

JOSIAH GREGG AND
DR. GEORGE ENGELMANN

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY JOHN THOMAS LEE

MY KEEN interest in Josiah Gregg, the Santa Fé trader and author of *Commerce of the Prairies*, has prompted me to search the country over for materials relating to him, and particularly for his letters. Learning of Gregg's connection with the physician and botanist, Dr. George Engelmann,¹ I communicated with the Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis, in the hope of bringing to light letters which the trader might reasonably be assumed to have written to his friend. Much to my delight, twelve letters were found in its archives—doubtless only a fragment of what must have been a rather voluminous correspondence, extending over a period of at least three or four years.² These letters are here printed for the first time, and they constitute a valuable contribution to our rather scanty knowledge of Josiah Gregg.

Gregg appears to have been a copious and frequent letter writer; in fact, he had a decided liking for epistolary expression. Yet, although he wrote in a day when letters were generally preserved, very few of his seem to have survived. Those addressed to

¹Dr. Engelmann (February 2, 1809; February 4, 1884) was born in Frankfurt-on-Main, Germany. He came to St. Louis in 1833, and there built up a large practice in medicine. Becoming also eminent as a botanist, he organized the St. Louis Academy of Science in 1856. See *Dictionary of American Biography*.

²For permission to print these letters I am indebted to Dr. George Moore, Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

John Bigelow¹ and to Dr. Engelmann supply biographical details which otherwise would have been lost to us. From them we may trace, at least in part, the trader's restless movements, his occupations, avocations, moods, and desires. And we are interested in all these things, for, gradually, as new materials are discovered, we are lifting the veil of mystery which for so many years has made him an obscure and elusive figure.

This sheaf of letters brings to light the dilettante in science—the amateur botanist, geologist, and zoologist—and it is pleasing to observe that the pursuit of these studies was the result of a consuming love of knowledge and a desire to oblige his scientific friends.²

Various motives have been ascribed to Gregg for the wanderings described in part in this correspondence. Some historians, notably the late William E. Connelley,³ have said that he was a newspaper correspondent with the American army during the Mexican War, but I can find no solid ground for the statement. One of the journals he is said to have served in this capacity was the New Orleans *Picayune*. However, the present librarian of that paper (now the *Times-Picayune*) informs me that nothing has survived indicating that Gregg was ever one of its staff correspondents.⁴ He was in no sense a journalist, and if he contributed to the press at all during this period, I think it safe to say that he did so in an informal way, possibly in the form of letters addressed to the editor. This he might very well have done (though nothing bearing his name has been found in the newspapers

¹The letters addressed to Mr. Bigelow have been 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]), and in John Thomas Lee, "New-Found Letters of Josiah Gregg, Santa Fé Trader and Historian," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* for April, 1930 (Worcester, 1931), 47-68.

²T. J. Fitzpatrick, Curator of the University of Nebraska Herbarium, has listed twenty-three plants named for Gregg by Asa Gray, George Engelmann, Sereno Watson, P. A. Rydberg, and J. G. Smith. See Lee, *op. cit.*, 54.

³In "Dr. Josiah Gregg, Historian of the Old Santa Fé Trail," *Mississippi Valley Historical Association Proceedings* for 1919-20, [334]-348.

⁴Letter of R. I. McClure, May 28, 1931.

examined), for we know that he had a decided itch for writing and was ambitious to excel in that direction.¹

It is clear that Josiah Gregg, while not a combatant, was attached to the army, in a nominal way, as a sort of guide and interpreter. Upon leaving Louisville, Kentucky, in the spring of 1846 he went to Independence, Missouri, where he joined a caravan of Santa Fé traders then about to start.² He had not gone far when he received communications from Senator Sevier and Colonel Yell, both of Arkansas, asking him to join the southern division of the army under command of General Wool. He was assured that he would be placed in an "honorable and profitable" situation. In consequence of these offers, he left the trading caravan and proceeded to overtake Colonel Yell's regiment, then on its way to San Antonio, Texas. However, no commission awaited him upon his arrival; and it was some time before he received, through the influence of Colonel Yell, "a sort of nominal appointment from Gen. Wool, in his staff, as confidential Government Agent, Interpreter, &c." Nevertheless, for various reasons, he soon became disgusted with his position and resigned.³ Gregg probably owed this doubtful recognition on the part of the army to his mastery of the Spanish language and to his cartographical knowledge.

Apparently his duties were not particularly exacting, for he seems to have been independent in his actions and movements; and his chief interests evidently were in matters far removed from the war. He devoted much time to scientific and geographical study, and to the forming of botanical and geological collections for his friends. That he expected to make use, in a forthcoming book, of the botanical data gathered on his journey to Mexico and California the letters make clear.⁴

¹Lee, *op. cit.*, 53.

²Letter of John Gregg, *post.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴See Josiah Gregg letters, *post.*

After his tragic death, a manuscript entitled "Rovings Abroad" was sent to his brother John, then living at or near Shreveport, La., which in all probability contained the materials—journals, notes, and observations—from which he expected later to construct a book.¹ This manuscript now appears to be irretrievably lost; but like many lost things it may yet turn up when (and in a quarter) least expected.

The trader was a competent geographer, equipped to take latitude and longitude; he was a close student of the best maps, and was himself a mapmaker of no mean accomplishment, if we may credit to him, as I think we must, the admirable large map which accompanies the first edition of his *Commerce of the Prairies*.²

For his day Gregg was a great traveller. His restlessness, both physical and mental, was always apparent. He was not content to remain long in one place; he must forever be on the move. In addition to his rovings in the course of trade over the Santa Fé trail and elsewhere, he travelled in many parts of the country. Such letters of his as have survived are dated from points as far removed as New York City, Mexico City, and the Pacific Coast, and from as far south as New Orleans.

One of the rewards for grinding historical investigation is that, now and then, a delightful surprise awaits us. The unexpected has a way of happening—and then we see our pretty house of cards fall to the ground! We carefully construct a case from internal evidence (always a dangerous thing to do), when, lo, a single new fact comes to light which brings all our reasoning to naught! With the utmost care we build a case upon certain reasonable assumptions and facts.

¹Letters of John Gregg printed in Twitchell, *op. cit.*, 29, 30.

²New York, 1844. The second edition (1845) should also contain the folded map, but unfortunately most copies were issued without it. This omission is inexplicable in view of the fact that the map is a valuable part of the book, and that the engraving had already been made for the first edition. Economy, I think, could have played little part in the omission. It is just another bibliographical puzzle.

Our researches are extensive and learned; we fit our data together with precision; our thesis (thus whispers vanity) is well-nigh perfect. Then, out of a clear sky, there comes fluttering down from heaven (though usually too late for us to make a graceful retreat) a scrap of documentary evidence which completely upsets the historical apple-cart!

I have recently had, and propose here to relate, a delicious experience of this kind. In the interest of truth, I must make a clean breast of it. I am referring to the debated question, Was Josiah Gregg a physician? No one seemed to know anything certainly about the subject and the statement that he was graduated with honors from a Philadelphia medical school was totally without proof. As Gregg was born in 1806, it seemed fair enough to assume that if he studied medicine at any college he would have done so before the publication of his book in 1844, when he was thirty-eight years old; and it seemed more likely still that he would have pursued such studies before he reached the age of thirty. Accordingly, on that theory, I instituted a long and thorough search of the records of medical schools which were in existence at the period indicated. Not a particle of evidence was found to indicate that Gregg ever entered such an institution as a student; hence the conclusion which I announced in a paper recently printed by the American Antiquarian Society.¹

However, in the course of my investigations, preparatory to preparing these letters for the press, I learned that ordinary rules do not apply to Josiah Gregg, who was as inscrutable and unusual as he was indomitable and modest. His friends never knew what he would do next, and once his mind was made up he was immovable. Then came the pleasant thrill of discovery. I learned that in the archives of the Filson Club of Louisville, Kentucky, there were a few letters relating to the trader. Two of these—one written by Gregg's brother John,² the other written by Dr. George

¹Lee, *op. cit.*

²John Gregg was born April 25, 1800. Place and date of death have not been ascertained.

W. Bayless¹—are of the utmost importance.² Largely biographical in character, they give us many new facts concerning Josiah Gregg. Among other things, the question of his medical studies is finally disposed of. John Gregg states positively that his brother studied medicine in the winter of 1845-6, when he was nearly forty years old. Dr. Bayless writes of him as *Doctor* Gregg and a former pupil; and, to clinch the whole matter, reference to the records of the medical department of the University of Louisville (now the University of Louisville School of Medicine), founded in 1837, discloses the fact that he was given the degree of Doctor of Medicine by that institution in 1846.³

One term of probably sixteen weeks does not seem a very long time in which to turn even an intelligent man into a doctor; but in the 1840's there was nothing unusual in this. In many cases pupils studied for about two years with an accredited practitioner, and then took a short course, as did Gregg, in some chartered medical school. Some states, however, did not require the stamp of approval of any institution as a prerequisite to medical practice. Missouri, Gregg's adopted state, dispensed with all such formalities.⁴

It further appears that Josiah desired very early in life to study medicine, but the doctor whom he approached on the subject would not take him as a pupil.⁵ While engaged in the Santa Fé trade he found it necessary to acquire an elementary knowledge of the science, so that he might minister to the needs of his

¹George Wood Bayless (January 17, 1817; September 8, 1873) was born in Mason County, Kentucky, the youngest child of Benjamin and Elizabeth (Wood) Bayless. He studied medicine in Louisville and Philadelphia and became Demonstrator of Anatomy in the Louisville Medical Institute, which post he resigned in 1848. For a short period he taught in the Medical College of Ohio (Cincinnati); resigned in 1850 on account of ill health and removed to Missouri, where he devoted himself for a time to agricultural pursuits. He returned to Louisville to resume his practice, and later was professor of medicine on the faculty of the University of Louisville. See *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Kentucky*, 1878.

²These letters are here printed immediately following the Josiah Gregg series, with the kind permission of the Filson Club.

³Letter of Dean John W. Moore, June 12, 1931.

⁴Lee, *op. cit.*, 49.

⁵According to John Gregg, *post*, this was "Dr. Sappington of Saline (Mo) County."

own employees; and it is said that he carried with him on the plains a small collection of medical books.¹ If we may rely upon the statement of his brother John, Josiah studied medicine so late in life for the love of acquiring scientific knowledge rather than to prepare himself for practice. And certainly he made but slight use of his right to play the rôle of doctor. In his letters, only one reference is made to anything of the sort.² He practiced for a brief period when he was in Mexico.³

It is small wonder that John Bigelow, whom Gregg knew intimately at the time of publication of *Commerce of the Prairies*, never referred to his friend as a physician; for Gregg, as usual, did the unexpected thing a year or two later, and at a time of life when most men have abandoned all thought of formal professional study. Thus another riddle in the life of Josiah Gregg has been solved.

