North Yuba California October 28th 1850

My Dear Bro' Edward

Sometimes I address one of you and sometimes another, but each of my letters is intended for you all. I direct to my Mother oftenest as is proper tho once in a while I think it right to vary from this; perhaps I am led to it from what I suppose may be the nature of my communication. I wrote about two weeks ago to my Mother but was much pinched for time and could therefore say but little, and being night and feeling cold I suppose what I did say was gloomy enough. I write to you in a curious place and in a singular fashion. I am sitting on a three legged stool (a proper camp stool) with my portfolio resting on my right knee for a table, our camp fire is just in front placed against a huge rock, three yards to my left runs rapidly but beautifully clear and cool a stream of water half the size of the Ure opposite you on my right and close to me sit a gentleman (a Local Preacher) from Michigan reading the Bible. Ten yards up the hill in the same direction [illegible] comfort in this region. The place is a deep canon or ravine with almost perpendicular sides three or four miles to the top. It is now morning and the thermometer is 36°. The weather for the season is delightful. The mornings early are cold but not uncomfortably so. The therm. has two or three times been at the freezing point but not once that I have noticed below it. I came here the latter part of July and almost all the time the weather has been clear and bright. At the time the sun crossed the line we had rain for two or three days, and since then we have had a few dull days and some when showers fell. I have no idea of making a permanent home in this country: for some years I had a desire to visit it and see it for myself and having seen it I am satisfied. In some respects it is pleasant, but I can be content to let other possess it. I have seen no part I like so well as Wisconsin and if Providence permit I hope to return there to love and die. I feel wishful to have one object accomplished, and that is to have you all there, of course this will not be unless you desire it, but my mind seems to fix on it with unwavering steadfastness. When I leave California (if I ever do) I purpose paying you a visit and we will then see what is best to do.

I suppose you hear and read much about this far off land of Gold, little in praise and much against it. For my part I act regardless of human opinion where duty is concerned, and believing I ought to come here I came. And I hope the journey has already done me good. At all events I do not regret that I came. Tho I know not what the issue may be. One important lesson I have learned: to confide less in man and more in God. The singular sights and scenes I have witnessed will be subject of reflection as long as I live. And my own positions will never be forgotten. I have known what it is to trust God and be delivered by him in a way that I never experienced before. My prayer is that my experience may do me good all my days. It is now a settled fact that there is gold here and that in abundance. I would very much like to send you a specimen or two but fear to do so in a letter. I have some rather pretty pieces. You know I was always fond of geological surveys and often traversed the hills of Wensleydale in quest of curiosities of the kind. This work is still a pleasure to me regardless of all profit. I have felt more joy in finding something I could keep as a curiosity than in finding gold I should have to part with. A potatoe is of more value than gold. Of course you understand how this is, and my feeling on the subject. Seriously, I think it is desirable to make gold mining profitable as well as pleasant. I have seen enough of the world to be satisfied that if I live it will be by my own efforts. Man is very selfish even at best and deals even justice to his fellow man grudgingly. I have seen enough of dependance on man even tho' that dependance was slight. And if I can secure something honestly and honorably to make me comfortable it is my duty to do so. To be rich I ask not, nor desire.

I believe California has an interesting and important future before her and without some mishap she must be prosperous. Her geographical position is of commanding importance. Her climate is excellent and all that could be expected from her situation. Her soil except the mountains is capable of cultivation. Her timber is exhaustless. And her gold mines the wonder of the world. So far the gold has been obtained chiefly from ravines and rivers. But where does it come from? Every theory supposes it comes from the mountains, and so far as there is proof the doctrine is confirmed. But the mountains have hardly been examined except in a few places. I think every year will see improvements in her population. The sober, thinking, and industrious will occupy the place of the idle and profligate. On my way to San Francisco a man who had been in the country asserted that there was not one "temperance" man in it. Of course he was mistaken; tho' the intemperate were no doubt in a large majority. Now temperance societies exist and flourish. Families are settling permanently, and schools and churches will be established.

Will it seem to you any way singular that there are no magpies in the States east of the Rocky Mountains? And yet they are found in California; on the Plains. Judge of my surprise and joy on beholding a maggy soon after my arrival; as the last I had seen was when in England. Hales are also common here, but in the States I never saw one. In some other particulars I have been strongly reminded of my father-land.

Dec 17th Since I wrote the above I have moved into my own winter quarters, a snug log house, or cabin as such are called in America. There are three others with me. We have bought our winters' provisions and for California are quite comfortable. I notice several are going to try to winter in tents a very unwise and unsafe plan. I shall try to preserve my health which is now very good. I have entirely got over my sickness. When I began this letter the weather was quite dry and pleasant and continued so for some time. Much longer than I expected as the rainy season last year began about the middle of October tho' more frequently it commences in November. Hitherto on the whole the weather has been pleasant. We have had a few days of rain and two or three of snow. At other times both in the house and out it is comfortable to go without a coat. I have felt no cold yet equal to what at this season prevails in Wisconsin, tho I am well up towards everlasting snow. At this time the mountains near here are covered but the valleys are free from it. I will give you an extract or two from my memorandum book Dec 2 "Snow fell plentifully and beautifully all the forenoon. Afternoon clear and pleasant. Evg Star light and very agreeable. The pines look noble from a white ground and chaste light above." Dec 3. "Fair, frosty and pleasant". And so it continued till last Thursday night when we had a little snow. Friday slight showers Saturday rain all the forenoon, since cloudy and dull but little rain. This day at noon the thermomometer was just 40° (in the shade of course.)

