

NEW-FOUND LETTERS OF JOSIAH GREGG,
SANTA FÉ TRADER AND HISTORIAN

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY JOHN THOMAS LEE

JOSIAH GREGG was born in Overton County, Tennessee, July 19, 1806, of Scotch-Irish and Pennsylvania-German stock. His mother's maiden name was Susannah Schmelzer or Smelser, as it was later written. The family removed to Illinois in 1809, and thence to Missouri three years later. Being a delicate child, he was not called upon to do the usual amount of work on the frontier farm. He is said to have been an omnivorous reader, and it is certain that he made the most of his educational opportunities; but precisely what these opportunities were we do not know.¹

It has been stated by some historians (there is a family tradition to this effect) that he studied medicine and was graduated from a Philadelphia medical college. In consequence, he has generally been called Doctor Gregg. Mr. William E. Connelley, Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, says: "Josiah Gregg chose for his life work the medical profession, and his family provided the funds necessary to fit him for it. He was sent to a medical college in Philadelphia, and from that institution he graduated with honors. I have made no effort beyond inquiries of the members of present Gregg families to ascertain the name of this college. They were unable to give the name or fix the dates of his attendance there, though it

¹For biographical details see William E. Connelley, "Dr. Josiah Gregg, Historian of the Old Santa Fé Trail," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Association Proceedings* for 1919-1920, [334]-348. Mr. Connelley was a pioneer in searching out facts relating to Gregg, and historians are much indebted to him. In passing, it may be stated that he still clings to the belief that Gregg was a physician.

was affirmed that he was in Philadelphia four or five years. He must have applied himself with diligence to his studies and have included others than those pertaining to medicine, for he had many additional accomplishments, as may be perceived from his writings."¹

Family tradition at best is hardly to be relied upon, and Mr. Connelley frankly says that he did not verify the statements made to him in this regard. The question, Was Josiah Gregg a Physician? has never been approached in a thoroughgoing historical manner, and for that reason I shall attempt to give a more authoritative answer than has yet been forthcoming. My research has brought me inevitably to the conclusion that it is extremely doubtful that the trader ever studied medicine for any considerable period, much less became a full-fledged physician who graduated from a medical school "with honors." Not a scintilla of evidence favoring this view has been discovered. Nor are my doubts in this connection of very recent origin. For some time it has seemed significant to me that Gregg, as far as I have been able to learn, never spoke or wrote of himself as a doctor. Indeed, he appears to have been singularly destitute of any scientific knowledge of disease or hygiene. If he had been a doctor in a true sense he would, I think, have mentioned that fact to John Bigelow (1817-1911) who became intimate with him in 1844—an intimacy that was kept alive for some years by correspondence. On the contrary, writing of his friend in 1907, Mr. Bigelow says: "His [Gregg's] notions of hygiene were rather vague, and he suffered naturally from his confinement [in a New York hotel while preparing his book for publication] and from lack of freedom, air and exercise to which he had been accustomed for so many years on the Prairies."²

¹Connelley, *op. cit.*, 339.

²Letter from John Bigelow to L. Bradford Prince, September 12, 1907, printed in Ralph E. Twitchell, "Dr. Josiah Gregg, Historian of the Santa Fé Trail," *Publications of the Historical Society of New Mexico*, No. 26, Santa Fé, [1924].

What are the facts? Philadelphia in Gregg's day was a truly desirable place for any embryo doctor, for it was easily the medical Mecca of America. It had two medical schools: the University of Pennsylvania (1765) and Jefferson Medical College (1825). The former graduated its first class in 1768, the latter in 1826. The records of these two institutions have been carefully examined, and the name of Josiah Gregg does not appear in them either as a student or as a graduate. However, in the period under consideration, the matriculation lists of the University of Pennsylvania include three students named Gregg: John who graduated in 1826; Richard who graduated in 1824; and William who graduated in 1831. They are all registered as being residents of Pennsylvania at the time of their matriculation. One or all of these Greggs may have been related to Josiah; indeed it is even possible, though not probable, that John was a brother. Josiah had a brother of that name, nearly six years his senior, who was born April 25, 1800. If this relationship could be proved, a logical explanation of the family tradition would be at hand. For after the lapse of many years it would be easy enough to confuse the names of Josiah and John.

At the time this John Gregg was graduated from the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania Josiah was about twenty years of age, and if the doubtful relationship which I have suggested could be established, the younger Gregg might have studied for a time in his brother's office.

At that period, the state of Missouri did not require graduation from an accredited school as a prerequisite to medical practice. It was the custom for students of medicine to study with a preceptor for two years or more; and many entered practice directly from the offices of their teachers. A fair proportion took one or more courses in a chartered medical school (sixteen weeks in length) and received the degree of M.D.

