

Sacramento City Dec. 23rd

My Dear Father

In compliance with the hint contained in your welcome letter of Sept. 5th I now proceed to deputize you as "Speaker" for the inmates of the "White Cottage". It seems as though "Uncle Samuel" were growing a little stingy and parsimonious in these his latter days, but in consideration of the many benefits which he has conferred upon his large and numerous family, and of which I myself have reaped the advantage, I will overlook the trait in his disposition and comply with his directions.

Last week the mail came up from Panama but brought nothing for me. I mean in the way of letters; for on inquiring at the Newspaper Box the clerk handed me a numerous package, the description of which I at once recognized as the familiar handwriting of my dear mother. I have carried it in my pocket ever since and whenever a leisure moment occurs, I draw it forth and read with deep interest "news from many lands", New York City, Springfield, and Palmyra. It is not necessary for me to utter any particular expression of thanks to mother for thus reminding me. She knows that I am not unmindful of the kind hand that envelopes them. As I recd. a similar package by a previous mail I hope that I am often to be favored with such tokens of remembrance.

Tuesday was the anniversary of the "Landing of the Pilgrims", and Mr. Benton preached a sermon appropriate to the occasion. Being unfortunately out of the city I did not hear it which I very much regret. We had announced his intention on the previous

our Sabbath, but it slipped my mind and at the time of leav-
ing the City I did not think of it. As he treated the subject
with his usual ability, it was no doubt a highly interesting
discourse. I believe I gave you an intimation some time
since of the fact that a day for "Thanksgiving" had been ap-
pointed by our Governor, he selected Sunday, the 29th Nov. as
the most appropriate day that he could think of, though had he
not been a "Puki", and of course supposed to know nothing
about these things, he would most probably have been ad-
judged "a little cracked". But notwithstanding this inno-
vation upon the sacred custom of selecting Thursday, I
resolved to keep and commemorate the day ^{so far} ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~above~~
be done by our Sankos alone. The announcement of
Mr Benton that he would preach a "Thanksgiving sermon",
at eleven o'clock on that day, seemed to propel the
rapid approach of the "day of joy" along the track of time.
Only one thing was wanting, but that was a very important
item under the circumstances - a well grounded hope of
finding a regular Thanksgiving sermon, without which
it is generally supposed, thanks would be "few and far between".
All anxiety on this point was however dispersed by the notice that
the Convent City Rev. would, on that occasion sermon up
a regular sermon in commemoration of the day. But also
for the stupidity of our Chief Magistrate, Thursday was a fine
and day, but Saturday brought heavy clouds and floods
of rain. From sunrise until eleven it poured down
incessantly and I then was obliged to relinquish my hope
of hearing the sermon. At twelve it was no better &
my visions of roast turkey were lost amid falling fogs
and melting waters. The "feast of Reason" and the

"flood of the soul" were alike unattended and unappreciated, and thus I lost the pleasure and the honor of observing, according to custom, the first Thanksgiving on the shores of the Pacific.

I found however that my misfortune in not hearing the discourse was the misfortune of many; and the next day, at the request of his congregation, Mr Benton repeated it to an unusually ^{large} and since grown out by the ~~early~~ remarkably fine weather which followed the rain. It was beautifully written, and though Mr Benton's delivery has always struck me as being dry poor and inefficient, yet on this occasion he seemed roused and excited by the subject, and read it in such a ~~more~~ forcible manner as to command the entire and uninterrupted attention of his hearers and at one or two passages to draw tears from their eyes. It was determined to request a copy for publication which has been done and by this mail. I transmit you a copy. If it interests you as much as it did me, it will pay for sending it so far. I will say however that though I am not prepared to endorse all his beautiful predictions of the future progress & prosperity of the "Emancipated State", yet in many particulars in most of his views, he is correct. He is a thorough bred Yankee, being from Boston. With the sermon I also send you a copy of each of the newspapers now published in Sacramento. Two of them have sprung into existence since my arrival, and demonstrate the fact that Californians are a reading people.

Until very lately political parties have had no existence among us. There seemed to be no particular necessity for making the distinction known in the state, between aspirants for office and the voters at the polls, supported without reference to party predilections the individual whom they conceived best fitted for

the post. But the Democrats were not satisfied with this good
but very ancient way of choosing officers. Thinking they
had a majority - which was conceded by the Whigs - in the city
and County, they determined to avoid themselves of this
opportunity of forcing the public offices with one of
their own stamp. So they had a meeting, laid down a
platform, marshaled their forces and dared the Whigs
to oppose them. Thus challenged the Whigs met and organized
the party and at an election for the office of Mayor beat
the Democrats badly. This was not expected, as the Dem.
had a very popular candidate in the field, and had more
over been very active in their own cause. On Saturday last
another election was held to fill the vacancy in the Legislature
caused by the death of one of the representatives of Sac. Co.
Grown disappeared by their unexpected defeat previously, the
Democrats used every imaginable effort to succeed. They had
meetings during the week, which were addressed by their
"big guns" and in fact looked so formidable in their
light procession, on the night previous to the election that
some of the Whigs began to doubt their final success.
But the next day they marched to the polls and at dark
the result was announced in the City - Whig majority 246
The Democrats were thunderstruck, but hoped the news
from the Country would set them right. Most aw-
fully they awaited the return of the Courier, but
when they came they brought the doleful news that
the Whig majority throughout the County was 150.
This gives the Whigs a majority in the State Legislature
and secures to them a Whig Senator in Congress in
place of Mr Fremont, whose term expires in March
next. It was this fact which made the election so im-
portant, and it was conducted with more zeal and
enthusiasm than I ever saw exhibited in the States.
Mr Fremont is politically dead, dead, dead. He could
be more so now he sleeping beneath the sad of the
beautiful valley which he has made his home. Per-
haps he thinks California ungrateful after so long
troubled him in office after being the pioneer to her shores.

