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Sacramento City

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My Dearest Sister

I have received but one letter from you since I have been in California, but that does not weigh an atom with me to prevent my writing to you: for I feel secure in the conviction that it is not any indifference but rather the want of leisure on your part that is the occasion of your silence. Until I am brought to believe that the fountain of kindness and true affection which you have ever manifested towards me is shut up, nevermore to be opened it will be to me a source of deep delight and a privilege which I shall not lightly value, to communicate with you, even through the unsatisfactory and tardy medium of the Post. My only regret is, that I cannot hope to produce the same pleasure by my letters, that yours afford me.

I would give a respectable "pile" just now to know what item of California affairs would most interest you. I know that although I have written a great many letters home, I have not made a commencement of the mighty task of giving a definite idea of the innumerable points of interest with which this country abounds; but the difficulty is, I am not able to realize your wishes, or even by guessing to ascertain the specific facts with reference to which you are most in a doubt or about which your curiosity is most excited I must therefore let fly my shaft "at a venture", hoping, that if it does not kill a King, it will do something that may interest or amuse you for a time.

Perhaps you would like to hear of my first trip to San Francisco – the "New York of the Pacific" – which I enjoyed to honor with my

Francisco a few days ago. I had just returned from a professional jaunt of about forty miles up the Sacramento, in which I passed through a beautiful section of the valley and had my curiosity strongly aroused to see other portions of the State. Returning home I found business rather dull and nothing on hand that demanded my immediate attention; so at Two o'clock, wending my way to the Levee I found at the foot of K. Street the noble Steamer New World, just on the point of casting off her cables, prior to turning her prows towards the waters of the "Bay". The bell ceased tolling and the heavy splash of the huge paddles announced that we were on our way. To attempt a sketch of the various classes of characters that composed her passengers would be almost useless. Like our population on land they were from "Every nation under heaven". Representatives of the white race from the fairest Castilian, through every gradation of half-faced ones down to the individuals of that ambiguous dye which renders it doubtful to which side of the line between light and shade they belong and specimens of the darker side of humanity ranging from the last described personages down, down, till the series ended in a jet black, with a charcoal lisped with the long, straight, horse hair locks of a "Digger" or a South Sea Islander, or with the flat nose, the short, crispy, unmistakeable wool of a genuine "Guinea Nigger". To specify with more particularity some of the individuals comprised in this general view, there was the Kentucky Hunter, with his tall straight form, keen quick eyes and embrowned features, dressed in linsey and leather & leaning on his rifle by the side of a group of Dutch, French or Spanish Jews. There was the real John Bull close alongside of his intimate friends and brethren, the Yankee and the

"Celestial". Thar was the Irishman with his loquacious tongue & "emerald" brogue, discoursing to his companion of the delights of "Swate Ireland", and within earshot was a circle of Mexican gallants keeping up an incessant chatter with the fair "Senoritas". I call them fair because everybody does so and though respectful to the sex, I'm bound to say, I have seen no Mexican ladies as yet that were not blessed with as much ugliness as they could conveniently walk under. They are all however possessed of that invaluable and delightful gift, called "gab" in an Extraordinary degree. But I'm off the track. You have an idea of the nature & character of my fellow passengers — let me tell you where they were bound. Those well dressed, genteel, moustached gentlemen are professional gamblers. They live an easy, a merry and luxurious life, and in this country where gambling is no disgrace do not attempt to conceal their occupation. They are off to the "Palaces" & "Salons" of San Francisco, or to the legislature of San Jose to practice for a time in a new field. Those merry faced, happy fellows that watch their baggage with so much care, are miners, bound for home, that Paradise on Earth — with their buckskin purses well filled with dust. Little do they care for the anxieties which torture some, or the golden visions which dazzle others of the heterogeneous crowd of which they form a part and yet an separate. Their profoundest thoughts are of the joys that await them in a reunion with those in a distant land, whose smiles are worth more than their hard-earned treasure. Yonder is a circle who brought with them on board the tools of the shovel, pick & pan of the miner. They have been struck with the "Gold Bluff" excitement and are off for the ever receding, true El Dorado as fast as steam can carry them