Gregg was a remarkable man in more ways than one, and it is well to bear in mind that his accomplishments were the result of an insatiable desire for knowledge in many fields.⁴ With only the most primitive educational opportunities, and in an atmosphere repellent to culture, he became a well educated man. He wrote his own language with facility and accuracy, though with no literary distinction; and he is said to have acquired a working knowledge of Latin, French, Italian, and the rudiments of German.⁵ We know beyond peradventure that he had an excellent command of Spanish, both spoken and written.⁶ He early developed a taste for mathematics, and while still a small boy he made a quadrant of wood, which was the marvel of his young friends.⁷ He taught school, studied sur-

¹John Gregg, *post*.

²Letter dated Saltillo, Mexico, January 24, 1848, *post*.

³John Gregg, *post*.

⁴This is borne out by what Gregg himself wrote and by what others wrote about him.

⁵John Gregg, *post*.

⁶At least one example of Gregg's written Spanish has survived; a letter dated New York, December 26, 1843, to Manuel Alvarez, now in the possession of the Historical Society of New Mexico. It shows excellent command of the language.

⁷John Gregg, *post*.

veying, law, medicine, and acquired scientific knowledge in various other branches, including the natural sciences.¹ He had scholarly tastes and never pretended to learning which he did not possess.² His versatility and acquirements were remarkable when we consider the meagre advantages and incentive which the frontier afforded. He was indeed a fine example of the self-taught man. But he will always be remembered chiefly as the author of a western classic, *Commerce of the Prairies*, a book which has and will retain an abiding place in our historical literature.³

1.

[Recd. April 23d

Ans. April 30th] Independence [Missouri], April 17, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR:

It is to correct an error which I committed in my letter of 11th inst. that I so soon molest you again. That letter you will doubtless have received ere this, which I sent you by my friend, Mr. Eugene Leitensdorfer,⁴ accompanied by \$50, for the purpose of purchasing a few articles therein enumerated. I have just perceived, that in giving you a description of the Daguerrotype plates I wanted, I set down their dimensions at "3 $\frac{5}{8}$ by 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches," instead of "2 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches," as it should have been. The price I gave, "\$3.50 per dozen," was correct for the size last mentioned, as stated to me by Mr. Miller, the Daguerreotypist. I hope my mistake will have occasioned no inconvenience, as the price will have shown the

¹Dr. Bayless and John Gregg, *post*.

²John Gregg, *post*.

³All letters of Josiah Gregg, known to be extant, have now been printed with the single exception of the Spanish letter to Manuel Alvarez, already referred to. For biographical details consult Connelley, *op. cit.*, and Lee, "The Authorship of Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, March, 1930, 451-466; also Lee, *op. cit.* For courtesies freely extended I desire to thank J. Christian Bay, Librarian, John Crerar Library, Chicago; Stella M. Drumm, Librarian, Missouri Historical Society; Nell C. Horner, Librarian and Editor of Publications, Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis; and Ludie J. Kinkead, Curator, The Filson Club, Louisville, Ky.

⁴Dr. Eugene Leitensdorfer was for many years engaged in the Santa Fé trade in partnership with his brother, Thomas, and his brother-in-law, Norris Colburn. He married, 1845, Dona Solidad Abreu, daughter of Don Santiago Abreu, at one time governor of New Mexico, who was barbarously mutilated and murdered in 1837. Consult Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies* (New York, 1844), vol. 1, p. 131.

size I wished. The large size would be too large for my instrument.

In a letter to a friend of mine, Mr. J. M. Stanley,¹ whom I expected would be at St. Louis, on his way here, I requested him to call on you, and take charge of the articles which I had sent for, provided you had met with no other opportunity to forward them. I also requested Mr. Stanley to procure me a Passport of the Mexican Consul, provided there is one in St. Louis—yet, I presume there is none. If there is, by chance, a Mexican Consul there, and Mr. Stanley should not have got out the passport (for he may have left St. Louis before the arrival of my letter) will you be so kind as to procure me one, and forward it by mail, provided Dr. Wislizenus² should have left—to whom I will hand over whatever charges there may be upon it, or remit to you, as you may suggest.

I have the honor to remain,

Very Sincerely & respectfully,
Your humble servant.

JOSIAH GREGG

Dr. George Engelmann,
St. Louis.

2.

[Rec. June 16

Ans. Dec. 22d.]

Independence, June 10, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR:

Your truly kind and obliging favor of 30th March,—and your most valuable Memoranda by Dr. Wislizenus,—were duly

John Mix Stanley was an artist of considerable merit. His specialty was sketches and paintings of wild scenes and life. A catalogue of his pictures was issued by the Smithsonian Institution in 1852. Of the 151 pictures by Stanley exhibited by the Smithsonian all but five were destroyed by fire in 1865—a grievous loss. He saw some military service, and in 1853 accompanied Isaac I. Stevens on his "Explorations for a Route for the Pacific Railroad from St. Paul to Puget Sound." Numerous sketches were contributed to Stevens's *Report* by Stanley.

²Dr. F. A. Wislizenus (May 21, 1810; September 23, 1889) was born at Koenigsee, in the German principality of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, the son of a minister of the Evangelical State Church; he took his degree in medicine at Zurich, and came to New York in 1835. He early entered into a partnership with Dr. George Engelmann at St. Louis for the practice of medicine. Having a decided bent for travel and exploration, he made noteworthy journeys to the western country and to Mexico (part of the time as surgeon of Doniphan's regiment). In 1840 he published his *Journey to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1839*, written in his native German. An English translation of the book was published by the Missouri Historical Society (St. Louis, 1912). He was also the author of a *Memoir of a Tour to Northern Mexico* (Washington, 1843).

received; and the only apology I have for not having answered them sooner, is, that I thought I would delay a little, until I could advise you of my immediate departure.

But delays have accumulated upon me, until you still find me here, without a perfect certainty as to when I can expect to be on the Prairies. I think I told you that I had made my arrangements to join the party of Col. Owens.¹ His stock of goods were greatly delayed in reaching here, so that his last wagons have just started. Still, I should have been off at least a week ago, but for a very severe visitation of Scarlet fever in the family of a brother-in-law, in this vicinity. From the contagious character of the disease, it is difficult to procure a supply of nurses (for we have had as many as eight of the family seriously and some dangerously ill at once), and, as well from inclination as duty, I have had to watch them,—scarcely having slept more than four hours in every twenty-four,—for the last fifteen or eighteen days: and, it may be, that my sister, whose condition is decidedly dangerous, may not be well enough for me to leave for a week to come.—I once had the small-pox among my party—four or five down with it at once—yet, I certainly never encountered so severe a tour of disease as the present, of Scarlet fever. Its origin was sporadic in the family. Two have perished—a little niece, and a small black girl.

I received the articles which you were so kind as to procure for me, by Dr. Wislizenus—all complete and in good condition—and I know not how sufficiently to express my obligations to you, for your attentions,—and very especially for the most valuable memoranda with which you have furnished me. I can only hope to be able, hereafter—not to repay you in equally valuable favors—but to reciprocate in at least an insignificant degree, by forwarding you such specimens—as well zoölogical as vegetable and fossile—as I may suppose interesting to you: not so much to forward to others,—as you so kindly propose to do,—as for your own use.

I suppose Dr. Wislizenus is now enjoying himself, in the

¹A native of Kentucky, Samuel C. Owens emigrated to Missouri when very young, and soon took a foremost place in the community. He operated a general store at Independence and dealt largely at wholesale in the Mexican trade; also he became an office-holder and a member of the legislature. Serving as a major under Doniphan, he met death while rashly exposing himself during the battle of Sacramento.

midst of the prolific vegetation of the Western Prairies—as the Party of Mr. Speyers,¹ (whom he joined) left some time ago.

I shall take the liberty of molesting you with an occasional communication, after I get upon the Plains, and I hope to have the pleasure of hearing from you frequently. Direct your favors to care of John Lewis,² Merchant of this place, who will forward on to me by subsequent parties.

I have the honor to remain,

Truly and respectfully,

Your much obliged

Friend & serv't.

JOSIAH GREGG

3.

[Recd. March 19th

Ans. April 13th.]

Monterey, Mexico, Feb. 10, 1847.

MY DEAR SIR:

I must acknowledge much neglect, in permitting so long an interval to lapse, without sending you either a communication or specimens of any kind; yet I know it has not been for want of desire to do so, but of leisure, material, and perhaps still more—of the necessary qualifications.

As to animals, nothing strikingly new or of important interest has presented itself: though even the few that I would have desired to preserve, I have lacked the necessary chemicals to dress the skins—to say nothing of the difficulty of procuring transportation. The field for *geological* research has been much more abundant, varied and interesting; yet I have really found my practical knowledge in that science too scant, to attend to it with any satisfaction to myself or profit to others. Then the want of transportation is still more felt in this line than in anything else. Notwithstanding, when a direct opportunity

¹Albert Speyers, a trader operating caravans between Santa Fé and points in Mexico. He was a Prussian Jew and is said to have carried both British and Prussian passports. One of the interesting things he did was to carry arms and ammunition into Mexico. General Kearney on one occasion ordered Captain Benjamin Moore to pursue and detain Speyers, but this nimble merchant was too expeditious a traveller to be caught. After giving up the Mexican trade, he finally went to New York, and there in due time committed suicide as the result of a Wall Street crash.

²Probably Josiah Gregg's nephew, the son of Polly Gregg who married James Lewis, November 6, 1827.

presents itself, I will send you whatever specimens I may be able to get together.

In Botany, I had done nothing until lately—within the last two months or less. Having sent my “portfolio” and drying paper across the Prairies to Santa Fé, I have been unable to procure any suitable paper until I chanced to find at Saltillo, an abundance of pretty fair quality. Since that, I have collected from Saltillo here, (rather to my own surprise, at this very unfavorable season) nearly two hundred varieties of plants—half or three-fourths of which were in flower. I flatter myself with the hope that at least a few dozen of these may prove new, and a chance one interesting to you: if so, I shall feel amply rewarded for the little pains I have been at: for I have ventured to put you up a small “book” with nearly a hundred species, I think—though in my very great hurry, I did not count them. These I send to care of Professor Short,^{*1} of Louisville, as I have met with a friend of confidence going directly to that place.

*I also send Prof. Short specimens of the same plants.

I have put you up very few collected in this vicinity, as they were not dry enough: these and such as I may collect in the meanwhile, I will send you by next opportunity. Not only am I aware that many of those I send will prove familiar to you, but I have even put up (from some fancied interest, on account of season or locality) many of your common garden plants; such as rosemary, fennel, flax, etc., and even cottonwood.—I have thought it preferable to reduce the package to as small a compass as possible, even at the expense of overcrowding the plants, as bulk is a desideratum of some importance, where they have to be packed in baggage trunks, etc.

