

Camp of Mr. Gray near San Diego, of a Sunday Sept. 3^d 1849

Dear friends. It is a long time since you have heard from us, but tis not our fault. I wrote you at Acapulco, and this moment is the first that I could send again. "This world's a stage truly, and what a shifting of scenery has there been ~~for~~ ^{for} us, in one half year! The first news we heard here was of the terrible ravages of the Cholera, and I know not now if it has not ere this visited my own sweet home, and taken for its victims some of my heart's idols, that I left there. But I trust in God that it is not so. His hand supported us in trying times, the wing of His protection sheltered in hours of peril, and why should I doubt Him now? If the oft repeated prayers of the wanderer have availed aught at the Throne of Grace, then sorrow has not visited you. You doubtless think us drowned ere this, but God has preserved us, we shall not see San Francisco for 2 months but what of it, I am happy in being here in the possession of life and health, happy perhaps in my ignorance of what may have befallen those I love. We have been a long time getting even here, but I am sure it is for the best, and so my heart is full of gratitude. Not one word from home yet, this has been my bitterest trial. Judge of my disappointment when J. Stone & Melcoun or Gwylers, of the Dramatic Club, told me at Acapulco they had letters for me, and a picture of my own dear wife, but could not get at them, as they were packed in their trunks deep in the lower hold of the *Sve Oregon* but they left the loved ones well and that was much, very much. We left Acapulco and had a long passage to Cape St. Lucas where we were obliged to stop and lay in water & provisions, then came the "tug of war" from that moment, July 1st to now, the wind has not blown from any other quarter than N.W. (dead ahead) 6 hours on this coast. Day after day the same old story, tack & tack. Ready about - hard alee - let go & haul, we would make an Island or point of land, and be a week getting to windward of it making no more than 5 or 10 miles lat. in 24 hours, what a weary

life it seemed to us. Provisions got out, and for two weeks we were on
1 pint of water per day. Water! that drink distilled in Heaven, so bountifully
for the use of Man - water, that sweet delicious drink that gushes from every
mountain side and snows over its pebbly bed, in every valley in New-England.
How we dreamed of it, only to wake with a parched tongue and fevered throat.
Lower California is a barren & desolate Coast, tis almost terrific. There is
mountains of salts of sand, of rock, of lime stone, of clay, but the gentle &
refreshing rain does not fall upon it for 8 months in the year. There is Salt
land, Mountain upon Mountain as far back as the eye could reach in the
weary distance, there is deep ravines & gorges almost fathomless, but their
depths are dry as ashes, even the dew falls not there, It would be useless.

Parched or raw peas were our living at last, and very few of them, but we
came at length to the ruins of an old Jesuit mission 9 miles in shore, a
small river run by it and some 50 acres were made to "blossom as the
rose, by irrigation from it, here we filled the water casks and bought
an ox and ten bushels corn, all the available provisions, 18th sailed again
in the little brig, and 15 including Chas. & self started by land, 103 1/2 leagues
310 1/2 miles to San Diego (St. James) 5 of us came all the way on foot in 10 days
travel, making 38 Miles the last day. We started (C. & self) with less than
\$5.00. between us, but sold some little trinkets by the way so that we had
about the same amount when we reached here. We find the California
Stearns charge 65 dollars from here to San Francisco about 600 miles, so
we have hired out (the whole 5 comrades) in Col. Wetters surveying party
for 2 months or until the next steamer but one goes up, at \$50 per Mo.
We are very contented even with this delay, and why not? 2 of the best
mining months will still be left us, and the healthiest part of the season, we are
not worked hard, and have plenty of excellent food, I had a sore heel & so
I am a cook (my hands ~~swell~~ of dishwater & raw) and Mr. Grey praises my skill
every day - I'll tell you how I do it, tho I was any thing but a cook, I had
considerable confidence in myself and am very careful and thus

I am enabled to "do the things to a turn". I need not tell you that I want to see you, or that I am satisfied now that a small competence would be better at home with those I love, than thousands gained at the expense of every domestic comfort, and the absence of nearly all that makes life pleasant. But I trust I shall have learned contentment, and to prize the blessings that I have enjoyed. While some have started from home long since we did and passed us on the steamer without any apparent hardship, many vessels have fared as hard as we. One from St. Orleans (Ship Florida) sunk with 200 souls, one Spanish vessel lost 100 out of 120 by thirst & starvation several small ones have been wrecked on the coast of Lower California and all supposed to have perished. The Flumbolt, that J. Brown went in was spoken at sea with the ship fever on board, The steamer California lost 7 by cholera, several vessels from Panama to San Francisco have not been heard from at all - and the steamers Mr. Kim of N. O. & Senator & Unicorn of N. Y. round the horn were giving up at the last accounts. Some of them will turn up safe probably, but what reason have we to be thankful to the Giver of all Good, for His kind protection and the health we are enjoying. Plenty is around us, we are again in the area of freedom and among our own countrymen "Alma is merciful," So use the expression of another "this is probably as healthy a spot as there is on God's footstool." The climate is beautiful, day after day the same unclouded sun is over our heads, nothing rusts or mildews, The Frogs peep at night and the cricket chirps like home, and each day day a sweet bird sings the same song, in the same voice as that which cheered my boy childhood, he takes a load off my heart each day, I shall change into a balloon ere long and visit you that way, I am so thankful, Forgive me if time & space do not permit me to mention the names of each that are so dear to me. Many, many acts of kindness are crossing up to keep my memory green, from each and all of you, and I wonder, only that I should ever have left you at all. As Charles writes home by this boat I direct to Petersham, and then you will all hear at the same time

