
WILLIAM HENRY KNIGHT

California Pioneer

I long to see *you* a Christian. It is my constant prayer that you may give your heart to God now, while He is visiting us in mercy. Do not be angry with me, dear brother, for writing you upon this subject, I cannot help it. . . . I feel so anxious to see you a child of God, to know that you love Christ who lived, suffered and died that He might save sinners and now lives to make intercession for them, for you.

The folks are or were all pretty well when I last heard from them. Am very glad that you have employment because I am sure that you are happier. Now do please write soon and tell us how your health is. You know that everything that concerns you interests us. May God in His infinite mercy bless and keep you and cause you to know the truth as it is in Jesus, is the prayer of your loving sister.

LIZZIE.

* * *

In 1858 it happened that in another State office a man by the name of Nash mentioned that his brother was making up a party to cross the plains to California. It is easy to imagine what that news meant to William. A glamour had already spread over the stories brought from those who had gone to California to search for gold. Then, too, a glance over history will remind us how perilous was the Ship of State during those years preceding the war; how wavering the allegiance of separate territories. To a young man fired, not with a lure of gold such as fed the "forty-niners," but with some indefinable urge to go westward, it is not hard to imagine William seizing the opportunity to join this band.

Thus it was that on May 1, 1859, he decided to leave with Captain Nash and his sister, Miss Clapp, former principal of a Lansing School, one of her teachers, and about fifteen men. The journey will be more characteristically told in his own words, since few have written of their experiences en route.

CHAPTER II

EMIGRANT TRAIN ENROUTE TO CALIFORNIA

*Gaily bedight
A gallant knight
In sunshine and in shadow
Had journeyed long
Singing a song
In search of Eldorado.*

EDGAR ALLEN POE.

* * *

Elwood, K. T. April 25, 1859.

Dear Mother,

It is Monday morning. I am writing in the tent of our camp a few rods from Elwood, which is on the west bank of the Missouri River, nearly opposite St. Joseph. I reached here three days ago and was very happy to find a letter from home awaiting me. Uncle Sidney says you do not feel reconciled to my determination to go to California. I think I can remove your solicitude and regret when I mention the particulars he requested me to write. The company with which I go will consist of nine persons of both sexes. Mr. Nash is conductor. Mr. Shaw, Mr. Cole, Mr. Wilson and myself are his male companions. Mrs. Nash, Miss Clapp, Miss Baker and Miss Skinner are the ladies. I have had previous acquaintance with the last three and regard them an accession to the pleasure of our journey. They have not arrived yet, but are expected the latter part of this week. Miss Clapp was principal of the Union School at Lansing last year and the other two young ladies have been her pupils. Mrs. Nash is sister-in-law of the conductor, and goes to meet her husband in California. Mr. Nash was recommended to me by his brother, bookkeeper of the land office at Lansing. He is an experienced Californian, having been over the route before, and knows what is necessary to the comfort and convenience of such a journey. He is going to have two good, covered wagons,

nine or ten horses, two tents and provisions enough for all. I shall, of course, have to perform camp duty and stand guard at night when it comes my turn, and help drive the teams part of the time. And I shall shrink from no duty which naturally devolves upon the position I assume.

I did not write you a second time from Burlington, as I was expecting to leave from day to day; but on account of bad roads Mr. Nash shipped his teams from La Salle by river to St. Joe. So word was sent to me and I came right on. We expect to start from here on the second of May and be on the road three months. A man by the name of Picket, with wife and child and wagon, will go with our train. We are going the Government route, by way of Ft. Kearney, Ft. Laramie, South Pass and Salt Lake. What I shall do when I get to California I don't know yet. Mr. Nash says his brother owns a large mine which he employs men to work, and if nothing else offers itself I may join him at first. I presume I shall toughen up enough in the journey to work if I wish when I get there. I have slept on the ground twice and on the hay in the barn once, and think I can stand it very well. I think you need have no apprehension about my encountering danger, especially from the Indians, as the emigration of whites is unusually large this year, though they themselves in many cases be unworthy of confidence. We shall go pretty well defended. I have a Colt revolver, five shooter, which, with a Bowie knife, I shall wear in my belt; but probably will have no need for either, unless it be to cut up Buffalo and Antelope meat with the latter.

