you that the Indians stole all my medicines one night: fortunately I kept my dental medicines & instruments in my valise under my head & thus saved them.

Every letter which I recve. shows me more plainly the strange ideas you have of affairs in this country & PRIVATE-ly as you desire I will say to you that the impression, conveyed to me by little things scarcely perceptible to you, but which force themselves irresistably upon me, often causing a roar of laughter from the party when I read aloud some such passages as Mothers “cheap pudding” etc; restrained me from explaining more fully the “job” I left to go to the mines, not quite so dirty a business as that of “Privy Coun-cilor” but not much more honourable, in the eyes of folks at home; & much more akin to “Funereal Violinist!!” viz: Musician in a Gambling House—I supposed from your general knowledge of worldly affairs that what was your opinion in regard to California, was the generally recd. opinion among the more intelligent—and that others had, if possible, a less correct idea of things out here. When I arrived in Cal. the Gamblers formed, & still form the aristocracy of the country, holding most of the important offices in the mines etc. and so far from being disgraceful to play in a respectable house (and altho’ I had an offer of $12. pr. diem, I refused because the house from which it came was considered otherwise, tho’ that made no difference to the mass of population in the singular city of San F.) it was a situation eagerly sought for & only obtained thro’ the influence of a superior musician. The “Graham House” in which I played was the first house in the city not only in point of respectibility, but of size, & I fancied that there was some difference between playing in such a saloon, & one in which the tables were...
kept by ladies who tho' “belles” here, were, in N. York, New Orleans & Mexico, prostitutes of the lowest order!

I will close this lengthy & windy epistle by a few answers to yours of June as regards Gold. Had I much or little no one out of my party would be a whit the wiser as a miners “big bag” never is seen. You will always see a miner shaking a small, thin buckskin, to try & get “half an ounce” when for all you know did he see a chance of investing 500 or 1000 dollars he could do it, without going an inch beyond his nose! But bear in mind that as often & oftener, the small thin bag is the poor “hombre’s” all!

Novr. 6th. 1850

Dear Father

We have prospected the Gulches around us as well as we could & have found gold in all of them; we are in a section of country which, tho' in the neighborhood of good “diggins” has been very little worked, quite a rarity already in this Country! or rather State. And we preferred risking the chance of “striking something” to settling in diggings which had been good, but were pretty well worked out. Whether we shall do well, or not, of course we cannot tell, but we are in hopes, & pretty confidant of making, at least, a little all the time & that, in this country as in all others is the sur-est way of getting along.

All the papers we see are full of “Jenny Lind” (whose portrait on “my home, my happy home” embellishes our cabin!) in your parts & the “Squatter War” in ours—like all things at hand we think nothing of the “War” & awfully want to get within hearing of the divine Songstress. The prices tho' paid for first tickets, particularly in Boston, would make even Californians stand back and indeed nobody believes that those who gave so much—dug their gold.

We have had cloudy days for the last week or more & considerable heavy rain, mostly tho' at night, and are in hopes soon to be
able to work to advantage in the ravines, our house is tight & warm and I think we shall winter it quite comfortably. I have plugged one tooth & extracted once since I have been here, making 13 dollars, & think from appearances that I shall have some considerable business in that line during the wet months. We had a meeting a few evenings since, as the country around is getting pretty well spotted with cabins & made laws, chose an Alcalde etc. I named the place “Unionville” as it was settled the same month that we rec'd. the news of the annexation of Cala. to the Union, which name was adopted. Unlike most places in this State our Alcalde is not a Gambler but a Miner.

My dearest Father,

When last I wrote you we were in our comfortable quarters, waiting for the rain, unable to work on the river fearing bad weather & unable to work in the gulches from not having had it, and as yet we have not had it. We lost about 6 weeks building etc. having every few days a shower, but at last we were obliged to give up “Unionville” as a total failure & fly to the river. . . .