Other medical colleges, with dates of organization,

in existence when Josiah Gregg would have received a medical education are: King's College, New York (1768); Dartmouth (1797); College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York (1810); Yale, Medical Department (1810); College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Western District, New York (1812); Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky (1817); Medical College, Ohio (1819); Bowdoin College (1820); Medical College of South Carolina (1824); Rush Medical College, Chicago (1837). The records of most of these institutions have been fruitlessly examined in connection with this investigation.¹

It is barely possible that Gregg studied medicine for a time in the office of a local practitioner, thus giving rise to the tradition that he was a doctor. But even this claim would rest upon a very slender, almost negligible, historical foundation, and I think that historians will do well to discard the professional prefix which they have indulged in for so many years. Gregg himself was the last man who would wish to sail under false colors, and it is certain that were he still with us he would be quite content to be known as plain Josiah Gregg, trader and historian.

Due to frail health, an adventurous spirit, and an indomitable will, Gregg took up the life of a trader on the plains. For many years he pushed his commercial pursuits over the old Santa Fé trail, and later became the recognized historian of that romantic and stirring movement. He appears to have been at the front during the Mexican War, probably as a newspaper correspondent, certainly not as a soldier. Later he went to California, enduring many hardships, and died there tragically, February 25, 1850. And there he rests in an unknown grave.

Josiah Gregg will always be remembered with gratitude as the author of the western classic, *Com-*

¹Dr. Irving S. Cutter, Dean of Northwestern University Medical School, and Mr. Charles Perry Fisher, Librarian of the College of Physicians, Philadelphia, have been very helpful to me in gathering these data.

merce of the Prairies, first published in 1844.¹ He came to New York late in 1843 seeking not only a publisher, but (being distrustful of his own literary powers) an editor as well to whip his journals and other data into shape for the printer. He was finally directed to John Bigelow, then a scholarly young lawyer with a decided itch for writing. A bargain was struck and both went to work with much enthusiasm. As Gregg furnished the materials, Bigelow gave the literary form and expression.² Nevertheless, it cannot be emphasized too much that the trader was essentially the author of the book, and that its authenticity has never been shaken. The work is remarkable for its accuracy, and historians will always rely upon it with the utmost confidence. It has an enduring place in our western literature.

Mr. T. J. Fitzpatrick, Department of Botany of the University of Nebraska, has conveyed to me the rather surprising intelligence that Gregg is known to botanists because he collected plant specimens in the course of his wanderings. Indeed, a number of species were named after him—a fact which seems to have escaped the attention of the historical fraternity. This disclosure throws an interesting sidelight upon Gregg's activities, and further stamps him as a careful and intelligent observer of whatever came under his eye. He discovered and reported many undescribed plants, and his name is associated with at least six: *Acacia Greggii*, *Cereus Greggii*, *Fraxinus Greggii*, *Sargentia Greggii*, *Linum Greggii*, and *Porophyllum Greggii*.

Josiah Gregg's interest in botany appears to have been due to the example and influence of his friend, Dr. George Engelmann of St. Louis. For the most part, new specimens were sent to Dr. Engelmann, but

¹The book has appeared in numerous editions, and the original issue (New York, 1844) is now a scarce item. It fetches a good price at auction and is much sought after. The two volumes were issued at \$2.00. Think of that, ye collectors of 1930!

²John Thomas Lee, "The Authorship of Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* for March, 1930, 451-466.

there is reason to believe that some were forwarded to Dr. Asa Gray. The trader's botanical collections were principally made between Chihuahua and the mouth of the Rio Grande, "particularly in the neighborhood of Monterey and Saltillo in Nueva Leon, a region which only one botanist explored before him—Jean Louis Berlandier, a Belgian, and a pupil of the elder Candolle, who first reached Mexico in 1828, and resided until his death in the city of Matamoras, where he established himself as an apothecary."¹

In 1894 the late Charles S. Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, printed an editorial article on Josiah Gregg which seems to have eluded the vigilance of our Western historians, and would have eluded me but for the scholarly prompting of Mr. Fitzpatrick.² I have found no reference to it in print. Brief though it is, Mr. Sargent's article is of considerable value to the investigator; for, in addition to references to Gregg as an amateur botanist, it contains a letter written by John Bigelow in which he recounts his connection with the author of *Commerce of the Prairies*. This letter differs somewhat from a similar account which he wrote for L. Bradford Prince³ thirteen or fourteen years later, and, moreover, touches upon some subjects not discussed in the second recital. For example, Mr. Bigelow gives the only known description of Gregg's personal appearance in these words: "I found Mr. Gregg to be at that time a man about forty and about five feet ten inches in height, though from the meagreness of his figure looking somewhat taller; he had a fine head and an intellectual cast of countenance and temperament, though his mouth and the lower part of his face showed that he had enjoyed to but a limited extent the refining influence of civilization. He had fine blue eyes and an honest, although not a cheerful expression, due, as I afterward

¹From Mr. Sargent's article mentioned in the next paragraph.

