

Charles A. Tuttle

Fort Kearny
May 12th, 1849

My dear Maria,

Yesterday we arrived at this place three hundred thirty miles from Independence opposite Grand Island in the Platte. We are all well and leave in ten minutes for Fort Laramie. Yesterday about ten A.M., a war party of fifty Sioux Indians well mounted and armed came across our path and threatened fight. We were but twelve men and three wagons. Each man took his rifle and prepared. We marched by the side of our wagons, and went through the Indians, they being apparently satisfied with our determined manner, opened and we passed. The Sioux and Pawnees are at war. This is Pawnee country and the party were on an expedition against the Pawnees. Today we have joined four more wagons with fourteen men making twenty six men and seven wagons. We now think ourselves strong enough. It only requires a determined manner to overrule the savages. The country between here and Independence is extremely fertile all the way but one vast prairie. No timber except on the borders of the streams. I wish I had time to give you a history of our journey. My love is unbounded. Oh my dear wife believe me your ever faithful husband, your lover and adorer. Adieu, for the teams are moving and I must close. Oh how my bosom heaves with inextinguishable love.

Charles

Maria.

Fort Laramie
June 5th, 1849

My Dear Maria,

I wrote you a line from Fort Childs 300 miles up the Nebraska. Whether you received the same is uncertain. From that place we made our way slowly along and arrived here this morning. The valley of the Nebraska is from 3 to 7 miles broad and is almost perfectly level. It is entirely destitute of timber except an occasional cotton wood shrub on the banks. The water is shallow never more than 5 feet deep. The river bottom is broad from 1 to 3 miles wide and is composed entirely of quick sand. The valley is flanked by bluffs from 1 to 500 feet high. Each of these bluffs the country is undulating but destitute of timber. The Buffalo appeared about 400 miles up the river. We passed immense herds. About 160 miles from Fort Childs we struck the South fork of the Nebraska which we followed up 45 miles and then forded and crossed over to the North fork about 13 miles. At the fort the river was $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile wide and the water from 1 to 4 feet deep. The wagons passed over safely. Fort Laramie is located on the point of land between the Laramie river and North Fork of the Nebraska. It is a trading post of the American fur company. The traders have squaws for their wives. We passed a village of the Sioux Indians about 100 lodges 140 miles back. We delayed three days to recruit our arrivals so that I had a good opportunity to study Indian character. I visited their lodges freely. They are made of Buffalo skins in the form of a cone and have a hole on the top where the smoke escapes. They are from 10 to 15 feet in diameter at the bottom and are very comfortable. The Sioux are friendly. Their women are prettier than any females among the Indians I had before seen. Their features are delicate and they are of a lighter complexion than the North American Indians generally. Above all this they are virtuous. Some of the emigrants as a great number were assembled here, were base enough to think meanly of their virtue but were indignantly repulsed. In short, the Sioux are a noble race of men not having yet imbibed the vices of the white men. They are at war with the Crows whose country we have yet to pass through. Some battles have been fought. There are 200-300 teams on the road. About 400 are ahead of us. We have about 1900 miles yet to travel to reach Sutters Fort in California. This will include the passage of the mountains and will be the most difficult part of the journey. My health has been good and the journey has improved it. Nothing but your presence has been wanting to make me enjoy myself, Maria. I have dreamed of you often. Sometimes I have seen you sick at the point of death, and have fancied myself bereft of my reason. At the idea that you are going to leave me. At others (pardon me for lovers are always jealous) I have seen you prove unfaithful to me, abandon me and your virtue too. Oh God how my brain would reel at the first moment of awakening and before what was imagination was found not to be a reality--could I bear to hear such news--never Maria. It is Moore I believe who says--

"I know not, I care not, if guilt is in that heart
I know that I love thee whatever thou art--"