Altho’ I have but little saved, yet I have made considerable since I arrived in California. I have now been in this country about 14 months & I have made a little over twelve hundred dollars, a pretty good years work. Chester has not done quite as much as I gained about $60. more than he while in San F. about $50. by Dentistry & $100. during the past few weeks in the river; but we still have one purse & that leaves us $1100. each. It cost me $150. to get to the mines from San F. $75. lays burried in the shape of my part of our boat $25. for packing & $50. for stuff to eat during our passage & a short time in the “diggings”. $40. walked off in our horse after he got too poor to run; $40. was my part of Chesters expenses to San F. this fall with what he bought; $100. for provisions for winter; about $300. for expenses during the past ten months, and one bill which, tho’ I cannot complain of scarcity of letters, I would yet willingly pay were it doubled, of $41.50 for postage. I have now $350. in my bag to which I am adding daily & I have every reason to believe, as I have my provisions that by the 1st. of April when I
shall have been in the mines one year, that I should have something more than $500.

And now for Dentistry, much as I desire to practise that profession, & determined as I am to try it—I yet wish to have an anchor to windward, in the shape of "a few hundreds" should it be necessary for me to follow something else.

Since I have been from home I have never known what it is to want, thank God, I have always had enough & have been well cared for. I landed, you know, in San F. with $15—$10 of which was consumed in expenses immediately, but from that time I have had enough to gratify every wish. It is true I have not been extravagant nor have I had many desires to gratify but tho' all things in this country take money still I have always had enough, & it has come easy. Even at "Gold digging" we never think of hurting ourselves by hard work—& I have jumped out of bed & plugged a tooth while one of the others got breakfast, for which I rec'd. "half an ounce"!

XII
Mokelumnes River April 26th. 1851

Dear Father

You know, my dear Father, that as yet, not one half of the time we set as the probable length of my absence, has transpired & tho' I may return in less than that period, still to do so, I shall have to make money faster than I have, but not faster than I could, were I differently situated. In order to do that I have found it necessary that I should be alone, for could I have put what I have earned into my pocket I should now be able to start for home with at least 1200 dollars—but it has been nothing but give, give & never have I rec'd from any man with whom I have shared, half as much as I have given! I am getting tired of this as you may suppose for I do not think that it is doing myself justice to stay out here working for other people.

I have now, a store on the same "bar" that I have camped on since last summer (most of the time) with a young man for a part-
ner, named Richd. Tylee. We own a fine waggon & pair of horses & send to Sacramento once a week for a load of provisions etc, he, attending to the team, & I, to the selling department; we have been in business together for about five weeks & for that time we have made about $100 a week, apiece! So that you see so far as I am concerned, I am doing well enough. My other partners are doing nothing that I know of...

XIII

Dry Creek Feby 6th 1852

You will probably be surprized to learn that after all my change of occupation I, instead of going to the “Hill” to practise Dentistry, concluded to “try on mining” again for a while, & am consequentely now a Digger. I am on Dry Creek, about 18 miles south of Mokelumnes Hill, & am using one of my mules to cart dirt. I am still in company with Capt. Tylee & his son Richd. who in adversity as well as in prosperity have “shouldered their part of the log.”

XIV

Chilean Gulch April 4th. 1852

My dear Father

My good friend & “quondam” partner, Capt Tylee had at last become quite disgusted with the land of Gold!! & in a fit of the “blues” shot off for “home, sweet home.” With what he had sent before he had about $1,000 dollars—which will “stock” his place finely & the old gentleman can live easily for the rest of his years. . . . he went home leaving his son Richd. to keep me company in “seeing life”! & to get in what little money he could of such of our old debtors as were still in this part of the country . . . we bought a splendid span of mules for $450.—& I went to teaming from Stockton . . . I teamed until the wet weather made the roads bad & then as I had not lost my preference for a good fireside over mud & rain I went into camp—since then, what with rain, floods, moving etc—we have done but little, whh. means—nothing. Dick & I with
three others are now engaged "sluicing" on Ahlama Flat about 4 miles from Mokelumnes Hill & are making money once more.