St. Joe is as busy and lively as a city of 100,000. It is crowded with adventurers for Pikes Peak and is ambitious to be the great outfitting post of the frontier. Saturday morning I saw a slave sold at auction. A negro boy of a dozen years was struck off for 700 dollars. The auctioneer's brutality accorded with his infernal profession. Let your next letter be directed to Ft. Kearney, Nebraska Territory, where it will arrive before we do, as the Government mail travels by express night and day.

Your affectionate son,

WILLIAM.

Elm Creek, Kansas T.

Sabbath Day, May 8th, 1859.

Dear Mother,

Do not suppose that I am in a city, town or village by the name of Elm Creek. It is merely the name of a little stream on which we are encamped today. As I wrote you from Elwood we started on our journey last Tuesday, the 3rd of May, and have now travelled 118 miles. After we get well under way, we shall expect to make from 25 to 30 miles a day, which is decidedly faster than three-quarters of the emigrants go. Accordingly last Friday we passed 91 wagons, but 65 of them belonged to one company who were taking supplies through to Salt Lake. That immensely long train with three yoke of oxen to each wagon was a very interesting sight. I expected much monotony on the plains, and perhaps after we have travelled a while longer these scenes which are now novel to us will appear quite monotonous. Thus far, however, the prairies have not been level like those of Illinois, but are beautifully rolling and variegated, affording us a constant succession of new and interesting scenery, or at least a change of the same scenery. The heavy forest of the Missouri bottoms extend about six miles from the river, and all the intervening distance is one vast rolling, rolling prairie, intersected every dozen miles or so with pretty, little, very winding streams, fringed with cottonwood trees inside of the deep cut banks. These are what make the land rolling, and the greater the distance from the streams, the more level the surface. Now if the surface was perfectly level like an Illinois prairie, the roads might be straight for many miles together, but as it is, you cannot imagine a more winding road. I presume we often travel ten miles where it is not more than seven miles straight across. Our first three days were pleasant—a bright, clear blue sky above and bright deep green, gently rounded hills below, both stretching uninterruptedly away till they meet at the horizon. Friday afternoon and yesterday afternoon we had violent rain, and got more or less wet, camped on wet ground and went to sleep. We get used to exposure very soon. Even the ladies do, and they enjoy the trip as much as the rest of us, for all really

enjoy our travelling now like a pleasure excursion—though when it becomes warmer and we find a scarcity of water and begin to suffer many privations, it will doubtless be far less funny. I do not know as I have introduced my companions to you fully. As I shall be with them many weeks, I will do so. Our company consists of 8 persons, 5 men and 3 women; we were expecting another girl, but she did not come. The men are Mr. Nash, the captain, Mr. Shane, Mr. Cole, Mr. Wilson and myself. The ladies are Mrs. Nash, whose husband is in California, Miss Clapp and Miss Skinner. We are also travelling in company with a man by the name of Picket, whose companions are his wife and child, Mrs. Slaven and a young man by the name of Lamont, making 5 in all. Mr. Picket has one wagon and 4 horses; we have 2 wagons and 11 horses; so our train consists of 3 wagons, 15 horses, 7 men, 5 women and a little girl 6 years old. Thus you see we have quite a nice little community of ourselves. Miss Clapp and Miss Skinner, as I formerly wrote you, have been acquaintances of mine in Lansing, and expressed themselves delighted when they found that I contemplated a trip to California; and the former exerted her influence to secure my passage with Mr. Nash, whom she knew and I did not. She was one of the founders of the Female College at Lansing, and was afterwards principal of the Union School with several teachers under her, and has had much and valuable experience in that line. She has high recommendations from Gov. Bingham and other prominent persons of her acquaintance in Michigan to the Governor of California and other prominent persons there. She is much liked for her social qualities, and is a general favorite with us. She has a horse of her own which she rides at pleasure, and as she is a good rider, has a handsome face, black flowing curls and is full of gaiety and a constant flow of lively spirits, she has become a great favorite and exerts a good deal of influence. By a sort of accident and mutual understanding between her and me, we are supposed by the rest of the company to be cousins. We have not undeceived them and probably shall not, as these supposed relations operate to the advantage of us both. Miss Skinner has been her pupil and is quite a pleasant young lady. Mr. Shane is on old fudge of