I doubt not you will frequently find the same plants twice or thrice inserted, as I had not the leisure to pack with sufficient care. I doubt not also, that you will consider them very badly “handled”; yet I hope the fact of this being my first attempt

¹Dr. Charles Wilkins Short was born at “Greenfields” in Woodford County, Kentucky, October 6, 1794, and died at “Hayfield,” near Louisville, March 7, 1863. For an excellent account of Doctor Short (with portrait), see Robert Peter, “History of the Medical Department of Transylvania University” (Filson Club *Publications*, No. 20, 1905), 78-82; the same matter with the exception of the footnotes is reprinted in J. N. McCormack (ed.) *Some of the Medical Pioneers of Kentucky* (1917), 70-73.

at practical botany will serve as apology: I think I shall be able to do something better in future. And now that I have embarked in it, and contracted a decided interest in the collection of plants, I trust I shall be able, in the course of the ensuing spring and summer, to send you several hundred specimens—many new and some interesting.

I have not attempted to collocate the plants in their botanical families: this of course you are much more capable of doing than I: I have striven to send you, wherever practicable several flowers of every species, that you may have a sufficiency for examination. As far as I knew them or have been able to procure them I have attached the Mexican names to the plants, with the virtues attributed to them by the people of the country; though upon these I do not place much reliance. Where I could learn no name, nor any distinctive character, I frequently congregated several plants under the same label.

Although I cannot hope it will be of any important interest to you, I send you several specimens of wood: it may aid in determining species. I will also send you as many samples of seeds as I can get, from Saltillo, which will still assist you more in fixing the family.

As I could get no stiff pasteboard for portfolios, and as that I had prepared was too light, I have thought best to "stay" the package with reed splits—of that species, by the way, of which I send you samples of blades and tassel. And even the cords with which the package is bound *may* prove of some botanical interest to you: the coarsest is of the fibres of that same species of *lechuguilla* of which I send you specimens: the finer twine is of the fibres of a particular species of *Maguey* (*agave Americana*) and called pita by the natives. It is used also for Saddler's and Shoe thread; yet, when intended for these purposes, it is not previously spun into thread, but a sufficient number of fibres are twisted together for the occasion, as the shoemaker does his "waxed-end."

I hardly deem it necessary to molest you with the news of the country, as I sup.[pose] you will be kept advised of everything that is interesting, through the papers. The truth is, there is little or nothing doing or occurring here now, with regard to "army operations" that could interest you; for though we have

had frequent reports of the advance of a large Mexican force in this direction, they have all turned out virtually false: the unfortunate capture of some of our reconnoitering parties, of which you will doubtless have heard already, has been the most important act of the enemy. I have no idea that there will be any general engagement until our army a[d]vance upon the Mexicans.

In very great haste, I am truly,

Your Friend & humble serv't.

JOSIAH GREGG

To George Engelmann, M.D.

St. Louis, Mo.

4.

[Recd. April 22nd.

Ans. May 7th.]

Saltillo, Mexico, March 25, 1847.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

From Monterey, I sent you, by the party of Gen. Butler,¹ a "batch" of plants—as also one to Prof. Short. I hope they may have been duly received. I now send you another lot by Dr. Zabriskie,² who goes directly to St. Louis. I fear this will be more confused and uninteresting than even the other. I have had to put them up in the greatest haste; for not being advised in time, of the departure of the party, I worked at them, and the lot I accompany to Prof. Short, the whole of last night, without [sic] having gone to bed at all: and now I find I have to mount my horse and overtake the party; for I could not get everything ready in time. Therefore I am compelled to cut short. The remarks accompanying the former package will serve to explain this. I hope to be able to send you another package before leaving here, when I will write you more fully. I intended sending you some mineral specimens, but had not time to put them up. I will send them hereafter. I send you a few specimens of wood and seeds, as you will perceive. I fear they will be of no interest.

¹William Orlando Butler was born in Kentucky and died August 6, 1880. He enlisted as a sergeant in 1812, and after numerous promotions he was brevetted major-general of volunteers, June 3, 1846. Distinguished himself at the storming of Monterey. See Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of U. S. Army*, 1:270.

²Diligent search has failed to disclose any information concerning Dr. Zabriskie.

Please have the kindness to forward to Professor Short, the package directed to him: the two go bound up together.

I remain,

Yours truly,
JOSIAH GREGG

5.

[Recd. Aug. 6th.

Ans. Aug. 22nd.]

Washington City, July 29, 1847.

MY DEAR SIR:

Your highly agreeable favor of 13th inst. was received in Philadelphia, where it arrived while I was absent in New York. Thinking I would not delay long in that City, I carelessly neglected to order my letters forwarded; and when I returned, I found yours in the office, with many others.

I doubly regretted not having received your letter in New York (enclosing the very grateful favor of Dr. Wislizenus) on account of the instruments etc. which he ordered. For I could not find the "viometer" nor even the prismatic compass (goniometer?) anywhere in Phila; and I did not remain long enough there, on my return, to order them from New York. The truth is, it is doubtful if the road-measure could be had anywhere, without ordering it made. The only man I could hear of in Phila. who had made them, lately died. And even if I could have got one made, it would have taken more time than I remained in the City.

Seeing no other chance to get a prismatic compass, I wrote to my friend Alexander Megarey¹ of New York, dealer in nautical instruments, etc. to send you one and draw on you for the cost—provided this did not exceed some \$15: Should the price be greater, I directed him to write you information on the subject, and wait your orders. I put in the maximum of "some \$15," because I have seen them priced as high as \$20 or \$25; and I was not sure if Dr. Wislizenus would like to pay so much, as he may not have anticipated the high cost of the instrument. Fifteen dollars is, I believe, the lowest I have seen

¹The name of Alexander Megarey appears in New York City Directories, 1822 to 1850, inclusive, at seven different addresses. He seems also to have been a dealer in nautical literature.

them priced—except mine, which I bought for \$9, said to be unusually low.

I procured the nautical almanac for 1848,¹ which I will send to you from Louisville with the plants; that is, provided I do not go to St. Louis myself, which, though it would be exceedingly agreeable to me, is not very probable.

As the principal object of this note is to inform you touching Dr. Wislizenus' instruments, etc. and of my having authorized Mr. Megarey to draw on you for the cost, if he sent the compass, I will not undertake here to answer your last letter: I will defer a full communication till I send the package of plants, — which will be soon; as I will leave here in two or three days for Pittsburgh— and thence immediately down the Ohio.

Permit me to repeat my thanks for your kind notices and advice; and believe me, as I truly am,

Your friend, etc.

JOSIAH GREGG

Dr. George Engelmann.

P. S. Please present my regards, and sincere thanks, to Dr. Wislizenus. His Barometrical memoranda are very full and interesting to me: more copious, indeed, than I could have asked him to draw for me.

I regret I am not yet prepared to send him a table of my latitudes, etc. for want of leisure to make the calculations; but I will not fail to profit by my leisure, on the Ohio river, and complete the calculations, when I will send them immediately.

6.

[Reed. Aug. 17th.

Ans. Aug. 22.]

Louisville, Ky, Aug. 13, 1847.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

You must allow me to apologize again for my delay in sending the collections, etc. which I have so long been promising you. I regret more particularly not having forwarded the Nautical Almanac, at an earlier day, even by mail, as it may not reach Dr. Wislizenus in time: yet I still thought, from day to day I should have everything ready to dispatch them together. But other indispensable business prevented me from completing the

¹Published by Edmund and George William Blunt, New York.

arrangement of the plants, until the present time; and I now dispatch a package with them and the Almanac, etc. on the steamer "Monona," leaving today for your port.

Dr. Wislizenus's opinion that the *piñones*, I sent you may have been baked a little, is very probable, as that is the most usual mode of preparing them for market. On this account I did not send them as seed to plant; but that you might see their appearance and character, and more particularly as a curiosity in the way of an edible: though I suppose you had received them already from Santa Fé. Although I observed no perceivable difference in the tree, you will have noted that those of Saltillo are both harder and larger than the New-Mexican.

I feel really thankful to you, and shall profit by it hereafter; for your advice as to the preservation of plants, etc. and particularly with regard to Numbering. As I before observed to you, I had no hope that my collections, up to the present time, would be of interest enough, to keep a series of numbers, as I was but in my "schooling." I shall in future, however, though still with very little hope of their being useful—number all the specimens I collect. But I repeat that your instructions, in every other regard, have been of infinite use to me; and I can only endeavor to give an earnest [expression?] of my gratitude, by striving to furnish you with a series of the fruits of my labors—which, though they can have presented but little interest heretofore, I indulge a hope, may prove of more in future.

As I believe I before mentioned, the few geological specimens I sent you, I could see no interest in, except as samples to show the character of the prevailing rock of the country. I do not know whether Dr. Wislizenus found any interesting fossil[s], in the same regions—at least I did not.

I send you a few specimens (all I met with) of the yellow-vine, which, I believe are those you took a special interest in. I will not fail to collect everything of the kind, I may meet with hereafter. And you will perceive that I have followed out your instructions in another regard, and that is of collecting specimens of everything I saw, be they interesting, new, handsome or otherwise.

As usual, you will also find the same plants duplicated frequently, and even put up in *several* places. This has occurred as well from oversight and ignorance sometimes, as oftener perhaps, purposely; for I frequently collected the same plants, at different times and in different localities, not only to get better specimens, but to show their geographical extension. And though, in some cases, on readjusting them, I collected the species together, I had not time to do it in every case.

Though, as a general thing, I endeavored to keep the dates in regular succession, they became disordered, in some cases, in the drying, while travelling, and I neglected afterward to regulate them; therefore you will sometimes find considerable confusion in the dates, etc.

I have, this time, adopted a set of semi-hieroglyphic characters, to indicate, in a slight degree, the size and abundance of the plants—which you will find inserted on most of the labels. Thus, (—) signifies *scarce*; (+) in *medium abundance* only; (x) *abundant*; and a duplication of these characters indicates an increase in their signification: as (— —) *very scarce*; (xx) *very abundant*; etc. Two different characters joined together imply a degree between them; as (+—) *rather scarce*; etc. The number prefixed to the character shows the usual height of the plant in feet. Thus (2—) is read *two feet high, scarce*; ($\frac{1}{2}$ +), $\frac{1}{2}$ foot high and found in *medium abundance* only; (5x) *five feet high and abundant*; (1 xx) *one foot high and very abundant*; etc. etc.

There are doubtless other explanations which should be made, but I cannot now think of them. However, the explanations and remarks accompanying the previous packages are generally applicable to this.

The trifle I have expended for Dr. Wislizenus is, of course not worth taking account of. Should opportunity present itself, of my being of any service to him or to you, I should take great pleasure in being occupied by you more frequently; and shall frankly occupy both of you, in a similar manner, as I have done heretofore.

I believe I mentioned, in my former letter, that I am bound directly for Saltillo again, and thence, possibly, for the City of Mexico. Any additional commands, I hope you will direct to

me at Saltillo, via New Orleans and Matamoros. If you write early, please direct to care of Moses Greenwood¹ (Commission Merchants, etc.) in New Orleans, and it may still find me there: if not, Mr. Greenwood will forward on.

I remain, most sincerely, my Dear Sir,

Your friend and serv't.