My plans are the same as formerly. I am coming home "Bye and Bye" with the intention of finishing my Medical Education & practising if I am able, but whether I graduate or not I have the title—which was given me first by old Don Carlos Davis—for curing a very bad sore on his leg which I dressed & washed twice each day for some five or six weeks & at last healed—after which there was no equal to "his medico" & he sent me considerable practise in the Dental line. Gradually all hands were putting the handle to my name but at last when after having had the pleasure of plugging two teeth for Dr. Thompson of St Louis & telling him, very politely, that I was not in the habit, ever, of charging gentlemen in the Profession—then it was like Figaro "Dr" here "Dr" there & "Dr" everywhere!!! ... So that, with what practise I have had in Diarrhoean—Rheumatism—Fever & Ague etc. etc. I think that I shall be able to graduate with one years more Lectures at "Jefferson" with ever so much honour!

XV

Mokelumnes River Sept. 10, 1852

My dear Father,

I have worked pretty hard this past Summer & had succeeded in making—a very good living!—& in fact a little more, but the laying abed business, by knocking about as good as $250.—out of pocket, has struck that happy balance in my cash acc/ct which is beautifully exemplified by obedience to the military command of "as you were"!

That you may understand just how I have been, I will say plainly, that I have been sick, for two weeks I was very sick.

After I had been ill about a week, Dick went down for Chester who came up & stopped with me until I was better—and all I can say is, that he was kinder than a brother, at any hour, day & night, he was ready to do anything for my relief—receiving the instructions from the Dr. & attending to them, making me light broth's etc. etc. and in fact, acting to perfection the part of a veteran nurse.
Dear Father,

I sent a package of letters a short time since, by Mr. Pope which I think must have contained some news, altho’ it still remains a mystery to me, how I contrived to write so many. I think tho’ that I must have put in all the “items” up to the present date, else I should surely have something to write about now! Still I don’t think that I could have told you about our great Supper on “Whites Bar”—(Bill of Fare enclosed).

Well—It was one of the grandest, & most magnificently melancholy affairs that ever was set down to, held in our house, Chester for cook – the legs of one table put into four holes in the floor to bring it on a level with the other table & a beautiful new piece of bleachd muslin for a table cloth. The Supper was given by four of us (I wish to God there’d been more of us!) to four others—as the result of bet which we had made on the Presidential Elections; the “unfortunates” (and, our existence so far up in the mountains, is our only excuse) betting on the side of “old fuss & feathers” “hero of a hundred battles” “great in cattle & horses” “some punkins in War!” etc. etc. the Whig (bad luck to ’em) candidate for the “highest office in the gift of the people”—If we had read, your “1,000,000 minority letter” with the lucid remarks thereon, we never would have done it, however—the bet having been lost a Supper had to be had—a “Bill of Fare” was submitted & Chester bribed to superintend the culinary department, he being, like the “Great Chieftain” “some punkins” in Cooking!

To work he went, but, after running up & down the river for about half a day, he reported that he “could’n’t find any mock turtles”! so he vetoed the first item right straight off! as to the rest he pledged himself to “put it through” provided four or five men were despatched to get dishes, five or six, to cut wood & two or three to draw water—“in order that he might not have his hands too full!” all which having been done he got up a Supper which was about as substantial as three or four ordinary dinners—off the fragments of which, he & Dick & myself lived for nearly a week!! . . . the desperate attack on Roast Chickens—Fried Oysters—& Quail & Rabbit
fricassee's only being interrupted by the necessity of ordering two of the party into the still more active service of routing the enemy outside which consisted of a drunken man, who, standing on the broad "platform" that, altho' he was a Dutchman by birth, yet he was an American in principle, persisted in shoving his head in by the chimney and attempting to make a speech . . .