You once told me that you would not again marry for love but for wealth. The expression has often been recalled by me while following the wagons along the road. Could I even think that your early love had expired I would rather never again see friends or country. But no--your plighted love has too often been repledged for me to doubt it. I wait with anxiety to hear from you at St. Francisco. No letter from you yet since I left home--I know you wrote. You could not suffer me to wait the arrival of news through your fault. I shall reserve all the fullness of my feelings and strength of my love to lavish on you at my return. Oh what an overflow of soul there will be. I was made to adore you. Your natal star from the time it rose was made the cyn-osser of my existence. Let it then be so through life. May God grant that I return with wealth so that it make you happy, I ask no more. I am keeping a journal of the country road and we will sit together in the parlor corner and read it, your head on my bosom and my arm encircling your neck. That arm encircling the only woman it ever embraced in love and that bosom palpitating with love toward the only man it ever loved. Do you answer yest to the last? Oh woman, what power the Creator has invested with you. You tie us with a chain of gold so strong that it never breaks but when it parts tears the heart out. You too have all the power. You can cover this chain with rust or snap it assunder and we can only lament. The man who loves as I do, can never betray her to whom he has sworn allegiance. A thunderbolt from heaven cannot be more powerful than would the effect on his own happiness the moment he should die so--Maria pray for me that success may attend all my virtuous undertakings. May I meet you once more with the smiles of virtue resting on your beautiful features. My respects to your father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Also to my own friends if you see them.

Perhaps you would like to know our manner of life. At 4 A.M., we get up and picket our mules in fresh grass. That operation consists in driving a stick 18 or 20 inches long and sharpened into the ground. The stick is made fast to a rope 20 or 30 feet long tied to a mules neck. Breakfast is then cooked. This consists in a cup of coffee, fried bacon, and dry or pilot bread. At 5 o'clock we harness our animals and travel on a slow walk until 11 A.M. The mules are driven by a man riding the high wheel mule and guiding the leaders by lines. At 11, we picket our mules in fresh grass and set about preparing dinner. This consists in a cup of coffee, cold beans, and bacon or buffalo meat if we have it, and bread. At 11½, we again move on stopping at 5. All walk except the man who drives the mules. We do this last by turns. Supper consists in tea, boiled rice, and dried beef or codfish. Sometimes we make our meals palatable in apple sauce and occasionally wern cakes are baked. One of the company does the cooking. We generally carry our rifles on our shoulders as we march along. During the night, we have 4 watchers. From 8 to 10, 10 to 12, 12 to 2, and 2 to 4. Each man takes his turn. At present each man watches 2 nights out of 5 in our company. Our beds consist of buffalo skins into the wagons for the bottom and blankets over us. Our appetites are good, our digestive organs strong, and our sleep, sweet.

Thence we follow the North fork of the Nebraska 80 miles and there leave it for the Rocky Mountains. If an opportunity is ours I shall write again. I send this by travellers from Oregon. They are waiting and I close.

I remain yours till death,

Charles

Maria.

Sacramento City Sept 2^d 1849
My Dear Maria -

I wrote you a few days ago from the South Fork by Gen. Marsh - I have now arrived here & find that Dr. has given up his intention of returning to the States & has forwarded my letter by mail - I will now send you something more than that apology for a letter - After we packed at Fort Laramie we had neither tent or waggon - The weather was cold but not often rainy - Our progress was rapid not less than 30 miles per day - At night we threw ourselves down upon our Buffalo skins with a blanket for a covering - Most of the company suffered from the exposure - About the 20th of June we ascended the Rocky mountains - This was neither very steep or difficult - Our gradual ascent up the Platte & Sweet water had already raised us about 5000 feet above the level of the sea - The 2^d day we reached our highest altitude in the middle of the pass about 7,100 feet - The pass itself is a level plain nearly flanked on each side by lofty peaks covered with snow - It is about 11 miles wide & 19 long - Near the pass & upon its north side are the sources of the Yellow Stone & Columbia Rivers & also of the Colorado, of the west - Upon its north side rising over a low mountain

As far as eye can reach are the wind River mountains - They are from 11 to 14000 feet high extending often 2 miles above the region of perpetual snow. Storms of wind hail & sled were almost constantly raging around their summits - While these mountains are covered with snow the little valley with which they are interspersed are covered with almost perennial verdure - The cold on the pass through the night was severe & from it resulted what is termed the mountain fever ^{from} of which many emigrants suffered - Our train determined to take the Mormon City route - The two roads separate 19 miles west of the pass - The one running south west to Salt Lake valley & the other north west to Fort Hall - They unite 100 miles west from Fort Hall - The road to the valley passes over a succession of mountain ridges divided by fertile valleys - Several times we reached an elevation of about 7000 feet - The deep ravines which separate the mountains are termed Canons - Down one of these canons July 1st we descended into the valley of the Salt Lake - The prospect was inviting - The plains were covered with herds of cattle & troops of horses & far in the distance small specks could be observed upon the ground which we afterwards found were the small houses made of logs & dolies in which the Mormons resided - Dolies are