²"Josiah Gregg" in *Garden and Forest* (New York), issue of January 10, 1894.

³Printed in full in both Twitchell and Lee, *op. cit.*

learned, to chronic dyspepsia. He was withal very shy and and as modest as a school-girl."

Then, too, Mr. Bigelow makes this revealing statement: "Although Mr. Gregg's early education had been limited and his reading not extensive, he had a vague notion, not unnatural to a frontier man of reflection, that there is no fame so enduring as authorship, nor any way in which a man may multiply himself so many times by the forces of other men as by writing a book. His whole soul, therefore, was completely absorbed in the work upon which we were engaged, as if it involved the destiny of empires. He had no family; he had a competence for all his moderate wants, and he dreamed of a fame from this work which should place him among the authors of his generation and compel his acquaintances to look up to him as he himself was accustomed to look up to those whose writings had delighted or instructed him."

The letters here printed were all addressed to John Bigelow, who later became a distinguished author and diplomat, and were placed at my disposal by his daughter and literary executor, Miss Grace Bigelow of New York City. Being historically-minded, Miss Bigelow with rare kindness searched her father's files for papers written by Josiah Gregg; and, in consequence, I am now able to give to the world nine letters hitherto unpublished. In 1907 Mr. Bigelow sent to L. Bradford Prince of Santa Fé copies of at least seven letters addressed to him by the trader, and these were many years later printed by the Historical Society of New Mexico.¹ Possibly the letters here given were overlooked by Mr. Bigelow, although, with the exception of two, they are not a whit less interesting than those sent to Mr. Prince. Miss Bigelow has turned the originals over to me with instructions for their final disposition. The letters, printed *verbatim et*

¹Twitchell, *op. cit.* Another letter from Gregg's pen was printed by William E. Connelley in his edition of *Doniphan's Expedition*. My investigations have failed to bring to light any other letters written by the trader.

literatim, prove conclusively that Gregg had received a good education. They are written in a fine, flowing, clerkly hand, and Gregg's meticulous attention to the excessive punctuation of the day, for example, indicates that he was accustomed to pen-work; moreover, he appears to have written with considerable facility, though he could not in any sense have been called a literary man.

So little is known of this famous trader of the old Santa Fé trail that I am sure historians will welcome the appearance of these letters in print; for, quite apart from their interest, they will prove valuable in tracing his movements and occupations in the years following the publication of *Commerce of the Prairies* and in giving us a fairly clear idea of the man himself. I do not overestimate the importance of these letters, which some may say are commonplace enough; nevertheless it must be remembered that in Gregg's case every scrap of information should be zealously garnered, so that the future historian may write of him with better understanding than has heretofore been possible.

ADDENDUM

Since this paper was submitted to the Society, I have received from Mr. T. J. Fitzpatrick, Curator of the University of Nebraska Herbarium, a list of twenty-three plants named for Josiah Gregg by Dr. Asa Gray, Dr. George Engelmann, Sereno Watson, P. A. Rydberg, and J. G. Smith. Of these botanists only Gray and Engelmann personally knew Gregg. Mr. Fitzpatrick does not by any means claim finality for his list; there may be other species associated with the trader's name.

My search for materials has brought to light twelve letters from Gregg to Dr. George Engelmann, American botanist (b. Feb. 2, 1809; d. Feb. 4, 1884), bearing dates ranging from April 17, 1846 to June 30, 1849. The originals, some of which are on botanical subjects,

are now preserved in the collections of the Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis.

There is also in the Alvarez Papers, in the possession of the Historical Society of New Mexico, a letter written in excellent Spanish by Gregg to Manuel Alvarez, dated New York, December 26, 1843, in which he says: "I have finished my negotiation for the publication of my work [*Commerce of the Prairies*] with Messrs. D. Appleton and Co., No. 200 Broadway, where you can also ask for me when you arrive." For some reason not now known this arrangement fell through. As has been indicated elsewhere, the book was published in 1844 by Henry G. Langley, 8 Astor House, New York.

I have been unable to find any contemporary mention of the trader as *Doctor Gregg*. The earliest reference of the kind that I have encountered is in John Russell Bartlett's *Personal Narrative of Explorations*, etc., published in New York, 1854, four years after Gregg's death. On page 468 of volume 2 of that work reference is made to a "Dr. Gregg," presumably the Santa Fé trader. Thus it will be seen the legend that he was a physician is not of recent origin. Final solution of the enigma I leave to the future investigator.