I will now give you a short sketch of my journeyings in this land. On the first of Jany 1850 I left the bay of Panama Central America, in the steam ship Panama. On the 21 of the month at noon landed at San Francisco. While on the Pacific ocean between those two places, we were in sight of land most of the way, frequently close in shore and called at three ports on the Mexican coast and two on that of California, all this was very pleasant; and more like a pleasure excursion than a sea voyage. I remained two weeks in San Francisco. I am quite partial to the place, the ground is hilly, but the situation on the bay and views are delightful, the bay here is about six miles across while it streatches inland till it is lost to the vision. I came up the Sacramento River in a large steam boat crowded with passengers and luggage to Sacramento City. We came up in the night so that I lost most of the river scenery. The day after I left for the mines, on foot having deposited my trunk &c with a friend from Wisconsin. The road led across the great plain, my face being directly towards the Snowy Mountains, "high white, and shining". After twenty miles the ground begins to be hilly and broken, and continues so with considerable increase till the summit of Sierra Nevada is reached.

Saturday evening about 5 o'clock (the 9th of February) reached Webeville somewhat tired. I went there because Mr James Wasley was there. I found a Methodist Society, a church for public worship, two local preachers, and some very pleasant persons. Here I preached several times, and once at "Hang town" (so named because three man were hung there for stealing) four miles distant. When you get to the mines you are in a hilly country where there is abundance of timber of the finest and best kind. I will give you an extract or two from my journal while I remained at Webeville. Sunday March 10. "A delightfully pleasant day. Applied to Dr Jenkins for medicine" (I was some unwell at this time) Preached in the forenoon at 11. Afterwards Dr Jenkins administered the Sacr of the Lords supper to about twenty communicants, two of which were black men. A profitable time. In the evg. remained in the Cabin feeling exhausted; with a slight head ache". Tuesday 12th. "In Cabin all day. Rain all the forenoon, and snow in the afternoon. A truly uncomfortable day from the weather. But all pleasant in the House except its own poor qualities. Thought much of home to day and its comforts and peace, of my Mother and all the rest. My prayer is that God may spare me to see them again on Earth, in health if it be His will. Read most of the day "Confessions of a Romish Priest" and "Howe on the blessedness of the Righteous". Wed 13. There is I feel but a step to death. A funeral this afternoon, the first I have been at in Cal. Coffin too short by some inches. Not a relation or friend out of the nineteen present. No service, no prayer." "In the evening pulling candy!" Thursday 21st March I started with Jas Wasley to go down to Sac City. The day was very fine. I walked about 20 miles, saw one large flock of wild gelse going north; one hare, and one magpye. Sunday the 24 I spent in the City. In the afternoon was present at the first Society meeting held in the place. The names of those who had joined the Church were called over by Bro' Owen the Preacher in Charge. Some were present, some in the mines, some gone to Oregon, some to the States, one in the Legislature, and others dead. On the 27th left for Webeville, and in the evening camped 10 miles from the City. This night slept (for the first time in my life I believe) in the open air. There were three of us two Wasleys and myself. The night was moonlight and very pleasant. No dew. The next night we pitched a tent. On the 29th arrived at home. Tuesday April 2 started for the mines higher up towards the Mountains travelled (three of us having 3 animals) to Coloma or Sutter Mill thirteen miles. At this place while digging the mill race the gold was first discovered. This is a thriving and very pleasant town, situated on the south fork of the American river, over which is a substantial wood bridge. I have seen no place in this country I like the location of better. I will give you an extract which will give you an idea of our travel till we came to the stopping place for which we started. Thursday 4th "Our road lay thro' a rough country, across small round hollows or valleys, and over very steep mountains, especially near the middle fork of Rio-El-Americano" which we cossed on a flat boat. Made 12 miles and camped in a very pretty hollow with some grass in it and good water close to our camp. On the 5th we reached a place called "Birds Store" our destination for the present. At this place remained a month, making explorations of the country. Snow was still on the hills close by; the days were very warm. Part of the time considerable rain fell, and while here the rainy season closed by two or three days of sound earnest raining. Once while out two of our party shot at an Eagle, one fire seemed to hit him, as he instantly dropt several yards, but soon rose again and took refuge in a tree. I much wished to possess its skin. An ext. Monday 8th April "Two murders committed at this place to day over cards. One man shot another, when the brother of the dead man stabbed the murderer." On the 14th the Therm in the shade as follows. At 11 A.M. 67°. 1 P.M. 75°. 45'. 6 P.M. 62°. One sunday while here going to call on a friend, a local preacher, while passing a tent I heard singing and noted down the sentiment which was this: "Our souls can leave the clime of gold to reach eternal joys." On the 4th of May left for Deer Creek 50 or 60 miles north. We were about seventeen in number. We went thus strong on account of the Indians, as they had been troublesome to small parties. I find my sheet fast filling up and must stop for the present. You have an outline of my movements till on my way to Grass Valley near Nevada City, where I remained untill the latter part of July, when I came here, where I have been ever since. I have said but little I wish to tell you but this letter must now go as it is. I know there is but little general information in it. But I write for home.

Your ever affectionate Brother M.