a bachelor of 35, and affords us infinite amusement in his whimsical ways. He and I have charge of the best wagon and a splendid team of four horses, which I have learned to drive to a charm. I have already learned from one of the ladies that Mr. Nash said I was the best driver he had. The other two men drive the other team of four horses. There are three extra horses to ride when we wish. So we drive and walk and ride and have a pleasing variety of occupation. It is an exceedingly good thing to have ladies along. We have many more nice little comforts and conveniences than we otherwise would; besides they do our cooking for us and as they can do it much faster than we could, it saves us much drudgery, at the same time we have much better fare. With all such companies of heterogeneous persons when they come into constant daily contact, there is apt to be more or less jealousy, bickering and even quarrelling among some of them. We have happily escaped so far, but have no warrant for the future; all seem to think that our company is an unusually pleasant one. Our rig, style and arrangements are superior to any we have yet passed on the road. I say passed for we don't meet anybody—people are all going one way. Occasionally there is a grocery and two or three houses. They are always called villages.

I hope to hear from home at Ft. Kearney, Ft. Laramie, Salt Lake. Give my love to all the folks who may inquire, especially yourself and Olive's family. I know not when I shall have another opportunity to write, but I shall write if I have one.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM.

* * *

Camp Ground 25 miles East of
Ft. Kearney, May 16th, 1859.

Dear Mother,

We expect to be at the Fort tomorrow night and I propose to drop you a hasty letter. On the 10th of May we saw one of the most exciting sights it has ever been my fortune to witness. The

great army of humbugged Pikes Peakers had commenced their return. Their visages were long and wrathful and their replies short and sour. That day we passed 250 wagons of hoaxed gold seekers. Most of them had not gone farther than Ft. Kearney, and hearing bad but reliable news, turned around as their preparations and outfit would take them no further than Pikes Peak. The next day we passed about 200 wagons more. It was a sad sight, yet amusing and instructive, to see men apparently of good position, means and home, become so deluded and hoaxed about the cry of gold. If the scene before mentioned was the most exciting, the following was the most terrible and dreadful I ever witnessed. It was a storm on the prairies. The first part of the night I stood guard over our tents and horses. Thunder and lightning and black clouds, with fantastic shapes, distinguished the heavens from the other evenings till after 12. About 12½ o'clock on the morning of the 12th I went to the boys' tent and told them to secure it immediately as a furious storm was arising. I then stepped to the ladies' tent near by and gave them the same directions, promising to assist them from without. I had my great coat and a rubber coat on, and believed I could stem the blast. The rain had not fallen three minutes before immense hailstones began to descend before the most violent wind I ever felt. Soon the tents were both prostrated, flat upon the inmates. I still stood over the ladies gathering their heads under me to shelter them from the pelting hailstones. I stood thus in the dark, wind, rain, cold and hail, wondering how long I should be able to endure it, no human assistance, no trees or sheltering protection near, exposed to the merciless fury of the worst, or one of the worst storms that ever visited these plains; for I have talked with many who have been over the route before and some who have lived along it, and I have not seen the man yet that made an exception. My head and shoulders were already sore and my arms and hands were losing their strength, when my hat which was tied under my chin was sent whirling into the darkness; and hailstones, which next morning measured over an inch in diameter, came near knocking daylight out of me, and I retreated under the tent and sat upon the windward side of the tent to keep it down and shield the others as much

as possible. One of the ladies fainted and on her recovery another fainted, and could scarcely be revived till morning. Indeed we feared she would never be. The hail lasted nearly an hour and the wind and rain till daylight. The other boys could not be induced to expose themselves to the storm till the hail had stopped and I was regarded the hero of the occasion, and it was affirmed solemnly that some of them might have perished had I not stood over them so faithfully. One of them has been sick in consequence. There are now three companies travelling in our train—ten men in all. It is thus believed to be large enough to afford all the protection we wish. We are not apprehensive of much danger, and don't fear any. Notwithstanding the hardships of the journey, it is becoming quite pleasant to me. If it should be all the way like this I should almost regret its termination. I shall expect to hear from you at Salt Lake and as soon as I reach California, by ocean.

Your affectionate son,

WILLIAM.