1.

Franklin House [New York City], June 20, 1844.¹

DEAR BIGELOW:

Finding I will not get copies enough to despatch me west before the middle of next week,² I have again got in the notion of a Catskill excursion. How would you like to go up Saturday morning and return Monday morning?

If this arrangement will suit you, why, I will not back out this time. I stepped to your office to propose it to you, between 3 and 4 o'clock, but you had left. I send you this

¹The Franklin House was a well-known hotel, and there Gregg lived while he and Bigelow were preparing *Commerce of the Prairies* for the press.

²Evidently Gregg intended to take with him a consignment of his book when he returned to Missouri. The publication date was June 22, 1844.

note that you may have time to think of it, and conclude aye or nay.—and I will call to see you by to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock.

Sincerely Yours, &c
 JOSIAH GREGG.

2.

Franklin House, Sunday Morning [June 30, 1844?].

DEAR BIGELOW:

I had intended to send a copy of my work to Mr. Ames (who wrote the "New World" review; but it escaped my memory. If you think proper, please present him one for me.

Yours sincerely, and just setting sail,

JOSIAH GREGG.

3.

Independence [Missouri], Sept. 6, 1844.

John Bigelow, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR:

Having been somewhat later reaching this place than I had contemplated, I did not receive your interesting favor of the 20th July until three or four days ago.

I had intended to trouble you with a letter of some length upon my arrival at this place; but I do not now find myself in condition, as an affliction, of a character I had never before experienced, was visited upon our family, but a few days before I reached here. I had the best of parents, who had lived to see a good old age. My Father, though he had been in somewhat precarious health for a year or two past, appeared in no danger of a speedy dissolution. But he was taken suddenly, and died on the 18th of August, after but four days illness.

I feel under renewed obligations to you for the pains you have taken in writing "notices" and "reviews:"¹ but no New York paper has yet come to me here, except the Anglo-American. In this I find a very clever review, written, I

¹John Bigelow not only prepared Gregg's book for the press, but he wrote a number of reviews as well, and had some of his friends do likewise. It will be seen that our present-day publishing methods are not of recent origin.

suppose, by some one of my worthy friends. I should perhaps have accredited it to you, had it not been for a very unfortunate blunder I find incorporated in it. You remember that I cancelled some two or three pages—in particular, a page of fiction written by friend T. [Louis Fitzgerald Tasistro] for¹ which I had a peculiar repugnance. This article I find copied entire in the *Anglo-American*. How that was bound up, after all my charges to the binders and to Saunders,² I cannot just conceive. No ordinary “money” could have induced me to have permitted such an extract to have been made—not that there is any harm about the article, if it had never been cancelled; but as it is, I could not undertake to explain, except to “confidentials,” if the “why and wherefore” of the cancelling were inquired into.

Without making the slightest reference to your communication to me, I write to Mr. Langley,³ that, lest he consider you under special obligations to review the book, I deemed it meet to remark, that I do not hold you bound to do anything beyond what your own “good will and inclination” might incline you to: and add, “When you asked me if he [yourself] would write articles, I told you I believed he would, as he had promised to do so; but I did not wish to be understood as holding him under absolute obligations.” I therefore hope you will do nothing that will militate either with your convenience or your feelings.

One “Santa Fé caravan” left this place some three weeks ago, comprising 15 or 20 wagons: another is now starting of about an equal number: and a third of about as many will depart during the present month. I am myself preparing for a “tour on the Prairies,” among the buffalo and antelopes—of some three or four weeks.

Very sincerely, Your Friend and Servant,

JOSIAH GREGG.

[P.S.] I shall probably leave for N. York soon after my

¹It is interesting to note that the trader first employed Mr. Tasistro, a well-know. writer and linguist, to do the work that was later done by John Bigelow. Gregg became dissatisfied and turned the manuscript over to young Bigelow. There was a dispute as to the compensation that Tasistro was to receive. For a discussion of the probable contribution of this gentleman to *Commerce of the Prairies*, see John Thomas Lee, *op. cit.*, 463-466.

²Probably the foreman of the printing establishment where Gregg's book was printed.

³Henry G. Langley, Gregg's publisher.

return from the Prairies. My health has improved a little: I hope to be "blithe and buxom" by the time I return.

4.

Franklin House, Dec. 25 [1844].