JOSIAH GREGG

P. S. I have not yet been able to extend out my calculations of latitude and longitude; but I think I can assert that I will be able to bring everything up, by the time I reach N. Orleans (health permitting), and will send them to you from thence.

7.

[Recd. Sept. 1st.

Ans. Sept. 18th.]

Vicksburg, Mi. Aug. 24, 1847.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

I believe I have nothing at all of interest to communicate to you, except the accompanying table of latitudes, etc. which, though it goes directed to Dr. Wislizenus, I hope will also serve your purposes, so far as you may incline to turn your attention in that way. I should also send the notes upon which the calculations were based, but I did not deem it of sufficient importance to trouble you with them; for the principal errors must be those of the instrument.

I should have made more observations for longitude* during the Chihuahua tour, but, first, for want of time, on account of rapidity of marching: 2dly, Jupiter was not in position to observe his satellites to advantage; and 3rdly, the moon, in the most important stretch—from Parras to Napirni—both going and coming,—was too near the sun, to be used with accuracy. Besides, I feared my sextant, roughly carried as it was, was not sufficiently reliable for lunar observations. My longitudes, taken at other periods, are, I feel very certain, within five miles,—which, you are aware, is about as near as we can expect to get it, with our ordinary means. My latitudes, prior to this last tour, as they were taken by sun, moon, planets and fixed stars—both north and south—I think I can generally

¹His name appears in all New Orleans Directories between 1846 and 1878.

warrant within a few seconds. But those on the Chihuahua route may often contain errors of full $\frac{1}{2}'$; yet even these are accurate enough for all practical purposes.

Owing to the reports of the very great virulence of the yellow fever in New Orleans (and possibly at Mouth Rio Grande, etc) I have nearly concluded to turn my course up Red River and through Texas. In fact, after all, this route will suit me about as well as the other.

I remain, truly, Your friend & humble serv't.

JOSIAH GREGG

Dr. George Engelmann,
St. Louis.

*I was also prevented by clouds, from observing for latitude; at several important camps; as at San Pablo, Santa Rosalia, etc.

P. S. If I go up Red River, I shall write to New Orleans, to have my correspondence forwarded accordingly: and though I may go through Texas, I shall still steer to the same point, Saltillo; therefore, please direct as before, until I advise you further.

8.

[Recd. Dec. 3d.

Ans. March 24th.]

New Orleans, Nov. 24, 1847.

George Engelmann, M.D.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

You will doubtless be astonished to find me here at present: I am a little so myself. But I made a rather un contemplated stop on Red R. with my Brother, on account of the virulence of the yellow fever here, in the fall; and I remained much later than I had contemplated. But I am now on my way to Monterey & Saltillo - and I hope to the City of Mexico.

Your very kind favor of 21st Aug. was forwarded to me at Shreveport; and, as I contemplated being on my journey sooner, I delayed answering until I should arrive here. But truly, I have at present only leisure to acknowledge its receipt: I [shall] look over it and answer it more at leisure. But one

thing I cannot omit to do: acknowledge—and th[an]k [you] again, most heartily—for the many useful and important suggestions you have (as heretofore) been so kind as to make.

As Red River, I supposed to be, a rather unexplored region, as well botanically as geologically, I have made several collections, in both branches. An occasional item may possibly be new to you: at least, they may serve to show the geographical extension of objects already known to you. As to Geology, I picked up a little of everything so as to fill a box, until I got together a much greater bulk than I had contemplated—they include about every rocky formation to be found in the circle of my travels, except pebbles. I have done nearly the same botanically: omitting only such articles as I *knew* to be familiar further east and north. You will not suppose, of course, that I send you all this “stuff” for preservation: it is only for your inspection, expecting you to throw away all except an occasional article which you might find interesting and new—if any.

As the specimens of coal, from about Shreveport, bear some resemblance, I think to the “cannel” coal about St. Louis, I should be much obliged to you, if you would examine it a little, and, should you deem it useful, write a brief statement of its character and value to my brother John Gregg, near Shreveport, La. Upon trial I found it burned with a very pretty blaze when fanned; but I had no grate to try it in.

You may perhaps be disposed to “scold” me for not numbering my plants: My present excuse is that I looked upon these as of too little importance: I assure you I shall commence a “regular series,” as soon as I land on the borders of Mexico.

I send you a few sprigs of the long gray moss, with the seed-pods. You are of course familiar with the moss, but I thought you might possibly not have had opportunity to examine the seed. What say you as to the question of its being a true parasitical plant taking root in the tree?

I found no well-marked fossiles, except the petrified wood I send you: nor vegetable remains, except recent ones, in the strata of “soapstone,” etc.

It had long been my desire to request you to accept a copy of my “Commerce of the Prairies”—not as an article of any value

or interest to *you*, but as a token of friendship and gratitude on my own part. But when I have sent you packages heretofore, I had not a copy of the second edition at command. But I have now procured one—though I regret that it is not better bound; yet it is the only binding of this edition that I have,—which I trust you will do me the kindness to place in some unoccupied corner of your library.¹

I send the box by Steamer, "Julia," and, as before, to care of Joseph Charless, Druggist.

You recollect specimens of the bean of the *Guizache* which I sent you. In connection I think I mentioned that the natives made writing ink of them. I boiled carelessly and very imperfectly a few of the *hulls*, and, adding a little sulphate of iron, the result was the ink with which I write this paragraph. I also boiled the seeds separately, but the result was a very imperfect color,—which convinced me that the virtue (gallic acid, I suppose) resides chiefly in the pericarps.

There were many plants in the lot I sent you (from Louisville) last which interested *me* very much, from their novelty, their beauty, their qualities, etc. concerning which I should like to hear your opinion, especially as to how many, if any are entirely *new*. My particular favorite, I believe, was a willow-like shrub, called by the natives, *Mimbre*. Its flower when fresh was beautiful, and very odiferous—that of a rose, with the scent of honey, etc. in addition. If I can procure any of the seeds, I will send them: there were none when I left.

I shall expect to hear from you. Direct to Saltillo, Mexico, via N. Orleans, Matamoros, etc., till further advice.

In haste, I remain, truly,

Your Friend, etc.,

JOSIAH GREGG

P.S. Please excuse blunders, for I have been occupied until the hour of closing mail, and have not time even to read over what I have written.

¹Gregg was partial to the second edition of his book, possibly because the first contained "a page of fiction written by friend T. [Louis Fitzgerald Tasistro] for which I have a peculiar repugnance." Consult Gregg's letter to John Bigelow, Independence, September 6, 1844, printed in Lee, "New-Found Letters of Josiah Gregg," *op. cit.*, 56, 57.

9.

[Recd. Febr. 26

Ans. March 24th.]

Saltillo, Mex. Jan. 24, 1848.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

Your very gratifying favor of 17th Sept. (enclosing one from Dr. Wislizenus of 8th, which please permit me through you here to acknowledge), I found in the office upon my arrival here, nearly three weeks ago: and which I should have answered, ere now, but for want of leisure as well as *material*. And even now I cannot enter as fully into details as I should wish: though the fewer details the better perhaps, of *dry matter*.

As to botany, I have done virtually nothing yet: the month of December was unusually cold, so that, from Matamoros here, vegetation was pretty much frost-bitten, except evergreen trees, of which I had already a tolerable assortment of specimens, which being generally in flower, rendered those to be had at the present season uninteresting.—I shall therefore leave this subject—as well as other branches of natural history—to some future communication; for I have done little else as yet, but endeavor to get myself to rights, in my new domicile—barring a little attention to medical practice, into which I have been drawn by the Mexicans.¹

We get very little reliable news of interest here from the interior. Great anxiety prevails among all our troops upon this line, with regard to their future destiny. They are worried beyond endurance with the inactive life they have led for the last 11 months. If they are not ordered on, they want to go to Mexico via Vera Cruz, or to go home—anything but to lie here. As for my own part I have not entirely lost hope of this column's being ordered forward as far as San Luis, whence a communication may be opened to the City of Mexico by Gen. Scott's army. I shall therefore not be in haste to leave here, with a view of proceeding to Mexico by another route. So, for the present, please still direct to this place.

My trip from the U. S. here was one of the most fatiguing, as well as annoying, I ever experienced—more so I am sure, than I ever had across the Great Western Prairies to Santa Fé.

¹This is the only reference to the practice of medicine found in any of Gregg's writings. For a discussion of his medical education, see the Editor's Introduction, *ante*.

Though I had a dreadful voyage across the Gulf—17 days out from N. Orleans to Brazos!—the height of my labors and vexations were from Camayo here. This was owing, chiefly, to two circumstances: first, a large “train” had just left Camayo before I arrived, and therefore I deemed it expedient to use every exertion to overtake it, so as to travel under protection of the escort. I was therefore unable to prepare myself with the necessary outfit, etc. And secondly, not being personally acquainted with a single officer belonging to the train or escort, I could get no aid or accommodation; and therefore having a little more “luggage” than I could conveniently get along with, I was troubled without measure.

This has suggested to me the expediency of endeavoring to procure from the Department at Washington an order to have my necessary baggage and travelling equipments hauled in the government wagons, which are seldom or never heavily laden. I think, if the object of my tour were made known to the proper department, I could not fail to be furnished with such an order. The last 12 months of my life have chiefly been dedicated to the public service, with considerable pecuniary loss to myself; and I am sure the future will be still more strictly of a public character.

As I feel loth to ask directly for such an order, myself, I should be greatly obliged to you, should you have a suitable acquaintance at Washington, if you would suggest the matter there. Should you think proper to make the representation, please direct that, should such an order be procured, it be forwarded to me, to care of Capt. W. W. Chapman, Quartermaster at Matamoros, who will forward [it] to me wherever I may be.¹

If we could procure an order to this effect, I should thus be enabled to send out any collections I may make.—The order should include my necessary travelling equipage for such a tour as I am upon, instruments, chemicals, preparations, collections, etc.

¹William Warren Chapman, a native of Massachusetts, died September 27, 1859, at Fort Monroe, Virginia, aged 45 years. Graduated from West Point in 1837, he became captain in 1847. For gallant and meritorious conduct in the Battle of Buena Vista he was brevetted major, February 23, 1847.

Please pardon this annoyance. It is only a suggestion which you can act upon or not as you may deem expedient.

I remain, my dear Doctor,

Very truly, Your Friend, etc.

JOSIAH GREGG

Dr. G. Engelmann,

St. Louis.

P.S. Although the ravages of war seem to be suspended here, the cruel agents of death are still active among us—in the shape of murders and executions. Besides anterior casualties a private in a volunteer corps of cavalry here, was shot some time ago for an attempt to kill his captain; and a couple of weeks ago, another was hung (of the same corps) for the murder of a Mexican, in the streets of this city. But a still more horrid affair has since occurred. Three volunteers, discharged on account of ill health, having started home, were most inhumanly butchered on the road to Monterey, some 15 miles from here. A portion of the perpetrators (five) were caught, and all hung last week in the Public Square. The[re] seemed to be no doubt of their guilt, and it is only to be regretted that they could not have been condemned in accordance with the rules provided; yet I perceive that all those best acquainted with the affair deem that to have been inexpedient if not impracticable, and that the course taken—a sort of official lynching—was necessary.