We are at present out of work. We have just had the longest & hardest rain storm that I have ever experienced—it *poured down without cessation* for 65 hours! The river rose the second day & drove us out of our claim at at [sic] one time we did not know but what it would drive us out of our house. Many miners had to move—the whole place was flooded & nearly all movable property, such as Toms, Pumps, Wheels, Rockers, Barrows, Boats, etc. etc. has been carried away . . .

Pork is $60.—a barrel & Flour $100.—but by sleeping late—Eating twice a day, only—& not taking any more exercise than is actually necessary in chopping wood & smoking pipes we think that we shall contrive to make both ends meet, &, if we dont, why—they may stay apart—that's philosophical—ain't it?

. . . I am . . . sorry to hear of poor Aunt Eliza, altho I think she cannot be very bad, inasmuch as I have considered her as actually deranged on the subjects of Abolition—Womens Rights etc. for the last ten years—but this Spiritual Rapping business, we out here, dont profess to be so d—d foolish as to understand anything at all about it.

Its worse than the Maine Liquor Law & that, is as ridiculous, as presenting Anti Slavery petitions to Congress. If any of the "mediums" were to venture out this way I imagine that they would get a Rapping over the head that would start them on a new branch, entitled "Terrestrial Communications" & in fact they might be considered as lucky if they did not get the contents of one of "Colts large size" or the noose end of a lasso—with which thro' the instrumentality of the limb of a tree they might become a medium between Heaven & Earth with a communication with the ground entirely imaginary!
My dear Father

I found, long since, that I had [ill] luck with the pick & shovel & tho' I have had [to] resort to them, to make a raise, several times, yet I could never succeed in getting any more than just enough to set me going in some other pursuit. I have no cause to complain regarding making money for I have made a great deal—but it has been my fate to play the part of a rocket—& just so often as I have come up brilliantly—just so often have I come down “stick”! I, at one time, had 15 or 18 hundred dollars—that was my highest flight, but altho’ I invested it, as I thought, safely—it took but three short weeks & I was minus more than $1,000—

Last Winter, it became apparent to us, that we should have to stay, a year longer in this [place]. Chester, having sold his Ranch, was with Dick & myself so we had a council & finally decided to get another Ranch & let one stay upon it this Summer & raise hogs, while the other two “mined,” then, after we had finished our claims we had come to the determination to dig gold no more, while upon our eight months experience on the place, we could form an opinion as to what was best to be done, either sell out everything & go home, or, if we found we could make money fast, try and arrange it so as to go home for a visit.

My dear Father,

I have been quite busy lately arranging our affairs a little for as Chester, Dick & myself had a Ranch & six claims to attend to this summer we concluded to curtail our expenses by disposing of some of our property. We sold three of the claims for $450.—& rented the fourth on shares, so that Dick & myself each work on the Mokelumnes this summer, he in the river & I in the “Pope Claim” & Chester is to stay on the Ranch. We are raising hogs & poultry (Shanghai Chickens, Turkeys etc) which, you must by this time know, is a very profitable business in this country. We have a place
of about 500 acres, all of which is most excellent pasturage & about 200 good grain land. We have four fine springs & plenty of water in the dryest season for any amount of Stock. So that I think we can get a good sum for the place when we wish to sell.

I would not have bound myself to this country by any additional ties had it not been for the fact that I have tripped up so many times & was afraid to risk another year in this State depending upon a mining claim altho’ that promised very fair; not for a “pile,” but for quite a little “raise.”

XIX
Mokelumnes River Sept. 27/53

Dear Father,

Altho’, so far, we have made another complete miss in the mining operation yet we have done pretty well on our Ranche & I think that for the future after this summers work is finished I shall abjure mining “in toto.” Our intentions were to take what funds we made this Summer & make a visit home this Winter & if we had say $700 or $800 each to spare we were going to lay it all out in cows & cross the plains next season. Dick & myself were to make the trip leaving Clint here to cut hay & prepare the Ranche for the reception of the stock. We have not entirely given up the idea yet & should we strick [sic] anything, this season in time to leave here in Dec: or Jan’y—we shall do so.