MY DEAR SIR:

I am off this afternoon. I have drawn out a 2d preface with some deviations from your "notions," which, if you think admissible, I believe I would prefer.¹ I enclose it to you, with marginal and interlineal annotations, hoping you will exercise your judgment upon it, and then send it to Mr. Saunders. I should also be very glad [if] you would read the proof, lest some blunder might get in to the press. I wish you would prepare it for the press according to your own taste, only allowing to my "notions" their due weight—and wherever admissible, I would, naturally, prefer them. My reasons I have generally expressed in the margin.

The tone of the article does not seem to suit for an "Advertisement"—those acknowledgments to the Press, &c. appear only becoming a "preface." I have inserted both heads in pencil, however; so that you can think of it and retain whichever you think most appropriate. If inserted as "Preface to the Second Edition" it could not with decency (I think) be placed before the preface, on the reverse of the Dedication leaf. I should be much obliged to you if you could consult with Saunders as to its location, lest some "bungle" might be made of it.

I frequently charged my memory to inquire of you, if you ever sent a copy of my work to Mr. Eames (this is the orthography, I believe); if not I wish you would send him one of the second edition, in my name.

I hope you will accept of (and call on Langley for) a copy of the second edition for yourself; and I repeat here what I said before, that if you should want a few copies for your friends,

¹This has reference to the additional preface which appears in the second edition (New York, 1845) of *Commerce of the Prairies*. There were also added a Glossary at the end of vol. 1, and an Index. It should contain the folded map, although this does not appear in many copies. Some booksellers persist in describing as complete copies that do not contain the large map, and collectors must be on their guard.

please call on Mr. Langley for them, on my account, as there are still a large number of copies due me.¹

In haste, Your Friend Sincerely,

JOSIAH GREGG.

5.

Coleman's, Washington City, Dec. 31, 1844.

John Bigelow, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR:

Commencing on the first page, you will find another article in "our line," which has occurred to me, partly from suggestions since I left New York, added to information I obtained in the West.² I am very anxious for something of the kind to be inserted in a place which will command attention, as it gives much more importance to the Santa Fé Trade than is claimed for it anywhere in the book, and consequently would seem to add to the importance of the work. Could it not be incorporated in our Preface to the second edition? I know of no other place for it except an "Appendix" is made of it, and there is neither enough for that, nor would it thus be placed in as conspicuous a part as I should wish. You will perceive it is written in the preface style: should it be located anywhere else, it should, I suppose, be changed from the third person, and "the author." If it should be concluded to connect it with the second preface, it would no doubt be necessary to reset what is already there and perhaps stereotyped; but this would make no difference, as it would cost but a trifle, which I am willing to pay.

If it is necessary to reduce the whole to one page, it will have to be set in a small type—perhaps even as small as *non-pariel*, leaded; though, even then a page would scarcely hold all. If a separate leaf be inserted for it, then, of course there will be room plenty to put in larger type—*breviere*, leaded, I should think.

¹Evidently Gregg expected the second edition to issue from the press long before the actual date of publication. The Preface is dated May, 1845. The "large number of copies" due the author must have been of the first edition.

²Probably a reference to that part of the Preface to the second edition in which the author speaks of recent developments in the Santa Fé trade and appeals to Congress to afford protection to "commerce across the Prairies."

I hope you will do me the favor to revise it, reducing its length if you find it can be done without impairing the *spirit*: and fix upon its location—if in the second preface, perhaps appended at the conclusion of what has already been written. If you use my original manuscript for the press, you will of course separate it from this half of the sheet, and rub off the pencillings. As you will perceive, I have sometimes interlined, with pencil, merely other forms of expressing the same [meaning], wishing you to choose of the two, or substitute new forms, as you please. If you should think any portion of it better omitted, you can do so.

Please request Friend Saunders to forward me a proof of the whole, to Care of A. Beclin [?] Pittsburg, as soon as it is set up. As I shall have occasion to write Saunders before I leave this city, I shall send him another copy of the same, lest by some chance this might miscarry.

I shall expect a letter or rather letters from you, directed to Shreveport, Louisiana.¹ I have concluded to go to that place where I shall at least sojourn for a while, whether I fix my domicil there or not.

Most sincerely, Your Friend and Servt,

JOSIAH GREGG.

6.

Louisville, Ky. Jan. 19, 1846.

DEAR SIR:

I wrote you a few lines on the 8th, and again on the 16th Nov. accompanying some "batches" of rough MS.; but, as I have not heard from you since, I am compelled to suppose they never reached you. Of course, if I could suppose they had been duly received, and intentionally left without réply, I should be very loth to trouble you even with this brief note; for although I thought it probable enough that you would find no use for the MS. I could not imagine in it any cause for the receiving or giving of offence. The truth is, I have been occasioned no little uneasiness, lest some untoward casualty may have happened you—unless you have been absent.