10.

[Rec. March 14

Ans. April 24.]

Mexico [City], Feb. 1st, 1849.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

A good long while has elapsed, it is true, since I have written you, though it is still longer since I have received anything from you. The truth is, our mail arrangements, to pass letters from one part to another, in a foreign land, must be very bad. For I have not received a letter from the U. S. since a short time after peace was made, when they were forwarded, not by regular change from the American to the Mexican post-offices,

but by a friend at fort Brown, opposite Matamoros. Now, not only my relatives, but many friends, I am sure, have since written me numerous letters, as well to Saltillo, as to this place, and not a *single one* since I have received a line from the U. S. This is most annoying; and what makes it more so, is the reflection that it must be on account of Carelessness in our own postmasters, in not passing the letters from the posts, by proper conveyances, into the Mexican republic; for all my letters written me within the republic come regularly, and therefore, I feel sure if they were passed to the posts, those would come likewise.

Well, a word concerning myself and arrangements. I left Saltillo in December (as I wrote you, I expected to do) and arrived here on 8th Jan. I have been occupied since chiefly in looking at the city and surrounding country. I make very few botanical collections in this vicinity, as I presume there is nothing new; nor could I, unfortunately, make many between Saltillo and this place, as it was too much out of season—A few winter plants and shrubs only could I pick up. The fact is, most of those on the way (being high valleys, plains and mountains) were those found about Saltillo.

When I left Saltillo, I had not my future route fully planned out: but as I believe I had written you, I have, ever since entering Mexico last time, contemplated a tour upon the Pacific Coast, as far north as California, and perhaps Oregon: and now that so much is said about the mines of California, I have the additional inducement to go that way. I have therefore *about* determined—if not positively determined—to leave here toward first of March for the Pacific Coast, via Morelia (formerly Valladolid), Guadalaxava, etc., to Mazatlan. If I find I can still proceed with safety, by land, I shall continue through the interior to Guaymas—thence cross the Gulf of California and proceed to San Diego, Monterey & San Francisco. Yet it is possible, owing to the danger of travelling by land, in some places, that I may conclude to embark at one of the ports, before reaching San Francisco. Still I shall be loth to do this, as all the sea route is of course time lost. This route you will see is almost wholly “untrod” by the botanist, geologist, or naturalist of any kind: and it being in a fine season for botany,

I hope to be able to make some interesting collections in that line, to which I am chiefly dedicated.¹

In your last letter you proposed to me to make botanical collections and send you for sale. A want of leisure and transportation prevents me from collecting (and more especially in Geology) as extensively as I should. Still, I now make it a point, whenever I can get them, to put up a dozen or more botanical specimens of every species—all of which I shall send to you; for I find it too inconvenient to make distinct packages to send so far to different points. With these you will be at liberty to make whatever disposition you may choose—present—sell—and keep—as you may think fit; but without requiring any pecuniary return to me. All I ask—I will not say in *return*, for this would be asking too much for so little—but as a favor,—is that, at your leisure, you examine them, and write me out a brief (but quite brief indeed) botanical sketch of all the country I have travelled over since entering Mexico last—or rather since I commenced collecting botanical specimens in 1847. This I should wish to use (with full acknowledgment to you, of course) within about a year—if nothing happens.

I shall send you (via Vera Cruz) before leaving this place, my entire botanical collections, etc., not very extensive, to be sure, as I was most of the time at Saltillo, whose vicinity I had examined pretty well before. Still—all in all—including duplicates of many sent you before—I suppose I must have nearly as many species as I sent you before. These will all go numbered, keeping a memorandum of them myself.

I can't tell you how or where to write me until I reach San Francisco: in fact, an answer, started immediately, would perhaps not reach there much before I. Therefore please write to that place, at once, by mail—or by private conveyance.

I will write again, when I forward my collections: meanwhile remaining most sincerely

Your Friend, etc.

JOSIAH GREGG

George Engelmann, M.D.

St. Louis, Mo.

¹This statement seems to be somewhat overdrawn, for Gregg certainly had in mind the writing and printing of another book, in which botany and geology would play a minor part.

11.

[Recd. 19 May.

Ans. Sept. 27.]

Mexico [City], April 14, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have various letters of yours before me, the latest of which are of Aug. 4 and 28—1848—and Feb. 18, 1849. The two first I have already answered, which I hope you have received. My last letter was dated Feb. 1, by Vera Cruz which I hope you have received; yet I will repeat some things here, to provide against accidents to the other.

In your letter of Aug. 4, you speak of a "dry berry" which I sent you as seed of the *junco* (green-thorn-shrub). I aimed at least to send you as well as Dr. Short, large branches of these berries. You say you had supposed it of some other plant; yet if you received the right ones, I don't know how you could mistake them, as they had twigs with thorns connected with them.

In yours of Aug. 18, you make a proposition to collect plants for sale. Circumstances and means of transportation will not permit me to collect as extensively as would be requisite for that: nevertheless, I make it a point to collect a considerable number of specimens of every plant,—where I can get good ones—all of which I will send you; yet not for sale on my account, but for you to make whatever disposition of them you may think proper. All I shall solicit of you (as I said in my last) is that, provided your occupations permit, you write me out a brief (though quite brief—suited to a short appendix) account of the botany of the regions through which I have travelled, since commencing to forward you specimens: yet this I ask as a favor, and not as recompense for anything I have done or may do; for the trouble has doubtless been more on your side than mine.

I hope to be able to publish within a twelve month, as I shall probably make my way home pretty direct from California.¹

I have now put up to send you from here some 700 specimens, including all my collections since I last entered Mexico. Among these I purposely embraced a great number of those I

¹The nature of this proposed publication is made clear elsewhere in this paper.

had already sent—many others have doubtless been introduced without my knowing it: nevertheless, I think more than half are distinct; and a few, I hope, new and interesting. I have now followed the system of numbering as you directed; but I find it impossible at present to copy you my notes; yet I will do it as soon as possible and send you.*

I wrote you before of my contemplated tour to California—through the states of Mexico, Michoacan, Jalisco, Sinaloa & Sonora—the most interesting botanical route that I can now well imagine. I hope to forward you something of interest at the conclusion of this tour.

I believe your last letter contains nothing requiring special answers. I perceive by it that some of my letters had not reached you. This last of yours was forwarded me from Saltillo to this city.

You will doubtless be surprised to find me here so late: I am myself, indeed; but numbers of interesting things have been daily presenting themselves to detain me (among them several M. S. maps of parts and whole of the Republic, which I have got the privilege of copying. In this line I feel sure I can produce something much more accurate than has ever been published.¹

My botanical collections about here [have] amounted to but few, as I not only supposed the country well explored, but the season has been particularly bad—the country burned up by drought: I had not seen a drop of rain since sometime before leaving Saltillo, till 10 or 12 days ago: and though you speak of hard winter—ice—snow—sleet, etc.—I have scarcely witnessed a *frost*: the only times I have seen the thermometer *as low* as the freezing point, was two or three mornings on the plains this side of Saltillo. In this city I have scarcely seen it below 40°.

Very truly,

Your friend, etc.

JOSIAH GREGG

*Since writing this I have engaged a young man to copy off my plant notes, which I will place in Portfolio, No. 1—between the board and the plants. I doubt not the copy will contain

¹See particular reference to a general map of Mexico in John Gregg's letter, *post*.

many errors; but I hope it may serve till I can send you a better copy, or the original.—I mark the box to care of Moses Greenwood, Commission Merchant, New Orleans.

You speak of "troubling" me: nothing that you can impose upon me do I consider trouble. On the contrary, I preserve your letters with care, and copy most of your "lectures" in my note book—so interesting and useful are they to me.

P.S. Monday, April 23.—Since writing this letter I have suffered considerable detention on account of a robber. Two Americans who brought me a letter of recommendation, and [whom] I engaged for the trip to California, broke open the trunk of a friend in the house with me, and, stealing my two best mules, made off toward Vera Cruz. They were caught, however; and are now in jail; yet having made away with the mules, and most of the money, the amount recovered hardly paid expenses.

12.

[Recd. Aug. 30th.

Ans. Sept. 27.] Mazatlan¹ (on Pacific Coast) June 30, 1849.²

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

I wrote both from Mexico and Guadalajara; yet, lest those letters might fail to reach you, I will repeat here, that I left, in the City of Mexico, with Messrs. M. Calmont, Geaves & Co. to be forwarded immediately to Vera Cruz, all my collections of Plants, etc. in one box, marked to your address, and to care of Moses Greenwood, New Orleans.

I arrived here on the 7th instant; and have since been occupied in preparing my collections to be sent to you. As I believe I before informed you, I now send all to you, as it is too troublesome to make divisions. On the present occasion, it is true, I have separated a small herbarium, putting [aside] a

¹The port of Mazatlan in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico, nearly opposite Cape St. Lucas, the southern extremity of the peninsula of Lower California.

²This is the latest letter of Gregg's that has come to my notice, written only a few months before his death.

specimen or two of everything which would bear division, though it is not as complete as the other: This I have done, principally with the object of guarding against the loss of the first, which I will have shipped to you by the first vessel for the U. S. The second I will afterward (in another vessel) have shipped either to you or to Professor Short. So, should you receive neither, you can inquire if he has received the one alluded to, which, under such circumstances, I hope he will place at your disposition. Should you both receive, please furnish Professor Short with such notes as he may require, from the Botanical Memoranda which I send you (as before, packed on top of one of the bundles of plants), for I have not had time to get two copies taken. Nor even have I found leisure to examine closely the copy I send you; yet from a glance, I think it approximately correct. The numbers of the two herbariums of course correspond. They now ascend to 1250. odd, there being nearly 600 in the herbarium I now send you.

It has not rained from some distance beyond Guadalajara, to this place, since September last, until a few days past, when we have had some light showers, indicative that the rainy season is about commencing. Owing to the protracted drought, I have collected but very little on this side of Guadalajara, except of trees and shrubs; and even of these I have had to pass many, to me new and interesting, for want of either flower or fruit, and often even for want of leaves: for it was "mid-winter" in the vegetable kingdom, on this route.

You will doubtless find all the defects in this that you have met with in my former collections; yet I hope you will meet with more that is interesting.—On this tour, I have had a young German with me, by name of Runckel,¹ a pretty fair practical naturalist, who has been of a good deal of service to me, particularly in the preparation of fowls. Of these I send you some 15 or 16 specimens—but some of them are nearly spoiled. They were prepared by Mr. Runckel. These I rather send for deposit with you, as it may turn out that I may want at least some of them hereafter, and therefore would not ask you to take the trouble to have them prepared and set up.

¹Runckel has proved very elusive; nothing concerning him has been found.