When all the moments of our visits made up of such days
as this I would go further than he did and say that not even Italy,
herself could match California in the mild and balmy influences
of her atmosphere. But this of course cannot last long, indeed
it will be a little singular if another day of such surpassing beauty oc-
cur this winter, clouds, rain & wind must in the natural course
of events soon follow.

Mr. Bloom who for several weeks was quite unwell has now entirely
recovered and is as fat as a "grizzly". He left for San Francisco a
few days ago on business; will return soon. Business is good
and promising to increase. Our city is constantly improving
Yesterday was completed the Levee which surrounds the entire
city and is 5 or six miles in length. Its cost was about
125,000 dollars. Yesterday morning I went down to the wharf
to look at a new boat just up from San Francisco. She is an
ocean steamer built at New Orleans, to ply between that city and
Galveston or Havana. She was brought around the Horn &
for some time past has been running between San Fran.
and the Isthmus. Thinking the Sacramento trade sufficient
to support her she is now to run between here and San Fran.
She is a noble vessel and stood as a queen among the ~~other~~
boats which surrounded her - several of which by the way were not
to be "snuged at." The scene on the river was indeed a busy one
and to a novice in such things extremely interesting. Vessels from
all parts of the world lay along the banks, discharging or waiting for
cargoes, steamboats were passing & re-passing up and down
the river to various ports heavily laden with goods and passengers,
and were it not for the grass trees along the banks, the
ugly stuprups in the straits and the dense thickets on the other
side of the river, it would have seemed as though I was transported
back to some old settled portion of the world. If I am not mistaken
Sacramento City on her river is rapidly approximating what Albany
was on the Hudson, at the time we passed through them on our way
to Missouri.

Christmas Day December 25th

I add a short postscript to wish you and all the loved ones in No. a "very merry and a truly happy Christmas. Could I be with you
even for a few short hours to join in the universal gladness on this
occasion I would not be so happy; the happiest Christmas that
my life has afforded. But even as it is I find I have a tendency to do
just my share and to enjoy it more than to a great extent.
I expect that no person on the earth would more gladly comply in
the gift of the Christmas Cup, than this fair valley. Last night was one of
the most beautiful that I ever beheld. The wind blew hard all
day yesterday but at dusk it ceased and the most perfect calmness
prevailed. A cloud of mist appeared to ~~diminish~~ ^{mar} the beauty of the scene
but the stars shone brightly. The gold shows out in ^{the} gorgeous constellation
that we see in the most clear sharp frosty nights in No. But here was but little or
no frost and the air was almost at zero and mild as the breath of Spring.
It was my intention to attempt to describe it. And this morning the
sun came down in a magnificent gold in an unusual splendor which he
seemed to have dozed for the occasion. The morning breeze was only
felt and it may be presumed to judge from the descriptions that I
have read of the climate of Italy that favored Olin Carnot boast of
a lovelier air than this. You probably saw Col. Mulro's letter
with respect to the climate of Vagrange and furnished with the flag,
in which he gives a glowing description of this climate.

But his political Career whether dictated by sinister motives or caused by ignorance of the wants of his constituents, has been so wretchedly unpopular, that he need not ever apply to Californians to aid him in obtaining any office higher than that of Justice of the Peace.

Our rainy season commenced on the 19th of Nov. with a very heavy rain which lasted two or three days. Since then we have had more or less rain every week, but there have been many intervals of one, two, three & four days, since, of bright and pleasant weather. Probably a stroke of clear, sparkling day once occurred. The temperature at no time has been cold, if I may except two or three nights when we had sharp frosts which produced out of doors ice $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch in thickness. Frequently the sun throws down his rays with such fervor as to remind us of the warm days of May in Missouri. The short, close cropped grass near the city preserves its verdant appearance, but does not grow so much as I had expected it would from the representations of individuals.

To day Monday 23rd - the sun shines brightly in a sky perfectly free from clouds, if I except one or two white, thin, gauze-like vapours which are lazily floating about, as if they had lost all their companions; or were leisurely on their way to join a long line of white mists which have settled themselves upon the brow of the Sierra. The wind most usually blows most strongly from the N.W. and seems to be slowly increasing in force; but it is not the stiff, sharp, piercing, blast that howls around the dwelling of the North. It is cool to the sun, but not uncomfortably so, and a dry little fire in my diminutive stove serves to keep me perfectly comfortable.

