[1851, Dec. 24]

Xmas eve Dec 24/51. Just after supper my dear Mother I sit down at my small table to enjoy the pleasure of thinking about and communing with you all. At such an hour as it I am wonder I should think of my far off home and of those who dwell there. I feel that you are all in my heart to live and die with you." What reflections crowd on the mind at such an hour as this, and how the heart feels at the remembrance of other days. I picture you around the old hearth stone / it cannot be wrong to shed a tear to its memory / even dear place. Those who have assembled by thee in peace in other days are now scattered) preparing and partaking of your "Funmenty". Are there but the three of you. Perhaps some neighbour or friend is also at the family board. You think of the absent as they think of you this memorable eve. Family gatherings on earth are a pleasant thing, they however are not all important. The meeting and union of families in heaven is above all things to be desired, and that is possible. Christ the way the truth and the life has opened it to all that believe. He who being the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person, of whom it was said thou art my Son, was brought into the world, for us, and for our salvation. It affords considerable satisfaction to believe that the most of us at least, I trust all, are bearing constantly in mind the coming and intercession of the Lord Jesus, and that we are seeking the blessings of grace thro' him. May we be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, go forward both to do and suffer his will in all things. For what to choose for the best we know not. A heart resigned, submissive, meek, on great redeemers throne, a heart new every thought renewed, and full of love divine, is one of the best kind of earth, and will ensure its happiness, peace, and immortal life.

I think it right to inform you that I intend if all be well to leave California sometime during the course of next year (1852) In April or May if possible. I shall then have been in the country two years which was the time I gave myself if I should not find it my duty to stay longer which I did not much expect. I have not made much tho' I have done well for the time I have been here, much better than the average. The little I have obtained if judiciously employ'd will answer a good purpose, and indeed ensure a comfortable living. Can I ask more at the hands of my God? The Lord be praised that I still live, and enjoy good health.

You tell me in your last letter that my friend Geo Metcalfe went to South Africa. I should very much like to see him again. Is it not likely he will return to England on account of the unsettled state of that Colony. Not much security for either life or property at present, I should judge.

How glad I was to hear Nich^l Horner was stirring about and still called to see you. He was in the house you say while you were writing. Remember me to them all at Cubeck. How is Eldad? And Francis and Mrs Morton? Give my love to them. In Wisconsin I had a very comfortable home with Mr Wasley. I was never situated more satisfactorily. I always found him a kind friend, and benefits were reciprocal. The last time I was there (2 1/4 years) not a word was said about salary till when I had been twelve months he spoke of it, and said what he thought would be right. It was a good remuneration, tho' nothing extra. Better probably than most other young men similarly employ'd were obtaining. If you give me eight years absence (which will be next Aug^t) I have now made more than my full salary for eight years would amount to.

Jany 10th 1852. Saturday eve We have lately had fine weather and as usual I have been very busy. I must wish you all "a happy new year". It has just commenced and I am writing to you, before its close I hope to see you. It is my intention so to do, if I am prevented it will be by something unlooked for. Sweet, sweet, home may I see thee once again! Time never seemed to pass so swiftly as since I have been in this country. In the prospect it also looks short and I am all the while fearing Spring will be upon us and I shall be unprepared to leave. In the retrospect however it looks long. I feel as if I had been almost half an age here. To look back two years I am ready to fancy the events of twenty have been crowded into them. All is bustle and enterprise and perhaps we take two strides while the old world is taking one. Probably you think we are in too big a hurry, to get along well. The fact is we have to act and think at the same time. May be you have time to think first and act afterwards.

Wednesday night last about 10 o'clock we had a total eclipse of the moon which lasted about an hour. The most perfect I have ever seen.

I shall send this by express so as to leave by the Steamer of the 15th.

When I do leave California shall I go to Wisconsin or England first? This question puzzles me amazingly. I wish I could solve it right. If I start in the Spring I fancy it would be proper to go West from New York and spend the Summer, making arrangements for you. Then again if I do go to England, (and I certainly shall unless prevented by something unlooked for, as I believe it is now my duty to visit my Mother,) it seems like taking a long journey that may be dispensed with. As I suppose I shall go to New York anyhow

Can you throw any light on this subject? I wish you would tell me what to do.

My address is Downieville
California.

I can most likely receive a letter from you here after this reaches you.

With love to all; Mother, Brother, Sister, Uncle, Aunt, and Cousins I remain affectionately

M. D.

Come to think over the subject you had probably better not write to me for California as I should perhaps leave before a letter could get here.

But I shall be glad to receive one in New York.

I hope to be there about the last of April.