I have often had moments when I almost resolved to pack up & leave in the next steamer, but to tell you the truth I dare not. I know that the increased valuation of property must in the course of a short time, a few years at farthest, give me a snug little sum; & I am afraid to give it up & take a fresh start, with, what might be called, nothing.

A few days since I performed the operation of extracting a tooth & replacing it—the reason for so doing was the importance of the tooth in mastication & the almost impossibility of getting artificial work here. The operation has thus far succeeded beyond my expectations....
My dear Father,

It is true that I had indulged the hope of being able to return before this, with some little money in my pocket, but things have been very adverse during the last summer & fall, so much so that I was obliged to give up all idea of making the trip.

About two months since a young friend of mine (Mons. Fred Trigalet) told me of a claim which he said was good & which he wished me to work with him. We formed a company of six, & commenced prospecting immediately. I am very well satisfied with the result, & altho the winter has now put an end to our operations still I think there can be no doubt but what the claim will pay well to work next summer. We shall commence again in about three months & finish it in about three or four more and then I shall leave this country.

I shall leave the River tomorrow or next day for the Ranch where I shall occupy myself until May in putting improvements on the place the more readily to effect a sale in the Fall—but should we not be able to sell my part will be worth more & we shall have stuff enough such as wheat etc. etc. to sell to enable the boys to buy my part. If we sell I hope to bring them both home with me.

Dear Father,

Since I have been here I have been engaged in the pursuits of farming such as "splitting out rails" "making fence" etc & have also put up quite a comfortable little frame house in place of the canvass one that the boys have lived in for the year past, so that we are very snug and can receive our friends in good style. Things look pleasant & homelike. Our grain is doing well & our stock increasing fast & we ourselves are fattening on fresh butter, milk & chickens in spite of the hard work (we dont work so very hard, by the way). I like farming very much, that is, California farming—which I suppose is
as different from the plodding make nothing farming of the States, as it is possible to imagine. Everything is worth so much more that is [sic] seems really money making for example—Dick & myself tried our hands at our old business the other ‘day & butchered a yearling calf, when after saving enough to do us for two weeks we sold some 50 dollars worth of meat—think of that for one years growth of one creature.

We have put in about 20 acres of grain—15 of wheat & the balance in barley and oats—that little crop will be worth about $1500—tho' I think we shall use the most of it for feed on the place.

We shall use the wheat for our poultry & we are now making arrangements for doing a big business both in Chickens & Turkeys—which latter are still quite rare as yet in this country. Chester took four “Goblers” to Sacramento the last time he went and sold them readily for seven dollars apiece, & a pair (a Gobbler & hen) bring from 20 to 30 dollars!

We are fencing & improving as fast as possible so as to try and sell next fall when the Emigration comes in, & we are going to commence killing our hogs in a few weeks, as that is the most profitable way of disposing of them.

XXII

Mokelumnes River June 10th/54

My dear Father

. . . Now, we have the “Ranche”. Six months ago we had $3,000—worth of of [sic] Hogs on it. Now we have half as many more & I suppose they are worth about $1,500—!! So much have that stock decreased in value. But we have horses, wagon, turkeys, chickens, crop & Ranche—& if we can sell them, I think I can raise enough to get home, & pay my medical education. . . .

XXIII

Mokelumnes River Sept 9th 1854

My dear Father,

We have just commenced working our claim which we have spent the Summer in fitting up & during which time, I have worked a little the hardest, since my arrival in the delightful country of
Fremont. We have made “Wheels” Pumps, Dams, Sluices, Toms, Troughs, Shafts, Drums & I dont know what all, and finally all is in motion. It is the best arrangement on the river & works almost as accurately as the Steam Engine in the Mint!!