unburned brick. The city contains a population of over 8000 - The ground is laid out into a lot so that it covers much ground - Up the East side of the valley rise abruptly a range of mountains covered with perpetual snow. The valley is fertile - The people are hospitable & while there we had an abundance of milk cheese butter & fresh beef - This and the adjacent valleys will support a population of several hundred thousand - We left the city July 7th and travelled 90 miles north to the North End of the Lake & then turned west - Our road lay over a level country for 100 miles further to junction of this & first Keall roads - Then again commenced our ascent - descent over mountain ridges - The country now became ~~higher~~ ^{lower} except upon the borders of the streams - Three hundred miles further brought us to the Humboldt river - This stream is about 100 yards wide & fordable in many places - We followed its course 200 miles to where it sinks in the sand - Then commenced the passage of the desert - As for the rest of our journey it consisted of an alternate passage of rapid streams on ascent of lofty mountains & an almost perpendicular descent into fertile valleys - Suffice it to say August 1st I crested the summit of the Sierra Nevada mountains at an elevation of

about 2000 feet & August 9th arrived on the
North Fork a branch of the Sacramento - The stream
was lined ^{with} men digging gold - Upon an examination
I found that all the stories we had heard in
the States were literally true - The whole country
from the mouth of the Gila North to Oregon is
pregnant with the precious metal - Miners so far
have dug it principally on the banks of the stream
because there they can get water to wash it out - But
every part of the country contains it - It is found
in small pieces in value from one penny to \$100
dollars - Generally on the North Fork where I com-
menced digging the small scales were worth
from 6 to 25 cents each - I commenced im-
mediately and found after 8 days that I had
in my purse 8 ounces worth here \$28 dollars
but at the mint \$76.00 - The weather was extremely
hot & this joined to another circumstance induced
me to come to this place - The miners make
from one to twelve ounces per day - This depends
entirely on the location - Time & experience are re-
quired to make a skillfull location - I became
acquainted with 3 gentlemen one from Oregon one
from Indiana & one from Waterloo N.Y. Masons
by the by who informed me that they had discovered
new diggings 200 miles North on the Trinity River
here they were sure of realizing a large return - I im-
mediately determined to join them - Our outfit is

now ready & our company consisting of 30 leaves
to morrow morning - The country we visit is
full of hostile Indians so that we are obliged to go
well armed - Provision here in the mines are
Pork 40 cents per pound flour 50 Sugar 50 tea 4.00
Coffee 60 & so in proportion -

Maria I confidently anticipate being
able in one year to return with \$5000 - Perhaps by
good fortune I may increase this to ten thousand
As soon as possible I shall make you a re-
mittance - Direct your letters after the receipt
of this to Sacramento City - I have received no
news of any kind from you & feel very anxious -
Do not think the love of gold makes me blind
to my other love - Night & day I am consumed
by thoughts of you - The fear that you may
forget me, prove unfair to feel, or that I may
never see you more prey upon me - Your love
is confiding, but gentle mine fierce & wild -
Yours the full moon shedding her silver rays in
a cloudless night, mine the sun searching
with its torrid rays every thing upon which it
shines - There is but one object however upon
this sun ever has or ever can shine - The moment
that object ceases to reflect its rays it will con-
sume itself by its own heat -

Oh Maria Metaphor aside how
I long to see you & clasp you in my arms - Oh what

a moment of ecstasy that would be - How my
heart would leap - What an inexpressible thrill
would run through my bosom - How many tender
things I could say & say from a loving heart - And the
what recollections of the past would rush across my mind.
Our bridal day - Subsequent happiness - The birth
of our little boy - Our pleasure at the event - Our
happiness in his society & the reverse of this happy
picture his sickness & death - What bonds are
the conjugal ties - Oh wedlock, when the product
of love, the sustainer of life - If gold can render me
Maria happy may my life be preserved to place
it in her power - If love will add to this she
can ask for no more ardent than mine -

I may not return soon from
the North & cannot write until that time be pa-
tient however & expect a letter as often as I
can write - Do write twice a month at least

Yours in love

Charles

Maria

and mother Harriet & all - Also my love
to my mother sister & brother - Tell them if you
see them they are all dear to me -

The train we have met
from the Salt Lake confirms all previous des-
cries about the Gold region - I shall expect letters
in San Francisco when I arrive -