The fate of the hat inspired William, the day following the storm, to write the following:

THE LAMENTED HAT

*Lamented Hat, thy fearful tale
With thrilling interest is o'erhung,
And long thy fate I shall bewail
In saddest numbers ever sung.*

*Departed Hat, with rapture sweet
I gazed at first upon thy form,
Nor deemed I then thou'dst be so fleet
To bide thee when assailed by storm.*

*Thy broad, brown brim brave shelter gave
'Gainst fervent sun and drenching rain,
And fondly thought I winds might rave
About thy dauntless front in vain.*

*Yet, dear old Hat, I'll not reproach,
Thou'st sheltered me in gallant style,
On rushing car and lumbering coach
And o'er the prairie many a mile.*

*Thy comely form around my brow,
In loving pressure did enfold,
And oft methinks I feel it now
Caress my temples as of old.*

*'Tis but a dream, the spell is broke,
I've seen thee wafted to the sky,
Thy shade departed I invoke,—
Do bats have ghosts after they die?*

*Then haunt me some wild stormy night
When thunders rive the blackened heaven,
Appear unto my longing sight,
Relate where thou wert tempest-driven.*

*Till then, my loved and cherished friend,
Thy memory in my heart shall dwell,
And deep emotions warmly blend
With these my parting words, farewell.*

* * *

While Captain Nash's party were in the Valley of the Horse Creek, high up in the Rocky Mountains, at lunch one day, they suddenly heard the Indian war whoop, loud, shrill and penetrating. A body of Indians were then seen coming through the gap in the mountains, probably a mile away and riding straight toward them. The ladies were advised to get into the schooner and the men to be prepared for anything that might follow. As the Indians approached they got off their horses and the leaders came toward the party. Captain Nash then went toward them with two loaves of bread and said "Howdy?" The Indians replied "Howdy?" and then Captain Nash said: "Perhaps you are hungry," and handed them the two loaves of bread, which they accepted with thanks and then went off in another direction.

• Salt Lake Valley, July 7th, 1859.

Dear Mother,

I have less opportunity to write on this journey than I anticipated. I am much out of practice, and my hand is stiff and unwieldy. I was happy to receive letters and papers from home on my arrival here, and take this not very good opportunity to express my gratitude. We are camped about 20 miles North of the "Great Salt Lake City," on the road to California. Our train consists now (and has for some weeks past) of our company of 8 and one who has just joined us by the name of Acker; Mr. Potts' company of 3 and Mr. Pierce's company of 4, making 16 persons in all. We expect to remain here till the middle of the month as an extensive sale of government mules takes place on the 14th, and Mr. Nash and Pierce wish to buy. I have seen and talked with the lions of Mormondom. Last Sabbath I was at the Tabernacle (the Mormon Church) twice, and heard Brigham Young in the afternoon, a rare thing, for he seldom appears in public now. His style is a self-exalting one, and at the same time so managed as to draw his people around him and enlist their enthusiasm. He sneers at government and army and expresses confidence in the ultimate triumph of Mormon principles, and especially of Heaven's great high priest, Brigham Young. The next day being the Fourth of July, a number of us went to the city to celebrate the day by partaking of a dinner gotten up for us at one of the hotels. It was a treat to sit in chairs at a regular table, covered with a white cloth and spread with white china dishes. Our company, including the three ladies, was a lively one and we had a good time. The Mormons were celebrating the day with a flag of their own, firing cannon and marching about to Yankee music. I called on Governor Cumming and found him engaged in conversation with Dr. Forney, Superintendent of Indian Affairs. They conversed with me very cordially till the Governor was called away, when I held a protracted conversation with the Doctor of more than an hour, and gained much valuable information. The next day Mr. Pierce, Miss Clapp, Miss Skinner and myself obtained an interview with Brigham. It is an almost impossible thing for strangers to

get admitted to his presence or his offices. But we sent word before hand that we wished to see him and he said, come. His residences, offices and other buildings are in a large enclosure surrounded by a great, thick wall about a dozen feet high. The gateways are all guarded by armed sentinels. We passed through the main entrance and a dozen armed men seemed to start up at different points in range of us. There were probably a dozen men in Brigham's presence. He sat in a big arm chair in the further corner, a big revolver hanging in reach of his arm. The other men were doubtless armed, though their weapons were concealed. Brigham questioned us very closely for a while till he was satisfied that our object was merely one for seeking information as an emigrant passing through. He then threw off reserve and was very cordial, sociable and affable. We had really an interesting conversation with him. He is proud of what he has accomplished in transforming this desert valley into a blooming garden. While we were there Kimball and Wells, his council and next to him in importance, came in and he introduced them to us. There were also two or three missionaries who have been to different parts of the world in the room. On the route we met several trains of Mormons going to the States dissatisfied, and have been told that many more were going to California; but according to Brigham, large fresh arrivals of the saints are expected in this valley this season that will more than supply their places, and I presume it is so, for they have many missionaries laboring in foreign countries. The United States soldiers are much incensed against the Mormons, but still they can find no just occasion for a collision. Camp Floyd, about 50 miles South of Salt Lake, contains more soldiers than any other Fort in the United States. There are said to be 4,000 camped there now, though portions of them are being sent out on the California road for the protection of emigrants. The valley is surrounded by lofty and almost impassable mountains. The approaches are but two or three, through long, deep, rocky and very steep ravines between the mountains called Cañons (pronounced Kanyuns). One of these, called Echo Cañon, contains a Mormon Fortification. Mr. Pierce and I stopped and explored them as our trains passed on out of sight.