Please send this to Lucy with as little delay as possible, so you are at it again
as Thos said in Sat Rooney - Diggs appeals to him with the scythe, in behalf in
behalf of his friends and self, and borrows the first line from Barry Cornwall

* Touch us gently hand of Time,
Spare our freshness and our prime,
While long leagues divide us;
While dig & toil for wealth
Touch us softly as by stealth,
LARRY THOU beside us.
Touch us gently, even now,
We discern upon each brow
Tracings of thy finger;
We are changed and that is truth,
But Oh spare what ~~is~~ signs of youth
That around us linger.

Flues of health are on our cheeks,
Spite of fortune's frowns & freaks;
And in our eyes are dancing
Hopes all decked in evergreens,
Pointing forth to happy scenes,
Which thou art advancing

We have been here one week and away from the brig 20 days. What we walked
20 days she has not sailed in 20, nor do we expect her for some time yet.
Clark remained on board to take care of the things. When she comes we shall
probably take out our plunder and dissolve all connection with her. It is a
splendid night, this Sunday eve, and the wood is scarce we have a good log
fire, just for its cheerful aspect - The Wolves are howling close by, perhaps
you would not like that part of it - but we are used to it - and care no more
them than for so many cats, and their noise is about as pleasant. You will
like to see this letter, I know you will and I think the hand will look familiar
and the contents gladden your hearts. How I should like to look in upon you now,
how often I do, in my dreams. Have sent to S. G. for some letters, but it is quite
uncertain about my getting them before I go myself which will be, Providence permitting
about the first of Nov. you will have some more there for me about that time for I
shall want the latest advices - Tell every thing to the minutest details, and it shall be
my part to give you a complete history of our eventful voyage. And Toot will
take your ready pen again and give Abner Sanderson a synopsis of this? Twill do
the noble hearted man good to know that we are still in the land of the living -
Clark too was a friend of his. It strikes me that my paper begins to fail.
Tho. but a moiety of what I could say. I trust the messenger will be welcome,
and find you all well & happy. J. Merjamine Howe
yours most devotedly, truly,
affectionately & sincerely

Tho. thy frock is ⁴nearly bare,
Mix no silver in our hair,
Or from our caplets take it,
Thine be to smooth lifes rugged points,
Heal the bruises at the joints,
And pleasant weather make it,
But most, Oh keep our hearts like youth
Pure, unselfish, full of truth,
Warm, artless and confiding;
For comely form or youthful face,
Would show with ill conditioned graces
Were not such traits abiding.
Touch us kindly - friends more dear,
Than life, or all I hope for here,
Will watch for my returning;
Spread thee - with a pleasant flight,
And bring those dear ones to my sight,
For whom my heart is yearning.

I have read the new Testament through since I left you and how much comfort has it been to me. When we left the brig we could not carry much so I took my selection, in case I should never see her again. A pair of socks that belong to Father, but got into my baggage, when I left home. A pair of working trousers my mothers work, my little bag of thread & needles, my wifes handy work & care and a pair of flannel shirts the work of both - the Bible and some medicines. We have always kept the sabbath true as my Fathers parting injunction. Well I must be up betimes and cook for 15 men, and as the fire has got low, and Mr. Grey has done his letters for this mail which closes tomorrow, I will close may the blessing of God be with you. Amen.

Pacific Hymn

- 1 Father may a better life,
For our ev'ning acts atone,
Give us love in place of strife,
Make us Father, all thine own.
- 2 Give us strength the wrong to shun,
Wisdom to embrace the right,
Truth like the unerring sun,
That daily bathes the world in light.
- 3 In Thy goodness may we trust,
With a faith that will not waver,
Alone - we are but feeble dust,
Blindly groping to our homes
Should Thy wisdom deem it meet,
That to us affliction come,
Grant Thy consolation sweet,
Thus supported we are dumb.
- 4 In full of gratitude may we,
In our hearts be ever found,
For the blessings sent from Thee,
For the joys our lives have crown'd.
- 5 When at last our warning lamps,
Changeful flickers dim or clear,
When our brows grow cold and damp,
And our parting hour is near,
- 6 When the lease of life is up,
Send a guiding Angel down,
Fill with hope & peace our cup,
Grant us an immortal crown.

J. B. Howie
Department