¹At which place his brother John resided.

But the chief purpose of this note is, to inform you, that I have just received a letter from my Brother, in Louisiana, with whom I left in charge your request for the procurement of the Louisiana Convention Debates,—and touching which he has the following paragraph: “Yesterday, Col. Porter (the member in our convention from this district,) presented me, for you, the debates of the La. Convention, which I will send in a few days, by my friend Oglesby, to N. Orleans, to be forwarded thence to you; provided a more direct opportunity does not present itself.”

Now, as I am daily expecting here, the arrival of these debates, I hope you will inform me, at your earliest convenience, if you are still in the “land of the living,” and if so, how I am to send them to you, provided I do not go Eastward myself: not only because those documents were procured expressly for you, and *I* have no use for them, but because I am always willing, and *desirous*, to fulfil every promise, whatever might be my opinion of the conduct of others towards me.

Also, my friend, Dr. Waldo,¹ (whom I requested to procure the debates of Missouri for you), writes me, under date Dec. 8, that the convention is still in session, and is expected to be for a long while yet; but that, when closed, he will procure and forward the Debates.

Very Respectfully, Yours,
JOSIAH GREGG.

John Bigelow, Esq.
N. York.

P.S. Please direct still to this place; and if I leave before the return of your answer, I will give instructions to have it forwarded to me.

7.

Louisville, Ky. Feb. 7, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR:

Yours of the 26th ult. I received yesterday. I greatly regret to see that you have got under the impression that I am displeased at your not publishing my letters—as would appear

¹Dr. David Waldo, long associated with the Santa Fé trade.

from the following sentence in your letter: "I did not suppose you had any particular purpose in hastening the publication of those letters," etc. Now I assure you that I "had no particular purpose" in their publication at any time, and took particular pains to give you so to understand, both in the notes accompanying, and my last letter—had you been willing to take my word for it. And I have on this or other account, neither been "mad" with ire nor *rabia*. But, as nothing grinds me more than to have a friend refuse to answer a letter (especially, as I stated I would not write again till I got an answer), I must confess that I was a little chagrined, and my feelings touched, on that account, and *that only*. But I am much rejoiced to hear that it was on account of your absence, etc. for I had feared something worse. Then, you add: "I shall see further about them at once." If you mean by this, to have them published, I must be allowed to protest against it, as it is now altogether too late: everybody knows I have been here for three or four months; and to see letters from me, dated in Texas would look ridiculous. Therefore, "a truce to explanations," and those letters emphatically:—only I will add that I regret your having placed them in the hands of others, as I could not have risked such *crude stuff* in any other hands but yours.

I am greatly grieved that those Debates have not yet arrived. I know they were started at the time proposed (now over a month), and therefore I am left to fear that they have been lost on the way. And what would render it still more unfortunate, is, that they were to have been accompanied by others papers of much importance to me, which could not be replaced: the Debates may be replaced, and I will order it done, in case those should prove to be lost. If they do not reach here before my departure, I will leave instructions for them to be sent to you, if they come afterward.

Regarding the a/c Current of Langley, I suppose it remained with the papers I left behind me, as I do not meet with it here. If I go West and find it, I will send it—if East, I will write to have it forwarded. Notwithstanding, I cannot see that it would be likely to do you much good, as he would be sure (as he has already done, and concerning which I wrote you) [to]

bring in after-accounts, so as to make but little coming to me. If I visit N. York, I will try to bring matters straight.¹

I shall be happy to hear from you; but it will be unnecessary for you to write me until I can inform you to what point to address your letter: for, "in all human probability," I shall leave here long before your answer could return. If I do not go East, I will write you, on my departure, concerning my "whereabouts and whatabouts."

Como Siempre, Sincerely Yours,

JOSIAH GREGG.

P.S. I should have mentioned that your letter of last fall, after having gone the rounds of Shreveport, La. with a detention of two or three months, reached me a short time ago.

8.

Louisville, Ky. March 5, 1846.