Yours ever

Charles

Murphy

Dated May 16th 1849

4
We follow the valley of this river some
four hundred miles further - The road
is beautiful - Yesterday for the first time
we met Buffalo - During the whole day we
marched in sight of large herds - The land
in some places was black with them - Our
horsesmen were soon out several were killed
and we are now luxuriating upon their
meat - It is very much like beef, with
a finer grain and rather more palatable -
Flocks of Antelope daily pass by but
owing to their flutings are not taken - There
is but little timber on the banks of the River -
Our fuel now is Buffalo chips - The com-
pany are all well - No further rain yet nor
night watches affect our health - I can
take my station at midnight on guard
lie down on the ground where I can skin
the Prairie with my eyes to distinguish
if any object moves or remain till day-
light without experiencing the least incon-
venience - This region is subject to violent
storms of thunder & lightning - Frequently
for hours the heavens are illuminated by
lightning & the ears almost stunned by con-
tinued peals of thunder - This always occurs
in the night so that the spectacle becomes
terrific and sublime - The country is
fertile almost beyond conception - I saw -

My Dear Maria,

Your letter of February 22nd as also those previously written have just been received. After my last was written I left Hang Town and located myself with Mr. Baker and the other gentlemen whom I mentioned high upon the middle fork of the American River. The snow about that time commenced falling in the mountains and for about three weeks we were camped where it lay from four to six feet deep. To an inhabitant of the States this would seem a great hardship with nothing but a tent made of pine boughs and the ground for a bed. But here not more than fifteen miles from the summit of the Sierra Nevada at least five thousand feet elevation, notwithstanding the depth of snow, the weather was not excessively cold. The thermometer was never at zero. After the snow ceased falling which was about the 25th of March, it rained almost incessantly for two weeks more. About the middle of April the dry season set in and the hills around us were soon bare of snow. The streams poured down a torrent of water and it was totally impossible to work or even prospect. I have not been able to do a days work in the mines since I wrote you last. We have packed some provisions from Sacramento upon which profit enough was made to pay our expenses so that our purses have not grown much lighter. I should not be surprised if ere this time you were becoming somewhat discouraged about my prospects. I will now tell you upon what we are relying. Sometime in February we became acquainted with a gentleman named Duncan who last October discovered some very rich diggings some thirty miles north and east of this place. In eleven days he took out five thousand dollars and says that the diggings are extensive enough for five hundred men. He promised to conduct us to his diggings and we have been waiting for the snows to disappear in order to visit this place. Lower down we might have made tolerable wages. But the assurances that Mr. Duncan gives us are that in two months time we can take out from five to ten thousand dollars each. Four days ago we started in company with Mr. Baker and Mr. Bennett to see if the snow would permit them to reach the ravines in which the gold lies deposited. Yesterday they sent back their mules as the snows were too deep for these animals to travel. They proceeded on foot intending to return in five or six days. If they succeed in reaching the place, they will lay their claims and return for the balance of the party and we shall go and camp on the ground until the water and snow will permit us to work. You will perceive by this that we are relying on making a fortune almost at a blow. If disappointed we shall turn our attention to other places. At all events Maria de keep up your spirits. I am positive if health is granted me to be able to make three or four thousand dollars by next fall. But little work can be done during the rainy season. The water is yet too high to work here. It will commence falling about the first of June. We shall then have about six months good working weather. You are right in saying the mines are a lottery. Some have made their fortunes but by far the greater portion of the miners are poor. But they work on expecting another year will make them rich. Of one thing I am determined and that is to return to the States upon the commencement of another rainy season. You may positively look for me then if life is spared.

I regret very much that I have not been able to send you more money. I have now between four and five hundred dollars in my purse. I have not forwarded it because during the rainy season I could not earn much and if taken sick nothing but money will procure either medical attendance or care. As soon as I am able to commence work and earn something I shall forward it all.