On the North side of the Cañon the rocks rise in perpendicular ledges 500 or 600 feet high, and then slope steeply back to the summit of the mountains as high again. The Cañon itself is 25 miles long. These fortifications extend along these rocks about half a mile, near the mouth of it. On these projecting ledges overhanging the road are built circular walls of breastwork with port holes for shooting rifles from. Some of these would contain 100 men each. Other places were fixed for planting light artillery that would command the road below. Between these artificial walls were collections of huge boulders, weighing from 100 lbs. to 5 or 6 tons. They were lying in convenient heaps on the edge of the rocks, ready to be precipitated upon the heads of the soldiers that were expected to pass through two years ago for the invasion of Mormondom. It is also supposed that they were intended for the purpose of cutting off big emigrant trains, to enrich themselves with the spoils. At least it stirred up a feeling of indignation in our breasts that has not yet been allayed. On the 18th of June we crossed the Rocky Mountains at South Pass. The road is so nearly level for miles before reaching and after passing the greatest elevation that one can scarcely tell when it is attained. We guessed at the point, however, and fired salutes, and felt conflicting emotions of sorrow at bidding farewell to the streams that flowed towards home, and joy at finding ourselves advanced thus far on our journey in safety. We halted at noon at Pacific Springs, the first water that flows towards the Pacific Ocean, and I ascended a mountain near by, from which I obtained the most extended view it has been my good fortune to witness. On the North, at a distance of 20 or 30 miles, the end of the Wind River chain of the Rocky Mountains broke the horizon, with its belts of dark pines and cedars, its snow-capped summits, its craggy, deep-shaded ravines, and all the rugged wildness characteristic of Rocky Mountain scenery. Farther to the West two other white-capped ranges could be seen like dim clouds in the low horizon. At the South were mountains without snow, high, rugged, rocky and fantastic shaped. In other directions, although the country was quite uneven, it seemed to be an interminable plain stretching to the horizon more than 100 miles away. Several hills,

often miles in extent, over 100 feet high and perfectly level on the top, seemed flat with the land. The Sweetwater is a beautiful stream that flows from the South Pass to the North Fork of the Platte, through a broad valley about 100 miles long, and apparently intended by Providence for a natural roadway. It is bounded on both sides by mountains of naked, gray granite, round and symmetrical in their outlines at a distance. Our first camping ground on that River was a noted curiosity—"Devils Gate." One of these mountains, 400 feet high by measurement, is rent in twain, affording a passage between perpendicular but ragged granite walls for the Sweetwater. A party of 5 or 6 of us, including the ladies, spent 3 or 4 hours in rambling over the rocks, and we descended a quartz vein in the rocks from the highest point; and when we got to the bottom it looked as though we had come down the perpendicular rock. It was perilous. Two persons have been killed there. Our last camping ground on the Sweetwater was near a huge snowbank on the 17th day of June. It was said to be 10 feet thick. So, on the last mountain we came over before entering this valley, we gathered snow by the side of the road.

The day after leaving the Pass I had a fine chase after a brown bear. I got within 50 rods of him and could see him very plain. He would run with his head thrown over his shoulder to watch me and stop when I stopped. He ran in this manner, keeping just about so far to the windward of me, till I had wandered a considerable distance from the train, when I gave up the chase and returned.