I also send you a few shells, as well as some vials of insects, etc., from about here—none, however, which seem to me to be of any special interest. Also a few specimens of rocks and woods. I have not followed your instructions in either of these, as it seemed to me that the size you gave, would have occasioned too much bulk and weight; especially in my land-tours. I also send a good many seeds—sometimes wrapped in separate papers, but oftener put up in the herbarium, with the plants to which they pertain.

I had fully intended—as I wrote you from Mexico—to continue my tour, by land, to California; but, since my arrival here, I have concluded to abandon it—much, indeed to my own regret. Yet, as I am not very strong in health, and the heat and fatigue are so great, I have begun to fear that I may not very well be able to endure two or three months more of arduous travel,¹ in such an unpropitious season: and, withal, with so little of interest before me, particularly in the vegetable kingdom: for although the rainy season is about commencing, it will only serve to annoy—to wet—make bad roads, raise the waters—without much improving vegetation in time for me.

Thinking of nothing else, just now, to tell you, I close by assuring you of my constant endeavors to keep you informed and supplied with everything of interest which comes in the way of

Your friend & serv't.

JOSIAH GREGG

Dr. George Engelmann,
St. Louis, Mo.

P.S. Our news from California is not now very flattering to the gold-seekers. The placers are said to be failing very much; yet I think it is chiefly owing to the overflowing of the Sacramento river. When the water subsides again, I am in hopes the mines will resume their flourishing condition—at least to a degree. It should be borne in mind, however, that the former bonanza, equally with the present unfavorable condition, have doubtless been greatly exaggerated.

¹He appears to have gone to California by water. See John Gregg, *post*.

13.

JOHN GREGG TO DR. GEORGE ENGELMANN¹

[Rec—Jan 17th, 1851]

Shreveport, La. Dec. 24/50

DEAR SIR:

Your kind letter of 28th ult has just come to hand,—making inquiry of me in regard to the death and early history of my lamented brother, Dr. Josiah Gregg. I am truly sorry to inform you, that up to this time, I have been whol[l]y unable, after the most diligent exertions, to obtain any information, in respect to the particulars of his untimely death or even to satisfy me as to the date—except what little I have been able to glean from the newspapers—which is doubtless the same you mention having seen. Immediately on hearing of his death, I wrote numerous letters to acquaintances and friends in California; but none that have answered have been able to give any satisfactory information—except in one instance a friend wrote me that he had been unable, after much inquiry, to obtain any information in regard to his death, farther than that he was engaged in marking a road from Trinity Bay to Sacramento City, and had reached Clear Lake, 60 miles from the latter place, at the time of his death.

At the time of his reaching San Francisco, about the 1st of Sept. '49, gold had recently been discovered in great abundance on the Trinity River, some three or four hundred miles north of that place and much anxiety manifested to discover a bay and good harbor, at the mouth of the above river, which was understood (by tradition as I understand) to exist there.

[*Written on margin of first page*] (—He was naturally of rather feeble constitution, and sank from over taxing his physical powers and excessive exposure in a rigours northern climate, I presume: yet his health was generally much better when traveling than at other times.)—

He was detained a short time at San Francisco—having found

¹This letter, although addressed to Dr. Engelmann, was also written for Prof. C. W. Short, who intended to write a memoir of Josiah Gregg for "Silliman's Journal" (popular name for the *American Journal of Science* in the 1850's), but an examination of the American Antiquarian Society's file of this journal between 1850 and 1855 indicated that no such article was printed. MSS. in the Filson Club Library.

it necessary to have a surgical operation performed for the purpose of removing a tumor from his shoulder, which had formed and become troublesome from the "rubbing of his clothes." So soon as he had recovered from this—which was in a short time—as was his wont—he set out in search of the aforementioned bay; with a desire and a hope to be the first to make the discovery: And in which, it appears, from an article in the *Alta California* of 1st of April last, he was successful. This you will find copied in the "Union" of Washin[g]ton City of the 11th May—except, that in the Union, there is an error in the figures of Lat. & c.¹

The last letter I had from him was dated "Trinity River below 3^d Canon Nov. 1st 1849." In which he says "I leave this place today for the mouth of this river in search of the bay." On the same day he wrote his old friend, Jesse Sutton,² of San Francisco, to the same effect. In this letter he seemed to indicate some foreboding of evil to himself, (a thing entirely unusual with him) as he says to him "I will mention here (though I believe I told you the same before) that should I chance to be lost, place my effects and memoranda (which are in the hands of Probst & Smith) at the disposition of my brother John." Mr. Sutton wrote me, when sending the memoranda referred to, that he had been unable to recover my brother's notes and [or?] the "Trinity Country," as also his geological and botanical collections: And says, from all he "can learn, they were either lost or destroyed"—I presume the latter, as my brother had it in view to make a location for a town—should he discover an eligible site—hence the loss of his papers amounted to an obliteration of whatever he had done.

Not fully understanding how extensive a "history," or "necrologue" you or Prof. Short may wish to publish of my brother, I am at a loss to know the extent of "his early history" you may desire to have. I will proceed however to give you his

¹There were several papers named *Alta California*: the *Daily Alta California*, the *Alta California*, *Steamer Edition* (weekly), and the *Weekly Alta California*. Files of all these papers are in the Henry E. Huntington Library, but unfortunately the issue of April 1, 1850, is missing. I therefore am unable to comment upon the article mentioned by Gregg's brother.

²Probably the same gentleman who is referred to in Dr. Bayless's letter, *post*, as "Mr. Sutton, a Santa Fe trader."

birth, early developments of character, raising &c.—from which you are at liberty to make such selections as you may, in your discretion, deem proper.

Josiah Gregg was born in Overton County Tennessee on the 19th of July 1806. He was the fourth son of Harmon and Susannah Gregg. Our father died in Jackson County, Mo., in the year 1844. Our mother still lives there aged 76. Three brothers and two sisters live in that and the adjoining Counties, and one sister near San Antonio Texas. Brother Jacob is now in the Legislature of Mo. as I have been informed. Our parents left the aforesaid County in Tennessee in 1809—Lived three years in Illinois, twenty miles east of St. Louis—moved to what is now Howard County, Mo. in 1812—Immediately, on reaching there, went into “Cooper’s Fort,” and remained there four years, during the Indian war. Having moved there at this early day, made it quite difficult for my father to educate his children—a thing much desired by him. For some years teachers of ability were not in the Country; and the new settlers showed little inclination to spend either money or time for the education of their children—not even in the erection comfortable school houses. It was the habit of my brother, as a set-off to such as boasted in his presence, of having received their educations in the best institutions of the country, to say that the little education he had, “had been received in the wood in a round log cabin,” and that the light had never shone through a glass window upon his books while he was conning his lesson. His education was ample—though mainly self taught, yet there were those whom he was frank to acknowledge as his benefactors; among them was John T. Cleveland of Howard County Mo. He spoke and wrote Spanish with as much facility as his native tongue. He read and translated French and Italian with ease. He professed not to understand Latin—yet his knowledge of it was much better than many who had made a study of it at school. He understood something of the rudiments of the Greek and German. He never professed a knowledge of any thing in literature, except what he understood critically correct.

He showed a very early predilection for books, and remarkably mathematical cast of mind. At the age of from 7 to 10 he

was quite as frequently applied to by his school fellows to instruct them in their arithmetical studies as their teacher; and it was a common saying among them "If Josiah can not work our sums it is useless to go to the teacher."

At the age of 11 or 12 he constructed for himself a quadrant of wood, with which he used to amuse and astonish the boys of the neighborhood—when they visited *him* in taking altitude &c. Many times would they climb trees, rope in hand, to test, by actual measurement, whether it were possible for him to perform the miracle of measuring the height of a tree without the application of measuring pole. When he was quite a youth he and I undertook to study the science of surveying, at home; without a teacher—having a neighbor, that had much reputation as a learned surveyor, who gratuitously proposed to give us instruction when we should need it.

When we came to the solution of "Gunter's Scale," said he to me "the Author of this book gives a very unsatisfactory explanation of this scale." I suggested to him that it would be better to ride over to the neighbor's aforesaid and get him to explain it, rather than spend time with it. He did so, but I discovered on his return that his countenance was fallen. "What" said I "don't you understand the scale yet?" "No," said he, "Mr. W. does not understand it himself, and says it is useless to spend time with it, for we will never have any use for it." I said that I presumed he was right, and that we had better not bother our brains further with it, but *pass* it by. He replied "That does not suit *me*, I set out to learn what is in this book, and I can't pass by any thing I don't understand." so saying he took the book and went to himself. Returning in a short time, said, now I understand it, and can explain it to you—which he did, with as much apparent facility as though he had been familiar with it all his life.

It frequently occurred to him in the course of his mathematical studies that problems would present themselves to his mind, for the solution of which, he could find no rules laid down in his books. In such cases,—as in that of the scale—he could not "pass," but invariably would invent a rule of his own, and insert in his manuscript book—kept for the purpose.

When approaching manhood he concluded—as well from

inclination, as the advice of friends—to prepare himself for some profession: And, believing medicine was best suited to his taste and genius, he applied to Dr. Sappington of Saline (Mo) County to take him as a student. This the Dr. however declined. He then read law for a time. He afterwards, frequently, told me that law was the only study he ever had undertaken, in which he did not think he had been able to make reasonable progress. Its dry details, and old, Saxon, arbitrary forms were suited, neither to his taste nor his genius. He would say “The Common Law may have been adapted to the age in which it originated; but is a reproach to any people professing the civilization & equality of rights we do.” But his health becoming bad he was induced by some friends to join them in an expedition to Santa Fe. To this he assented, mainly in the hope of recovering his health. It had the desired effect.

As for the incidents of his life during the time he was engaged in that trade, you will be able to collect them from his work, “The Commerce of the Prairies.”

After abandoning the Santa Fe trade he sojourned for a time with me, at Van Buren Arkansas—where I then lived. But there he seemed restless. There nothing seemed suited to his tastes—nothing adapted to his genius.

It had been his habit from early youth to note down every thing he deemed worthy of remembrance. This habit had been well preserved in during the time he was engaged in the Santa Fe trade; But without the intention at the time of making any other use of it than a mere book of reference to strengthen his own memory. From these however he was finally induced by his friends to publish a book—with what success you are aware. As to how it was received by the press of his own country, as well as England, you will see by a reference to the accompanying “Opinions of the press.”¹

After the publication of the above work he returned, in July '44 to my house in this state. Here too he soon became restless. He longed for travel and research. He soon set out, overland, along the western frontier of Ark. & Mo. for Independence Mo. There too he became restless, and again soon returned to my house.

¹This, of course, refers to *Commerce of the Prairies*, first published in New York, 1844.

Having found it necessary while engaged in the Santa Fe trade to understand something of medicine, for the purpose of administering to those in his employ, as well as others in company, he had procured, and continually carried with him a small collection of medical books; And such was his reputation in administering of remedies, that, not only his men, while on the plains, but many of his friends and relations at home, would not consent to have a physician called so long as he could be induced to attend the patient.