MY DEAR BIGELOW:

It was but a few days after I wrote you my last letter, that the package containing the Louisiana Convention Debates came to hand; but, as I concluded, about that time, to make a visit to your city, I laid them by to carry them myself,—expecting to start in a few days. But very soon after, I had the misfortune to be taken to my bed, very ill—which turned out (very strangely for a man of my age, and habits) to be the Measles. I have been closely confined, ever since, till the last few days: in fact, to-day is the first that I have pretended to "stir about" any. On account of this misfortune, which consumed nearly all the time I had to spare for the trip East, I have given it up, and shall start West in a few days. I therefore I [*sic*] send you the Debates by mail. I went to the agents of a sort of Express arrangement for carrying packages Eastward; but they could give me no satisfactory information—said it would have to pass through many hands to reach N. York; therefore I knew it would be delayed, and charged heavily; for they could not tell me the cost. On carrying it to the post-office, I was informed that the postage would be about

¹John Bigelow seems to have acted as Gregg's legal agent for some time after the publication of *Commerce of the Prairies*. Many years later, Mr. Bigelow wrote: "I doubt if he [Gregg] ever received a penny from the sale of his book, for the printing of which I have no doubt he bore all the expenses." Moreover, he appears to have been badly treated by his publisher, if not actually cheated. For further particulars see John Thomas Lee, *op. cit.*

45 cents: therefore, I was certain this would be not only most certain and expeditious, but cheapest. So I mail it to-day.

I expect to go direct from here to Independence, Missouri, and thence to take a tour on the Prairies, in the course of the Spring—probably extending it across the Rocky Mountains.

You had the kindness to offer to procure me books, etc. there. I am very anxious to get three Nautical Almanacs (in fact, a failure would discomfit me very much in the objects of my trip—or at least a part of them; for I could neither take latitude nor longitude without them.) I have therefore enclosed a \$5 bill* to Mr. Alexander Megarey, No. 190 Water street,¹ who sells all such things. I will be under greatly increased obligations to you, if you will call on him, and see if he has received my letter with the money. I have his card of 1839, when his No. was as above, and I think he was at the same place when I was there last. If you should not find him there, you may doubtless discover his whereabouts in the city Directory. I direct his letter to 190 Water St. so that you may inform him where to look for it, provided he has not received it. If, by any accident, the letter should fail to reach him, I hope you will do me the very great kindness, either to advance the necessary amount yourself, or prevail on Mr. Megarey (who ought to recollect me very well), to send me the Almanacs, and I will remit the amount to you or him (as the case may be) immediately upon being informed of it: for I would not have them to fail, for scarcely any sum.

I will here give you a description of what I want, to serve in case my letter to Mr. Megarey should fail: viz. Nautical Almanacs for the years 1846, 1847 & 1848. That for 1848 will no doubt have to be of the English edition, as the American abridgements will hardly have been published so far in advance; but for '46 and '47 Blunt's abridgement² (or any other

¹New York City Directories (1822-1850, inclusive) give the name of Alexander Megarey, mathematical instrument maker, at seven different addresses. He seems also to have been a dealer in nautical literature.

²Published by Edmund and George William Blunt, sons of the irascible and somewhat eccentric nautical publisher, Edmund March Blunt (1770-1862), whose *American Coast Pilot*, to name but one publication, ran through numerous editions. There is an amusing anecdote of the hydrographer in the *Dictionary of American Biography* which, were this the proper place for such indulgence, I could match with stories equally amusing and revealing. By a strange coincidence, in the room in which I am writing this note there hangs over the matelpee a charming portrait of Blunt's daughter, Eliza (Blunt) Hooker, painted by the gifted and picturesque John Wesley Jarvis.

of the kind if published for 1847—if not, I would want the English) will answer. These were formerly priced at \$1.50. In fact, for 1846, I could make out to do with Blunt's smallest edition, formerly printed at \$1—as the year will be pretty well spent before I get fairly launched out. Then, please see that they are securely and suitably enveloped, and mailed, directed to me at Independence, Missouri. It will doubtless be best to make a separate package of each one.

I trust you will do me the favor to write me immediately, advising me if the Almanacs have been forwarded: Also, sending me your commands, all direct to

Your Friend, truly,
JOSIAH GREGG,
Independence,
Missouri.

P.S. You will also please inform me if you have received the Debates.

*The bill I enclose to Mr. Megarey is on Bank of Monroe, Rochester, N. Y. Letter A. No. 359. (New York Safety Fund.)

9.

Independence, Mo. May 8/46.

MY DEAR BIGELOW:

Your very kind and courteous, and equally esteemed, favor of 16th March, came duly to hand; and I must confess a little neglect (though I can honestly plead a want of "Malice aforethought"), in not having answered you sooner. But that dire de'il procrastination, the mother of so many thousand worse evils, has kept me waiting—first, to find out something definite regarding the Convention Debates—and next, to "find out something definite" regarding the disposition I should make of my own proper self.