The train was 5 miles off when it had halted at the Little Sandy River. As I said before, we are now encamped 20 miles North of the City, at the base of mountains 3,000 ft. above the valley. The Great Salt Lake is about 21 miles West of us. I have not been to it yet, but it looks beautiful from here at the hour of sunset. Three of its islands are visible, two of them containing mountains over a thousand feet high. Between here and the city we saw the Boiling Springs, where a torrent of hot

water comes pouring out from beneath a great blue rock. Though the water is clear to the eye, it is strongly impregnated with sulphur, and deposits a thick sediment. It empties into a lake two or three miles broad in which several of us bathed one evening. We had hot, tepid or cold baths at our pleasure. As it scarcely ever rains in this valley in the Summer season, it becomes necessary to irrigate the land to be cultivated by turning the mountain streams upon them. Thus in the city the squares are large and each dwelling has a small farm or large garden; and the whole is irrigated by streams that flow from the Mountains and are divided so as to have beautiful little rivulets coursing down the gutters of each street—an interesting feature of the city.

The houses are built of adobe, or sundried bricks. These bricks are variable in size, generally 3 or 4 times the size of our red bricks East. Brigham says they are both warmer in Winter and cooler in Summer than common brick and stone. Their color is a pretty, light brown and when finished off they look very well indeed. But the truth is that many of the houses are shabby and indicate poverty and from the nature of things it must necessarily be so. Brigham requires one-tenth of all their earnings to go into the coffers of the Church, which he has irresponsible control over. Their wood has to be hauled over two high mountains from a distance of 15 miles—not very big loads, nor very good wood at that. In fact, a person only used to the well-worked roads of the States would suppose it unsafe to attempt to draw an empty wagon over this. Their irrigating is much more expensive than having the land voluntarily watered by showers from heaven. Of course I knew that polygamy existed in Utah, but now I have a realizing sense. As I was passing along after Church Sunday afternoon, two wives were fighting in their door yard; one had struck the other, and the words that followed were pretty loud. Yet they had the appearance of being respectable. The landlord we stopped with on the Fourth had three wives to wait on us, and one of them, with him,

argued the propriety and justice of such an institution. A man (the prosecuting attorney), near whom we are now camped, has two or three families in several houses and 27 children. No one knows how many wives Brigham has got, not even his own wives—probably over 100. Other Church functionaries indulge a similar greediness for wives. Of course, children fairly swarm.

WILLIAM.

P. S.—Since writing this letter we have had a hard thunder shower and a rain of several hours duration. I am greatly obliged to Uncle Sydney, John, Olive and Isadore and, if I had a good, cool, secluded place to write, I would return their favors, and regard it a pleasure to do so. I have written this in my lap in the wagon, with half a dozen persons chattering near by. Do I need any other excuse for writing poor letters and seldom?

In some places, since we came to the mountains, the mosquitoes have been almost unendurable. They would fairly swarm about us in clouds and almost torment the life out of us. Now, however, we have got a curiosity of a different description in the shape of crickets, 2 inches in length—almost big enough to saddle and ride off. Plenty but harmless. In some parts of the road we have been almost suffocated by dust, but generally when the wind blew up dust, it blew away mosquitoes—exchanging one evil for another.

Your affectionate son,

WILLIAM.

CHAPTER III

SAN FRANCISCO

COLONEL NASH and his party arrived in California on the 26th of August, 1859. That very night William Knight, curled up snugly under his buffalo robe, witnessed an unusual sight in that latitude of a brilliant aurora borealis. It is difficult to say if this was another portent to the young impressionable boy. He had already been deeply impressed by the comet he had seen in the sky as a child. These lights beating and swaying above him in a new land may well have lured him to the study of the heavens that later became his daily food.

But California was in a turbulent period. Only a month after the boy arrived and sold his good old buffalo robe for enough to get him to San Francisco, he heard Colonel Baker's funeral oration over the coffin of Senator David C. Broderick, killed in a duel with Judge David S. Terry of the Supreme Court of California. No hall could hold the crowd gathered about him in Portsmouth Square.

Baker took his seat in the Senate in 1860; before the end of the session he was recognized as the foremost man in debate in that body. In early days he had served in the Black Hawk war and later raised a regiment for the Mexican War. During the conflict of 1861, on the floor of the Senate, he used these memorable words: "I have bared my bosom to the battles on the North-Western frontier in my youth, and the South-Western frontier in my manhood; and if the time should come when disunion rules the hour, and discord is to reign supreme, I shall again be ready to give the best blood in my veins to my country's cause."

California, in 1859, was still in the pioneer stage of its existence. It contained less than 400,000 inhabitants, the greater portion nomadic. They came to dig gold, make a quick fortune and return to their Eastern homes. San Francisco numbered 70,000 people and had but one first-class building—the Montgomery Block on the chief street of the same name. It was an office building and here were the leading attorneys, professional