After this desultory reading, he concluded, while at my house, in the summer of '45 to commence reading medicine more methodically, with a view of attending the Lectures at Louisville the ensuing winter.¹ Accordingly when fall came he proceeded thence. He chose Louisville, because he had no personal acquaintances there; as he believed, and thereby hoped to pass partially "in cog." But shortly after his arrival at that place, he wrote me that he much regretted having gone there. A friend had been there from Van Buren Ark., who had introduced him to some of his acquaintances, and they in turn to theirs—among them the Professors. He wrote: "although I am pleased with many of my new acquaintances—especially the Professors—yet it interferes with my studies—the grand object of my coming here." He, however, soon after, appeared so much attached to some of the Professors, that he no longer seemed to regret having gone there.

He read medicine and attended the Lectures, not with a view of ever practicing; but to gratify his passion for science; and in the belief that it might add to his standing in Mexico, where he intended traveling.

On leaving Louisville, in the Spring of '46, he repaired to Independence Mo. where he joined the "Santa Fe Caravan of Traders"—then on the eve of starting. He had however proceeded but a short distance with the Caravan when he was overtaken by a communication from Col. A. H. Sevier, Senator in Congress, from Ark.—as also one from Col. A. Gell, [Yell]²

¹For facts relating to Gregg's medical education, see the Editor's Introduction, *ante*.

²Archibald Yell, member of congress, commanded the First Arkansas Infantry during the Mexican War. He was killed at the battle of Buena Vista, February 23, 1847. Letter of Adjutant General of Arkansas, June 13, 1931.

Representative, from the same State, soliciting him, in the strongest terms, to join the "Southern Division of the Army" under Gen. Wool, destined for the invasion of Chihuahua, and warranting him an "honorable and profitable" situation. He accordingly (having a desire to serve his country in the Mex. war) suddenly left the "Missouri Traders" and steered South to overtake the Ark. Regiment of Volunteers, under Col. Gell [Yell]—then in route for San Antonio, Texas, then place of rendezvous for the "Southern Division of the Army." But on arriving at San Antonio he found no commission—"no honorable or profitable situation" awaiting him. Finally, however through the influence of Col. Gell [Yell] (the member of Congress, and Col. of Ark. Regiment referred to above) he received "a sort of nominal appointment from Gen. Wool, in his staff, as confidential Government Agent, Interpreter, &c." This appointment however he resigned on reaching the Rio Grande—an account (as he wrote me) of the "humiliating" situation in which he was placed. "For," said he, "I am held, not only on a par, but subordinate to persons of, apparently, very low character which the Gen. keeps about his person." He was afterwards, for a time, nominally, in the staff of Gen. W. P. Butler—But at the close of this service, utterly refused to receive the pay and emoluments pertaining to the office—although strongly urged to do so by Gen. Butler—not having—as he considered—received a definite appointment. Thus you will see how the foregoing promises were fulfilled! He had many warm friends among the Officers of the Army. They placed great reliance, not only in the latitudes and longitudes taken by him, but in his topographical observations generally.

At the close of the war he remained in Saltillo for a while, extending his knowledge of the topography of the surrounding country &c. In the mean time he was induced by his Mexican friends (of whom he had many among the principal men of the country) while he remained to practice medicine. But he soon wrote me, "I shall be compelled to leave here sooner than I intended." "For," said he, "I have '*stuck up my card*,' and the Mexicans have come to think I am a wondrous Doctor"—I have to go night and day—not a moment to spare—except five to seven hours for sleep—for amusements, for social inter-

course, for scientific purposes &c!" An Officer of the Army—an old acquaintance of mine, as well as his—wrote me "I am on a visit to your brother at this place, (Saltillo). He could make a fortune, if he would charge as others do. But you know him—He won't do it. If a Mexican says to him, yo soy poorcito (I am very poor) he is charged nothing—Even the rich are not charged more than half price." My brother himself, in a letter to me, mentions a bill, paid by a neighbor, to a physician, of 170p for which he would not have charged more than 30p or 40p—And adds "at such rates (had I the conscience to charge them) my practice would be over five thousand dollars per month."

But here, as usual, he became restless. For notwithstanding his pecuniary interests seemed imperiously to demand that he should remain—He must travel—must explore. In Decr. '48 he left Saltillo, in company with many of the principal personages of that place—both Ladies and Gentlemen—in route—via San Luis Potosi—for the City of Mexico, with the ultimate design of going thence—through the western part of Mexico—to California. He did not hear of the discovery of gold in California until about the time of his arrival in the City. He wrote me that, since hearing of this discovery—and consequent excitement it was producing—he had determined—to "hurry on there." Yet he did not leave the city until the 26th of April following. He was in the City of the "Montezumas"—He must look into every nook and corner—He must see if any *relic* was to be found to indicate that the place had once been inhabited by another race.—More, he must ransack "musty records"—And then, he must travel the Country around about.

His friends who were in the City with him, from Saltillo, offered everything in their power to induce him to return with them; and prevent, if possible, his going to California—But to no effect—*There* he had determined on going—He never relinquished a fixed idea—a matured plan. The two Governors (of Saltillo)—The actual and the elect—both offered to raise a bonus for him; and the latter told him that if he would return he would give him an appointment which would be virtually a valuable sinecure.

Leaving the City of Mexico, he passed through Morelia,

Guadalajara &c. to the Port of Mazatlan where—not being able to get on board a Steamer—he took a sailing vessel, and after a tedious voyage reached San Francisco about the 1st of Sept. '49.

As an evidence of the estimation in which my Brother was held by the Mexicans, the Governor of Guadalajara furnished him an escort, on leaving there. He wrote me that he had no use for it, having six foreigners with him—but would take it the first day, out of respect to the Governor.

My Brother, at quite an early age, showed some quite peculiar traits of character. For example, he never hung around or upon his mother, nor even slept with her—He left her arms at the age of 13 or 14 months; and never returned to them for a moment, except when caught and held by her—and notwithstanding this, his warm maternal affection has always been remarked by the family. He seemed to have an early idea that it was unmanly to be caressed, as an infant, by a woman. He never followed her in her walks, nor even asked permission to accompany her on a visit to a neighbors. He never indulged in the childlike plays, or frivolities common to children of his age. He possessed the most scrupulous and conscientious integrity from infancy to his death. I have heard individuals remark that the only care they had in a settlement with him was to prevent his doing injustice to himself. I never knew his particular acquaintances to keep an account against him. He was not only left to keep the Act^s but to make the settlement. He was modest and unassuming. Never used any coarse or profane language. Never could be induced in *boyhood* to utter a word he deemed the least exceptionable. It has been the remark of our family, that, he was believed never to have uttered a word, up to the age or [of] 16 or 17, that would have been improper, in the presence of the best circle of ladies. In *boyhood*, he never could be induced to tell an untruth—not even in jest. He was remarkably temperate both in eating and drinking. He sometimes would take a glass of spirits with a friend, as it would appear, merely not to be considered *odd*. A thing, to which he seemed much averse. I have heard him remark “I have no desire to be considered an odd fish.” His books were his principal companions from

infancy to manhood, and continued favorites through life. Yet he was warm hearted; and to his friends, enduringly attached—In the selection of whom, he was slow; but once selected he never forsook them, nor they him. He possessed [possessed] an early, and remarkable command of himself—always completely under the control of the dictates of his judgment—was one of the very few, who, appeared, never to have a boyish preak [prank?] or irregularity to regret. He never professed to know or understand anything—even in literature—in which he was not well versed. Hence, whatever he professed to understand, all, who knew him had the utmost confidence in. In truth, I never knew an assertion of his doubted, from his infancy by those who knew him. He was remarkably averse to ostentatious show. He formed his opinions of men, not from the show they made in the world, but from what he esteemed their moral worth: Hence the upright, no matter how humble, always manifested the highest regard for him. The Mexicans—both high and low—always evinced the highest regard, and most unbounded confidence in him.

I have hastily and confusedly thrown together the foregoing, just as the incidents of my brothers life, and peculiarities of his character recurred to mind; not with a view that you should use it as it is—nor even draw from the whole of it—but to give you a general idea of the *boy* and the *man*. I have, in some of the details, been prolix and minute, in the belief that you would better understand my Brothers general character by a detailed statement of facts—though many of them might be unimportant in themselves—than in any other way; and also in the belief that even a concise history of a person can better be given when the writer fully understands the minutest details of the character of the person of whom he writes. Many of his juvenile peculiarities were not prided in by himself in his riper years. Some of them were such as are most commonly superinduced, in children, by superstition or religious gloom; but not in the remotest degree so with him; they seemed the sole result of an early and high sense of honor and propriety.

I have traveled beyond the time you desired—"the time he went to Louisville" in '45 instead of "'46" as you suppose. I

have done this with a hope that I might be able to give you something that had not fallen out in his correspondence with you. The quotations, I have made, are mainly from memory, yet in most instances they will approximate very nearly the truth. I leave it entirely to the better discretion and judgement of you "or Prof. Short to publish his necrologue and acknowledge his services in the cause of science" in such manner as you may deem proper.

As you have seen, I received nothing from him after he reached California, except the few letters before referred to.

His notes, from the time he reached the Army in '46 till he arrived at San Francisco in '49, are ample. His sketches and maps of the country through which he passed are quite extensive. In a letter to me from the City of Mexico, He says; "I have succeeded in getting the most ample notes for a general map of Mexico that have ever been obtained, I presume.— Having such a mass of information, of all sorts, I am now making all my calculations on publishing in a year or two; but shall try to do it on a different principle: that of sale of Copyright." So you will see he thought himself amply supplied with matter for Publication. I am yet undetermined as to what disposition I shall make of his notes. I would be pleased to have your opinion on this subject. I contemplate writing Prof. Short, and other Scientific persons in respect to it.

Be pleased, Dear Sir, to accept my grateful acknowledgements, and heart felt thanks for the interest you manifest in my deceased Brother.

With a hope of soon hearing from—I am

Your Most Humb^l. and Obt. Svt.

JOHN GREGG

Prof. George Engelman

St. Louis, Mo.

P.S. Am pleased with your suggestion in reference to the "bird skins." You are therefore at liberty to present them to either of the institutions indicated by you, in such manner as you may deem advisable.

I am truly sorry, circumstances place it entirely out of my power to make you a fair copy of the foregoing, and give it some arrangement, but I hope however you will be able to

make it answer your purpose. Should anything else be needed please inform me.

J. G.

14.

DR. GEORGE W. BAYLESS TO PROFESSOR CHARLES W. SHORT
Hazelwood (near Weston) [Missouri]

March 16th 1851

DEAR DOCTOR:

I wrote you about two months ago,¹ that I had made arrangements for procuring the information you wished concerning Dr. Gregg; and I suppose you have, for some time, been looking for another letter from me. I certainly expected to have been able to write you long since; but have looked, in vain, for answers to the letters that were written to Independence by the Rev. Mr. Kerr.² I expected to have obtained desirable information from persons who were companions of Dr. G. in his Santa Fe expeditions; but have been disappointed. I have learned that the gentleman from whom I expected most, has been engaged in some contemplated expeditions the approaching season; and he may have never rec^d the letter from Mr. Kerr, or else have overlooked the subject.