But as regards the power of the winter winds, California is not far behind other parts of the world. A few nights since, a breeze which at sundown was gently sighing over the valley, increased at midnight into almost a hurricane. The building in which I was spending the night with a friend in the country, shook and trembled as though in great fear of being overthrown, but it stood the blast unharmed. Next morning however on reaching the city I found that many

Buildings of larger size and greater pretensions had suffered con- siderably. Several, which stood on posts two feet above the ground, were dislodged from this elevated position and seated upon the ground a few feet distant without serious injury. One of these, "The Quincy House" containing a family, was removed so gently, as to cause them little or no alarm. I saw it the next morning, removed several feet from its former position and it seemed surprising that the force which could accomplish such a feat, did not overthrow the structure and crush the inmates, so much for California mountain winds.

Yonder you a singular sight; at least to the uninitiated, - a drove of Mexican pack mules, twenty in number, returning from a trip to the mines, driven by two of the "natives" in their costume of their countrymen. The huge pack saddles, now empty, would at first sight strike you as the load itself. They consist of two broad, short, flat leather bags, stuffed with hay or some other suitable substance united together at the top and thrown over the back of the mule to protect his vertebrae and ribs from the severe and cruel galling of the packs which they are forced to carry. The girths of these saddles are made of leather or horsehair woven by Mexican skills, and are from six to eight inches in width. To break them is an impossibility, instead of buckles they are fastened with tough thongs of rawhide which are so contrived that they give the driver an astonishing power in drawing the girth together, when saddling his mules, and enable him to compress the sides and bend the very ribs of his patient slaves, until it seems as though life itself would be squeezed out of them. But they say this cruelty is necessary to keep the saddle in its place when ascending the cliffs and descending the precipices of the mountain passes where the mines are to be found. From two to three hundred pounds of flour, are generally packed upon a single mule; the quantity of corn, being proportioned to its size and strength. In the same way they transport all other kinds

of merchandise, over roads which no white man could
travel, and into deep and darksome glens which no man could
inhabit for want of food, were it not for the services of the
useful and much abused Portegies. The Indians, their drivers
who are usually employed to conduct these "trains", are about as feeble and
as intelligent as their brute servants. In the summer season they ride slow-
ly along behind the drove, carelessly whistling or singing a gleesome strain
now and then scolding some stubborn mule which in spite of their threats
will turn aside his head to crop a spin of grass or an overhanging
thrust. Their dark complexion, long, loose, jet black locks and demi-
savage accoutrements and dress, leave you in doubt at first, whether
they are not real, bona fide sons of the forest, - live Siggeer Indians. But the
evening doctory calls forth a volley of abuse, and the soft, smooth, musi-
cal accents contrast so strongly with the harsh gutturals of the Siggeers
that you hesitate not to pronounce them the descendants of the noble and
chivalrous adventures of sunny Spain. But ah! how dissonant.
Nothing but the dark, fire-lit, flashing eye and the melodious intonations
of the voice, remain to mark any claim of kindred to their
and accomplished ancestors. I am now describing the lower
class, - those who were born to, and who aspire to, nothing higher than
the station of mule drivers. Of the higher class, we saw a number in the cities.
They are all, without exception, gamblers of exquisite skill, and con-
sider it no crime, no impeachment upon their fair fame, no devia-
tion from the strict rules of morality to spend their allotted years
in dealing cards in all the various games, ^{with} which the science of gamb-
ling makes them thoroughly conversant.

I must bring my letter to a close as I am clearly approximating the outer
boundaries of the second sheet. I often wonder if I do not weary you with my
long and procerely monotonous letters. As you perceive I do not express
any opinion with reference to the propriety of Emigrants coming
from Missouri to California. I do not think I have as
yet seen or heard all that is to be seen and heard, and should
the future develop anything which should reverse an opinion
sent back upon that subject, I should regret very much.

Can thing heaven's sake say, and that ever imprudently - that is
misunderstand, and certainly, and making a representation
showed him, I'm sorry to see him. In answer and different
of the impression can be made for friends to be compared to
and the coming in the way of justice and Congress
having made it an impression for a family, but of course
the most important part of those who ~~will~~ and friends the future
glory of the name, but the family should come and make the
from former friends. For the convenience and bringing in
friends made to the system. But I'm sure that many more
than of any other nation for friends.

SACRAMENTO CITY
DEC 26

Ed. Elias Winchester
West Springfield
Shelby County
Missouri



Please tell mother that if she is not able to write me a whole
letter, I hope she will find time and strength to write a long present
to your mother. I return her many thanks for the last one and wish to
many such. I'll do my best to show come to the conclusion that to be
either entirely forgotten me or think that I take no interest in him
As I can discover the last supposition I must admit the first
which he knows is very gratifying to my feelings. He is entitled
to many thanks for his remembrance. I shall regularly remember
them. For now, I have no message of importance as he will claim
my next letter. I'm sure that I do not forget her. Your
how dear father that I may hear from you again very soon. Your
last was highly interesting and claims my kindest thanks. I'm
in my warm affection to mother and with her, and believe me to be as ever your most
affectionate son, Elisha