    Now, if the gold is there, it will pay—& if it aint—it wont . . .

Dick was up here a few days since & said that they had commenced selling—they had sold an indefinite amount of hogs & had got the pay—in barley!! I thought that it was a little on the principle of “out of the frying pan into the fire”! but I said nothing. I am as resigned as was Mr. Montezuma when Mr. Cortez was roasting him.

XXIV

Mokelumnes River Oct 15th. 1854

My dear Father

    I dont think that in my last I gave you an account of the destruction of our famous “Mokelumnes Hill”; altho’ 'ere this you may have seen some mention of it in the journals for it was, and is! one of the important places of our State. So strong was the wind & so light the buildings that it was all destroyed in a couple of hours—all in the village were well off, and many quite rich, but in the short space of time between daybreak & sunrise all were penniless. . . .

    Mining, here, this summer, has been dull enough only two or three parties have done well & I am sorry to say that ours are not of that number—altho’ many have done much worse than we have—almost all the claims have proved a total failure & as the places which are now being tried are nearly all very difficult to work (all the easy places having been worked) heavy losses, have been the result. We have paid up all our expenses and are in good hopes yet that we shall make something . . .

    I have just had a visit from Dick who took me off with him to the Ranch to have a final understanding, the result of which is, that Chester & my self have seperated & Dick & I continue together until next Spring, when if I cannot persuade him to leave this country with me, we shall close up.
My dear Father,

You know that I had invested the few hundreds which I had amassed in the farming line with Chester & Dick. I made a sufficiently long trial to feel dissatisfied with the result & sold out making between two & three hundred dollars, but as the boys had no money to let me have, I was tied to the "Mines," having a "hard row to hoe."

Our last claim after paying something more than expenses, which were very heavy, failed—& we abandoned it leaving the "materials" in charge of one of the partners—who, some three weeks after sold all our property & left with the money! I followed him, for the company, as far as San Francisco, found him, but could find no money, I had instructions to endeavour to frighten it out of him, but they were not willing to spend much merely for the satisfaction of putting him in prison. After I had tried my utmost in the way of threatening, I found that it would cost some three hundred dollars to proceed against him, the Lawyers fee amounting at once to one third that sum, & that ,with no prospect of getting any of "the needfull," so I was obliged, as Capt. Tylee says, to "let the tail go with the hide" & make the best of my way back to the mountains, a sadder but not a richer man.

On arriving back on the old river I found my partner Dick, who had just sold out, leaving Chester sole proprietor of the Ranch—& having succeeded in getting a few hundred dollars in money was looking me up for the purpose of "going into something." It was at this time that one of my French associates told me that he was a good "fabricant" of "eau de vie" & all kinds of fine liqueurs such as "Absinthe" "Vermouth" "Curazoa" "Kirchwasser" etc. etc. and as all these were bringing a very high price we thought it good opportunity to try what we could do. So we left the mountains, Dick, Mons. Défanet & myself & came to Sac. City. Here we hired a house with about two acres of ground attached. Dick commenced putting in a garden & Monsieur & myself were soon "en train de faire des fins Liqueurs". At first our prospects were very good and we thought that at last we had found the means of getting out of
this country. We invested as fast as we sold and had every hopes of soon making a very good business but—and that “sacre” word is always in the way—about three weeks since, in consequence of large arrivals at San Francisco, all kinds of liquors commenced falling very rapidly & as a natural consequence sales stopped altogether and with them we have stopped too! I expect to lose some three or four hundred dollars but not discouraged I am going to try and make it up again. It is said that there is nothing like trying—but really I am getting to be a doubter.

XXVI

Sac. City March 23d. 1855

Dear Father & Mother,

After having waded into our Liquor & Syrup speculation about up to our necks, we backed out, settled our books by tearing out the leaves & called it square all around (a practical method of “squaring the circle”). Dick & myself immediately got land from Judge Beatty our neighbor & increased the garden, which we had commenced, fourfold—we have already been to considerable expense & have got it about half planted, we intend raising principally corn & sweet potatoes, with merely enough other stuff to make sale for those articles. I intend this affair shall be my “benefit & last appearance upon these boards” & if after everything is in & coming up right, we can dispose of it – we intend doing so as soon as possible.