Hre are merchants, - some for New York & Philadelphia in search of merchandize of all kinds, others for Chili to bring up cargoes of flour & sugar, others for the South Sea islands to supply us with potatoes, onions, beans &c, while others again are bound for the gates of the Celestial Empire to drive some money making bargain with the "mar velous of The Sun & Moon". The dialects of this mass of humanity are as different as their places of nativity, and the subjects of discussion among them are probably as various as the tongues in which they are discussed. But they have occupied my attention too long. Let us look abroad, The Sacramento is a beautiful river, - winding smoothly and gracefully along through a rich valley and skirted with forest and copses which in the season of their most luxuriant foliage must be extremely beautiful. Here and there as we glided swiftly and almost noiselessly along, we passed the rude cabin and diminutive garden spot of some Enterprising industrious Squatter who was bravely doing his share of the great work of reducing the wildness to cultivation and causing it to blossom as the rose. Occasionally too we met some noble and graceful vessel, slowly making her way up the stream with a rich cargo for our merchants, or passed others at anchor waiting for a more favorable breeze. Two years ago this stream was silent and undisturbed. No human dwellings appeared along its bank save the rude huts of the "Diggers" or the scarcely less rude cottages of the Mexican, and no vessel rippled its placid bosom save the light and fragile bark of the fisherman. Now, the ever increasing din of civilization, resounds through the forests from the rising till the setting Sun, and the gently flowing waters are lashed into white crested waves and dashed furiously against the echoing shores by the plunging prows and ponderous paddle wheels

of "ocean steamers". I could not obtain a very fair view of the country back from the river, but it seemed to be a level and generally fertile valley extending nearly to the mountains, fifty or one hundred miles distant. I was most anxious to get a good view of the new "Port of Entry", Benicia, which threatens to become a rival of Sacramento, and which is said, by the way, to be a very beautiful, if not a very important place, but the sun set and darkness veiled the scene, about an hour before we reached it. I was still more desirous to see the new site chosen by our present Legislature for the Capital of the State. It is on a beautiful slope that extends to the water's edge on the North side of the Sacramento which here widens into a ~~expanse~~ miniature bay running in a westerly direction. As yet the ground is unoccupied, but soon will be, by the workmen on the public buildings. The land is generously donated to the State by a Mexican, named Vallejo and the town is to bear his name,- (pro. val-yá-ho). He has also pledged himself to pay the princely sum of $400,000 towards the construction of the State Edifices. So we may expect to have a Capital that will vie with that of any of the older States. The darkness prevented our from seeing this interesting spot.

Thence to San Francisco we probably passed through the most delightful scenery on the trip but I lost it all and only went on deck when at ten o'clock the announcement was made that we were approaching the city. Soon we were in view of towns and lights glimmering in the distance and were cautiously threading our way among the shipping in the harbor, whose bare masts towering high in air on every side, formed ~~like~~ almost a forest around us. At length we reached

the end of a long pier, built upon piles driven down in the mud - extending out over the waters of the bay for ¼ of a mile. Here we were landed, having made the 160 miles which intervene between the two cities in about 8 hours. Anxious to improve every moment of my stay in this, the centre of the wealth and power of the "Eureka State", I walked about the principal streets until finding that but little was to be known of San Francisco at the night time, I sought lodging, determined to take with the sun the first glance at it in the morning. Accordingly I was out at an early hour, wishing for a position whence I might take in the harbor with its mass of shipping and the city at a glance. I climbed a high hill which rose on the north. You must recollect that San F. is not on the coast but is situate on the west side of San F. bay from which an outlet leads to the ocean ten or twelve miles distant. This outlet opens at the northern Extremity of the city. I reached the summit of the hill: the sun was just rising and tinged the spires of the city and the mast of the shipping with a gorgeous golden hue. A fog was slowly floating over the scene, or the effect would have been much more striking. As it was, I was was so much occupied that I did not think of looking in any other direction. I turned around. To the north at the base of the hill was the outlet from the bay Expanding into a broad and beautiful harbor. Following it's course to the westward, I now for the first time observed that what I had taken to be a mass of vapor far in the distance was the illimitable and boundless Pacific. To me the sight was deeply interesting. The innumerable events with which history has associated it, the deeds which have been performed upon its waters, the nations which line its shores all came to mind at once, and I only regretted

that I was compelled to enjoy the splendor of the scene alone. Yes! in a city of twenty five thousand souls, I knew no mortal with whom I could interchange the thoughts which this scene induced. I gazed. till I was tired, — thought of the ocean on the coast of which I was born, and of the long distance that I had travelled to obtain a first glimpse of "salt water"; — and I assure you did not forget the present resting place in the valley of the mississippi midway between the two oceans. I thought also of the fact that twelve years of my life were passed in the valley of the Connecticut, twelve years in that of the "Father of Waters", & wondered whether it was to be my lot to spend twelve years in the valley of the Sacramento. What do you think of it? But I became tired and wended my way down again into the busy streets, and I'm sure it was impossible to think of any thing except that which was directly before me. When I got up, there was but little stir, — now every thing was full of life and commotion. The streets were crowded with carts, waggons and vehicles of every description, each one of which was rattling along as if the existence of the city depended upon his speed. I entered the public square — the "grand plaza" — and strolled through the gambling houses which open their spacious doors to the public at all hours inviting the gamester and all the rest of the world to enter and try their fortune at Monté. They are the largest and finest rooms in the city and may literally be called Palaces. Their decorations are very rich. Large and costly pictures adorn the walls, splendid chandeliers depending from the ceiling give the rooms at night the brilliancy of day, while music of the highest order tempts you when you would leave to tarry longer. This is a portion of the splendid machinery with which the professional gamesters work the ruin of the inexperienced. As yet our Legislature has made no move towards checking this evil, but it is to be hoped that they will do so this session. But there is nothing save these public establishments which renders San F. very different from