Well, with regard to the first: Mr. Woodson (one of your fraternity, and not the least intelligent at that, and a member of the convention), has informed me that a Mr. Flagg of St. Louis, took full notes, and will publish the Debates; to which effect a resolution passed the Convention. I have delayed,

in hopes to procure the Debates and send them to you myself; but, after many inquiries, I cannot learn that they have yet been published: in fact, Mr. Woodson seems very confident that they have not yet been issued from the press. By writing to Mr. Flagg (Edmund Flagg, St. Louis), he will no doubt forward them promptly to the Democratic Review:¹ I would write him myself, but I have not the slightest personal acquaintance with him—therefore, he would be much more likely to obey the request of the Review than mine. Mr. Flagg is in some way connected or attached to the Missouri Reporter office—S. Penn, proprietor.

You requested, some time ago, the account current which Langley had furnished me. I enclose you one, which I have received from Rockhill, Smith & Co. Phila.² This I should suppose much preferable to that furnished *me*; for in the latter there were no credits for proceeds, as the accounts sales had not yet been made up. On this you will perceive a credit of \$182.60 and a *promise* of further credit the following month (July, 1845). But in the debits he has inserted two items of some importance, which are wholly *erroneous*, to say the least of them—if not fraudulently intended. These are, "S. W. Benedict, for altering stereotype plates, &c. \$40—" and "Advertising \$25." It was specially stipulated that I was not to be charged in either of these cases, to which Saunders was witness; and I doubt not, of course, that he would so testify, as he has written me that he remembers the contract (as I have stated it) perfectly. You will also perceive, in his note to Messrs. R. S. & Co. that he acknowledges his *conditional* responsibility to you. Please preserve this account, holding it subject to the order of Rockhill & Co. Phila.—There is also another erroneous item in the a/c, viz. "1 Ream Paper \$6."

You express a desire to "hear from me frequently, while scooting about" over the Prair[e]s. I shall be gratified to write you, whenever I find a conveyance; but, as well then as now, I wish it understood that *I do not write for the press.*

¹John Bigelow was a regular contributor to this journal.

²Gregg's business agents in the East. *Commerce of the Prairies* was dedicated to Thomas C. Rockhill of Philadelphia "with sentiments of the most sincere gratitude and esteem."

We have little news of interest, beyond an occasional arrival from Santa Fé; but these bring no intelligence of interest, especially in a political point: for news from the Mexican Capital reaches us much sooner via N. York, than via Santa Fé. With regard to the sentiments of the people of the North, the common impression among traders, is, that they feel (nor would take) no interest in any difficulties with the U. S. You may have observed a notice in the papers, of the arrival of Mr. Leitensdorfer and his wife, daughter of the late ex-Gov. Abreu. This is the same lady (Dona Soledad) that you will see mentioned in Kendall's Work,¹ whom Gov. Armijo first strove to seduce; and next practised all sorts of outrages upon her and relatives—especially her husband and uncle, both of whom have since died. Her father, Don Santiago Abreu, was massacred in 1837, as you will see mentioned on p. 131, 1st vol. of my work.²

Another party of about 45 men, with 17 wagons, arrived a few days ago, having left Chihuahua on 3d of March, and Santa Fé on the 30th. The principals were Wethered, Coldwell and Jones. Magoffin is also expected within a week or less, in company with some Mexicans—all (including the first mentioned) bringing considerable capital, and intending to return (for the most part) the present year.

There will perhaps more than a dozen different Caravans (of 20 or more wagons each) cross the Prairies to Santa Fé the present season. More than double the amount of goods ever taken in one year before, will go to Santa Fé during the spring and summer: some think over a million cost! with some 3 to 500 wagons.

The spirit of "Westward, ho!" is on the wing in all directions. The emigration, this spring, to California & Oregon will be immense—but more for the former country, it is believed, than

¹George Wilkins Kendall, *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fé Expedition* (New York, 1844), a capital book, written by a trained journalist and keen observer. For an admirable account of this writer, see John S. Kendall, "George Wilkins Kendall and the Founding of the New Orleans Picayune," in *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, April, 1928, [261]-285.

²Gregg says: "Don Santiago Abreu, formerly governor, and decidedly the most famed character of N. Mexico, was butchered in a still more barbarous manner. They cut off his hands, pulled out his eyes and tongue, and otherwise mutilated his body, taunting him all the while with the crimes he was accused of, by shaking the shorn members in his face."

the latter. I must close for want of space—will write you again before my departure, especially after having an opportunity to visit the Oregon and California rendezvous.

Truly Yours,

JOSIAH GREGG.

P.S. I had almost forgotten to mention that I am preparing for a "trip of pleasure and health" to the "old stamping-ground." Whether I shall go further than Santa Fé or not, I am not yet determined—will inform you when I shall first have informed myself. I hope you will still write me. Direct to "Care of Dr. David Waldo, Independence, Mo." and he will forward on to me, by subsequent caravans. I hope to be able to get off sometime in the present month. The earliest caravans are now just starting.

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