XXVII

Sac: City July 4th. 1855.

Dear Father & Mother,

I suppose that ’ere this you have heard of the “grasshopper scourge”. They have, I doubt not caused more loss than all the fires of San Francisco, Sacramento & Stockton combined! It is a perfect realization of the “plague of locusts” in olden times, & is really a curious tho’ sorrowfull sight. At times they pass between us & the sun dimming its brilliancy, like a cloud—& then wherever they alight the superiority of numbers is shown most “heartrendingly”—beautiful & extensive fields of grain waved their heavy heads
in the gentle breeze, filling the farmers heart with gladness but, alas! in the short space of three days they were worthless—absolutely good for nothing, a cumbrance on the ground.

If the straw could be burned & thus in a measure enrichen the earth, it would be something, but that would be too dangerous to be, for a moment, thought of. Fruit trees have been destroyed by “the orchard” & Mosquito bars & even drilling offered no impediment to the flying curse. Gardens, everywhere, have been ruined—striped is the word—& the ground left perfectly naked. We have had about $5000 worth of Cabbages & Corn destroyed on the place which I am tending & I suppose Dick & Crippin have lost twice that on their place. Cabbages are cut completely to pieces leaving in the place of a plant, only a specimen of “filigree work” worthy a place in the “Exposition Universelle” & the corn hangs in rags & ribbons rustling mournfully its own requiem.

We were fortunate enough to have in quite a lot of Sweet Potatoes which the insects have not as yet injured & I think they are pretty safe as the vines have got quite old & tough. If they are spared I shall feel truly thankful that even that much is granted to me, but if, contrary to our expectations they also are taken I believe all the “Job” in me, would be exhausted & I should rebel against the chastenings of “Providence”—however I have not much fear. When the grasshoppers alighted among our produce & I saw that it would be folly to think for an instant of contending with them I felt as tho’, like an angry child, it would do me good to sit down & roar out my rage & disappointment. The past five years, however have taught me to look at such things with a philosophic eye and not be childish, at least outwardly—so I went into the house & smoked a pipe.

Notes of Dr. Flagg enclosed with a map of California

It was a great grass-hopper year [1855] and half our crop was lost, but we saved our sweet potatoes, and it was from these, and my share of Ranch stuff, that, on hearing of the extreme illness and probable almost immediate death of my Mother in August, I left at once for home via Nicaragua arriving in Sept 1855. My idea was to return as promptly as circumstances wd permit, but as my
Mother lived on from month to month, but always a little worse, I
could not think of leaving her thus. I therefore took a course of lectures
in the "Philad. College of Dental Surgery" in which my father was
Professor of Anatomy & Physiology—and graduated in 1856.

In a month after my graduation my mother died—but cir-
cumstances so decidedly pointed to remaining in Philad. that I
did so—and the results seem to have proved conclusively my "life-
work" was to be done there.

My seven years of "experience," was not a success from the one
standpoint of making a fortune—but as I always had plenty, never
wanting for "oro," and gathered that, as I went along, which has
been to me something which no fortune could have replaced, from a
mere money estimate, it has always seemed to me Providential
that all things were as they were.

My California teaching has been worth to me more than its
weight in gold, a thousand fold. I had seven years of a delightfully
varied, wildly exciting and interesting life, I took a full share in
all that seemed to me for the best for the country I was in. I gained
a strong physique—a self reliance—a fund of helpful and aggressive
attributes that have given me a most acceptable life-work; a rare
circle of friends; a wife such as California could not have furnished;
children and grand-children that are a comfort and a delight, and
a home, such as is vouchsafed most rarely.

Que voulez vous de plus?