tea boxed cities on the Atlantic side. Saving Sats
[illegible] with the "Sight" of time through of business.
Entering the book store I took a Account I made such
additions to my Lady Library as my shallow purse and
the [illegible] would permit. A copy of the Statutes passed
at the last Session, for instance, I longed at, thirty dollars, but
took one that had been a little damaged at entrance, And
at the house was inspection. This was a matter which had
long been [illegible] to attend to. I now felt comparatively rich.
Sixteen time passed - three o'clock - the steamer hour of departure
quickly arrived. I had taken a good view of the city the harbor
the innumerable vessels that crowded it, the Steamboats at the wharves
the U.S. troops that were just embarking for the Southern mines to
relieve the Nancy Indians, and was perfectly satisfied and willing to
return. The last bale of freight was taken on, the plank hauled in
the rope cast off, and the steamer slowly swung around turning
her head homeward. Soon we were clear of the Cove with which
the Contra Costa coast combined to form a dashing at a good
East rate across the smooth waters of the Bay towards the mouth
of the Sacramento. I ascended the upper deck and as we passed
the outlet into the ocean, turned my eyes toward the "golden gate"
hoping to get a last glance at the waters of the Pacific, but my po-
sition was not sufficiently elevated and I was disappointed
Island which however has gracefully sliding down the light
mast of the bay and from the mast head of one about a
mile distant floated the White Cross of St George. I thought of
England and that truly, "her hand is on the deep." But night came on,
and that too long, before we reached Valley - that is to be. Sis-
sponited [illegible], and Spies, of dashing waves and rumbling
machinery was [illegible] Within I awoke all was silent and
the first rays of morning [illegible] the cabin windows.
We were at the wharf in Sacramento.

I will now give you a word respecting myself. My health still continues most excellent, with the exception of a very slight headache and a day or two of sore throat, I have not had an hour's ill position this winter. I am fleshy as a bear. I think the climate a very healthy one, in spite of the terrible mortality which prevailed last fall. That I think is not justly attributable to the climate but to numerous other causes. The weather this Winter has been indescribably delightful. I wish you could have been here to enjoy it. You have often read of the "perpetual Spring" of some certain localities. If we have not had a fair specimen of such weather this winter, I doubt whether it can be found upon the Earth. According to the scientific observation of Prof. Blake of St Louis, now in this city, our city of Sacramento is more favored in this respect than the "Eternal city" Rome, in the midst of Italian atmosphere. Farmers have been ploughing ever since the 1st of May, and many have been planting garden seeds. Even now, fresh vegetables are found in the city market. Three weeks ago, Mr Hitchcock showed me radishes as large as my finger, which had grown on their grounds.

I think I have written that Mr Crowe went to San Jose (pro Hozáy) (I must learn you to talk Spanish when I get back) - early in December. He expected through Cook Campbell's influence to get a clerkship in the Legislature, but found it not worth his acceptance. His bro. Saml. has written to him to come home & practice in St Louis, and he has resolved to do so. He has not made a cent to take back but has been getting in debt and will have to borrow his passage money. I think before I do this, my bones will repose beneath the sands of the Sacramento. He wrote me some thing about Cook which I will repeat as it may be interesting to you. — leaving you to judge whether it should go any farther.

"Campbell is to be married, sine engage in a short time to a Mexican "Grejeta" I have not seen her but she is said to be very beautiful and wealthy. Cook seems to be perfectly enchanted. In fact he is not to be called an American any longer. He has great predilections for Greserism any how! He is down on the Americans and his associations are very much Mexican, and will be more so after his nuptials. Another secret. It is an ecclesiastical law which I have learned in Mexico and is the same wherever the Catholic Church has a foothold that no foreigner or Protestant can join in wedlock a catholic subject without first being baptised or Christened by the Priest. To obtain his fair object, Cook has taken these requisite steps and attends scrupulously the Catholic Worship. This act of Campbell's has taken place where society has no force. To have taken such a step in the States would have required a little more moral courage than Cook possesses."