Five or six weeks ago, I made a visit to the venerable mother of Dr. G. who is living with her daughter in the neighborhood of Liberty. From the mother and sister I obtained the chief facts of the early part of his life;—up to the time of his leaving home, to make his first trip to Santa Fe. Before detailing them, I will remark that I soon found his mother & sister to be persons of clear good (*strong*) sense, and much better informed than the generality of persons to be met with in this country. The sister bears a strong resemblance to the Dr. and like him also in mental activity. Her children, some of them grown, partake of the same character; so that I would say there was *good blood—a vein* of strength of character & intellect running through the family, and that the Dr. was not a mere isolated instance. In corroboration of this idea, I will mention that his

¹This letter is also in the collections of the Filson Club.

²Chaplain of Fort Leavenworth.

brothers are spoken of as prominent men in their respective communities; the elder one having represented the county in which Independence is situated, the present winter in the Missouri Legislature.

His mother (whose name is Susanna) is in her 77th year, I found her reading the history of the Reformation in ordinary print—reads her bible a great deal, takes much interest in whatever is passing around her, and her conversation is marked by clearness and strength. Except for an old dislocation of the hip, she would be equal in her physical with her mental activity;—and when not reading, is constantly engaged in knitting or sewing. She showed me a quilt which she was engaged in putting together. In regard to the accuracy and neatness with which the pieces were cut and put together, many young ladies might envy her skill.

The Dr's father was named Harmon, some years since dead. He was a wheel-wright by trade; was a skillful workman, but early gave up his business, and became a farmer. None of his sons were put to the trade; but he was particular in teaching them the use of tools. (I suppose, that, to this fact, is attributable the mechanical *skill* of the Dr. as exhibited in some works presently to be mentioned). He lived in West Tennessee (Overton Co.); removed to Illinois 38 years ago, where he lived three years; when he removed to Jackson Co., Mo., not far from Independence.

The Dr. was born 19th July 1806, in Tennessee and was 6 years old when his father removed to Illinois. He was of delicate constitution. He was always delicate; and "over-taxed his Energies that time."—a remark made by his mother, in allusion to the circumstances of his death. He rec^d a plain English education, such as was afforded by a common country school—(which, 35 years ago must have been very *common* in Mo.) At 16 years of age he and an elder brother studied surveying privately. He became an excellent surveyor; and constructed, for his own use, a well finished *quadrant*, which is now in the possession of his brother. He also acquired a knowledge of the Latin and French languages in private study.

Saturday 22nd. I was interrupted in my letter at the close of the preceding page; and, throughout the week, I have been

incessantly engaged in planting, (not merely superintending) fruit & ornamental trees and shrubbery, so that at night I was too tired and sleepy to do anything. Hard work has effectually cured my dyspepsia.)

At 18 years of age, he opened a school in the country, near Liberty, Clay County; in which he taught the ordinary English branches. He continued the school one year; when he gave it up to commence the study of Law. To this he applied himself so closely that, in about a year, his health gave way, and, by the advice of physician and friends, he abandoned it. He now went on a visit to some friends in the lower part of the state, where he was taken sick in September, and was confined until near spring. This greatly reduced and debilitated him; and I have referred to it particularly as the fact that seemed to give direction to his after life,—led to his becoming a great traveller, and to the development of his taste as a naturalist. He was advised by his physician, as a "hygienic measure," to take a trip across the plains—to Santa Fe. You will find in his "Commerce of the Prairies" an account of his condition on setting out on this journey: and the effects of travel on his health. At first he was compelled to travel altogether in a light wagon; but soon got to be able to alternate it with horse back travel.

He availed himself of the opportunity of riding in the wagon, to apply himself to the study of the Spanish language. With the aid of his knowledge of Latin & French, he got on rapidly: so that by the time he reached Santa Fe he was able to speak the language.

During this journey, or shortly after, he engaged as book-keeper for a Mr. Sutton, a Santa Fe trader. This led to his being taken into partnership by Sutton; and thus he was introduced into the Santa Fe trade. My impression is, from conversations with him, that he continued in this trade nine years; and that, during an interruption of the trade caused by the war between the U. States & Mexico, he went to Louisville to attend the medical lectures.

(You will perceive that the foregoing account must be defective; inasmuch as it does not give the whole lapse of time between his first journey to Santa Fe, & his going to Louisville.

He was about 20 or 21 years of age (according to his mother & Sister) when he started to Santa Fe; which would make it in 1826 or 7 and, by reference to my list of pupils, I find that he was in Louisville the winter of 1845, 6. I am very confident that he told me he was nine years in the trade; so there must either have been a considerable interval between his first trip & his engaging as bookkeeper for Sutton; or else he must have been a considerable time in the employment of this gentleman—which I do not think very probable. I did not perceive this difficulty when I was with his mother; and I am at a loss to explain it. In the preparation of your memoir, you will have occasion to look into his "Commerce of the Praries," and you may there find its solution.)

I have referred to his possessing considerable mechanical ingenuity & skill; and have mentioned the construction of an excellent quadrant, as one exhibition of it. Another striking one, which he told me of, is the construction of a town clock in & for the city of Santa Fe. My recollection of the matter is, that, having sold out his stock of goods, and being compelled to remain all the winter in Santa Fe, before he could re-cross the plains to the U. S. for a fresh stock, he engaged in the construction of a town clock as a pass time. He was enabled to supply himself with but a very indiferent supply of tools, and used wood as the chief material. But he succeeded in completing the work, and attaching it to a church bell, where he left it working finely.¹ His book will furnish you abundant materials for the history during his trading to Santa Fe.

The interruption to the trade, as already referred to, as occasioned by the War, led him to attend the lectures in Louisville, as a profitable mode of occupying the time that he supposed the interruption would continue. I think it was his purpose when he went to Louisville to have re-engaged in the trade on suspension of hostilities; but at the close of the lectures, (spring of 1846), after a short visit to his friends in Missouri, he set off for the south to join Gen^l. Wool's division of the Army, which was ordered to penetrate Mexico to the city of Chihuahua. The expected route of the Army just met his views, for he wished to travel from this city southward.

¹For another version of the clock story, see Connelly, *op. cit.*, 340, 341.

Before leaving the states he was induced by Col. Yell of the Arkansas regiment, to join him as a companion and guide; and he continued with him until he fell at the Battle of Beuna Vista (I find by one of his letters that this is not strictly correct; for he engaged in practicing med. a short time in Saltillo, before the battle)—to which point, you remember, Gen.¹ Wool's division diverged. After the battle, he undertook, with 8 or 10 comrades, to pass up to the city of Chihuahua. Here he found Col. Doniphian—with whom he returned to Saltillo. In the Spring (1847) he came back to the United States, for the purpose of buying goods to take to Monterey & Saltillo: but hearing unfavourable accounts of the trade while in New York, he determined to abandon the enterprise. He had still in view the same object—to provide means for travelling Southward through the several states to the city of Mexico, for purposes of observation. Disappointed in his plans in this, he determined to return to Saltillo & practice med.[icine] until the cessation of hostilities, when it would be safe to pass on down to the city. This he did late in the fall of 1847. (He was on his return from New York when he & I went to see you at Hayfield). His plan was to practice in Saltillo,—until the close of the war—then pass on down, stopping a few months at each of the chief towns, until he should reach the city of Mexico. He intended to practice at the stopping places, as a means of defraying his expenses. It was also his purpose after remaining some time in the city to pass on by the Isthmus into South America—to travel down on the Atlantic side to Cape Horn, back on the Pacific side up into California—and back thro' Santa Fe to the U. S. I have several letters from Saltillo in the Spring & Summer of 1848—whilst he yet had this tour in contemplation, and asking me to send some intelligent young physician to him as a companion. The last letter I rec^d from Saltillo was dated Aug. 1848, when he seems to have still had the same plan in view.

The next I heard of him was by a letter (the last I ever rec^d from him) written at Mazattan [Mazatlan] June 30th 1849,¹ in which he says, "I left Saltillo last winter for the city of

¹Curiously enough the last letter of Josiah Gregg's, here printed, was written from the same place and bears the same date.

Mexico where I remained until toward the close of April when 'like all the world' I set out toward California. I arrived here on the 7th; and have since been occupied, first, in collecting plants, birds, &c, in the vicinity; and secondly in preparing my previous collections for the United States. I had at first contemplated continuing my journey by land, through Sonora, and California, via Monterey to San Francisco. But I have got so much worried out with the heat and fatigue, that I have about come to the resolution to embark here directly for San Francisco.¹ The fact is, the present season is one of the most unfavourable for a land tour—and especially for botanical collections. Vegetation is now parched up, as it has hardly rained since last fall. True, the rainy season is just about setting in; yet this will only serve to annoy—wet—make bad roads—raise the rivers—while it will scarcely improve vegetation in time to benefit me."

I give the above extracts to show the purpose that carried *him* to California; and also in corroboration of the idea that I have, of his purposes,—while sojourning in Saltillo—and the contemplated tour through Mexico and South America. If he had lived, he would, doubtless, have published an account of the manners and customs of the inhabitants, together with the natural history of those regions. I apprehend, my dear Sir, that your herbarium would have been not a little enriched by specimens from those regions, if he had lived; for the very last lines in this last letter to me, written as a P. S. he says "please say to Prof. Short that I am sending him a small package of plants. Yet as it may be several months reaching him, I will defer writing him until I arrive at California." In other letters he speaks of sending plants to you; so that, I infer you would have rec^d numerous contributions from him, if you have not already done so.

I suppose that he must have arrived at San Francisco in the month of July (1849); and was probably about there for a couple of months. I have learned from a gentleman from this county, lately returned from California, that Dr. G joined a small party in Sept. 1849 in fitting up a small vessel to go up Trinidad or Humbolt's bay, with the view of laying out a town

¹In all probability he went to California by water.

at the mouth of the river of the same name. He also stated that he understood Dr. G. died, of some disease, at the mouth of the river. The exact place and mode of his death, however, are involved in mystery; and his own family are as much in the dark concerning it as other persons. The account which they have rec^d is that he died, probably of starvation, in the mountains adjacent to Trinity river; and that when his body was found there was on it a work in manuscript, nearly ready for publication. Of the exact character of the work, I have not learned. A member of the family, the husband of the sister whom I have spoken of seeing with his mother, is now in California,— and will endeavour to obtain correct information as to his death, and also to secure whatever notes &c he may have left, with the view of their publication in some appropriate form.

It seems a curious coincidence that he should have sacrificed his life to the interests of science on the waters of the bay that bears the name of the great philosopher whose example he was following in the study of nature. 'Twere a fit place for him to die.

Very truly your friend,

G. W. BAYLESS

Prof. Short

Mrs. Bayless and our children continue in excellent health; and she joins me in kindest regards to Mrs. Short & the ladies. Vegetation is coming forward a month earlier than last year. Peach trees are ready to expand.

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