Oh Maria if you could but dream how much I suffer on your account you would forgive me all the errors of my life. I took you, an artless girl, from the home of your parents to live in poverty. Your great ambition was wealth. I saw it but could not gratify it. And yet when I saw how your whole life seemed to be bound up in riches, poor as I was, and madly blinded by love, I took you from a home where your every wish was gratified to one where even your moderate wants were but scantily supplied. Could even my ardent love supply the place of all this? You say you want to see me placed where I can be respected and beloved. Maria my ambition was once to figure in the world. That ambition is not crushed or even bridled. It is the star that rules my destiny. But while you are unhappy it will never be gratified. For I shall be unhappy too. You will never be happy until my purse is filled with gold. For that reason I shall brave every danger for a fortune. If in that my hopes are crushed I will not look into the future. You will not think me insane when I tell you that I love you to distraction and that to secure your happiness I would sacrifice my own.

You speak of Harriet's prospects and ask me to advise her. Maria I acquired the anxiety I fear of one of your sisters by volunteering advice. Never ask me again to speak of matrimonial matters to the young. You know how highly I respect Harriet. She will be an honor to any husband. ~~Caroline~~ and Edward! I long to see them. I am sorry Caroline could not get along without learning the dressmakers trade. It is an unhealthy business and more than that sometimes brings a person in association with bad people. I think that milliners, dressmakers and that class of females are not blessed with a superabundance of virtue. But James has nothing to fear. Money will come in to his aid. Besides the source the indictment proceeds from it is not such as to give him much alarm. Maria do not engage in school teaching, nursing or anything of the kind. Stay at your father's home. There you can read and have protectors. Money you will not want after a little.

Oh how happy will be the day of our union, if that day by God's blessing arrives. I hardly looked forward with more pleasure to our bridal day than I now do to the time when I can again clasp you to my arms. My heart will be too full for utterance. Oh how thankful should we be that God made us to love. And then that he made us to love only one. If our affections were divided among many so much the less intense would be their force. As the rays of the sun when concentrated by a glass produce intense heat, but when scattered over the earth afford occasional warmth followed by chilling blasts. So love when divided among many objects sometimes warms the heart then leaves it desolate, but when turned towards one alone keeps alive a burning altar in the bosom.

Maria when we again meet you will not stretch our your arms at night on your pillow for me in vain. I will nestle so close to your bosom that our days and nights both will be one life long rapture. And then the hopes of being blessed with children. Oh visions too bright I sometimes fear to be realized! Do love, keep up your spirits. Your health depends mainly on this.

I enclose in this letter some gold dust. The pieces at sixteen dollars per ounce are worth about ten dollars. I have selected flat pieces because they can be easily enclosed. Gold is found in all shapes. Pieces have been found worth \$1000 and even more. Generally however the scales are small. Large quantities of it is taken out on the rivers fine as dust. I shall write to Joel and his wife soon. Nothing I could send them from here would be of service. From your last letter I hope he and Moses have settled. By the way does an heir await them? It is time I think. And James pretty wife. His immense property will need an inheritor. They were both old enough when married to not waste the last part of their lives on the honeymoon. To your father and mother convey my love. Their kindness to you shall never be effaced from my memory. To my mother also send words of love and courage. Tell her that her sick boy is in good health, wading through the snows, fording rivers and climbing rugged and almost inaccessible mountains. This feeble constitution has ripened into a healthy and vigorous manhood. He hopes to see her ere long and loves her as ever.

I see papers occasionally from the States. It is almost impious that our politicians seek the dissolution of the Union. When our great republic falls to pieces, I shall for one be prepared to say that man is not fit for self-government. Tell the Willmot proviso men that they are endangering the great fabric of our government. Slavery can never exist either here in the Desert or New Mexico. The natives of the country are deadly hostile to it. The emigrants both from north and south, oppose its introduction. No nation could receive the sanction of the people which recognize it. Not one man in one hundred would vote for it. God is great. He will curb the limits of slavery. That being who fixed bounds to the ocean, can and will put an end to human bondage. Mr. Webster's speech is a great patriotic and intellectual effort. Mr. Clay too deserves eternal credit. And last though not least, Old Bullion rides the storm scattering the enemies of the Union as the autumnal winds scatter the leaves of the forest. How contemptible such men as Van Buren, Giddings, Hale and Seward appear by the side of these.

If you should send me papers they would not reach me until out of date. Besides it would cost three dollars to get one out of the Post Office. We can buy papers brought into the mines when the steamer arrives for one dollar each. Write Maria once in two weeks. I am often where I can get neither pencil or paper for weeks. I write at every opportunity. Your letters are my great solace. Mr. Baker is wild. Maria, write with me continually at Gods throne for his blessings. If there is love past the price of gold or rubies, such is mine to you.

Yours ever,

Charles