not time to hunt up to apologize to him for my apparent neglect & to let him know my future address, as well as to ask his. I always envy you the pleasant people you constantly speak of in your letters as having met. I am afraid it is true that I should be somewhat out of water at a watering place now a days, but the imagination still wants society with a great deal of pleasure. What would you have said if I could have suddenly appeared among the Newport crowd in my usual costume. A pair of buck skin breeches fringed down the legs—a red flannel shirt over a hickory one and a panama hat, once worth an ounce but blackened with dust & sweat. A leather belt supporting a sheath knife and revolver and a beard as long and grizzly as a bear skin. I am sorry you have had any uneasiness about me. I have never been in better health though my weight is much reduced—even Alfred could no longer complain of my fat—I weigh but 153 pounds.

Well in any event I had to quit the mines for the winter and even if our new Uncle Sam turns me out next spring I can but go back again with the experience of the past summer I think I should meet with success. It takes some time to learn that as with any other trade. But sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Goodbye my dear mother I will write again by the next steamer & must now talk to Wolcott. Love to all my friends from your son

GEORGE

* * *

Astoria, Dec. 22, 1852

My Dear Alfred

I presume you are again wondering what the devil has become of me for I fear that my last letter to you has miscarried as I hear nothing of others sent at the same time. I wrote you from the Salmon at the end of September and just as I had finished it yours of April and some other date came along. It was the first time I had heard of you since your departure. I gave you in mine, a full account of my doings and wanderings since the previous one. You very naturally blame me for my neglect of writing home, but I have written once a month since I went to the mines with perhaps one exception & sometimes oftener. There is however no mail farther than Humboldt Bay and access to that is very uncertain. We not only have great trouble in getting letters, but as the only means of sending is through occasional pack trains, are by no means confident that ours will go out safely. In fact I did not hear of my appointment till about the 20th of

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November and then by a mere report brought up by a man who came from San Francisco. My letters did not reach the Bay until the 1st December. But for the impending famine through all the northern mines, I should not have left them even on hearing of the appointment, for I was not an applicant for it, and was ignorant then that the salary had been raised. To remain was however out of the question for I saw clearly that the suffering would be terrible and that the winter diggings there would not warrant one in remaining. There was not ten days provisions in the whole country when I left, the rivers were high and snow fell immediately after to an unusual depth. All the signs are of a very severe winter and a very early one. Here where I now write in Oregon, the country is covered with snow to the depth of over a foot & it is hard frozen. There is not a hope of saving the cattle. Many will perish through almost the whole extent of Oregon. Many emigrants will lose from five to ten thousand dollars worth. The potatoes have been frozen to a serious extent, for you know they rarely more than house them & even the seed wheat has been ground up. Wheat is worth six dollars a *bushel.* Flour at the Oregon mills 40 $ per bbl. So that you see the prospects in the mountains. The Columbia is frozen nearly across at Vancouver, a very unusual thing.

Even had I been aware of the increase in the salary of the collector of Astoria, I should not, until knowing how the election had gone, have left the mines with any favorable prospects, for I had firmly determined to continue in them until I had money enough to establish me in something else. There is no country in the world where money is as necessary to success as it is in California and Oregon. To take this office for a few months & then to be turned out of it, with outstanding bonds and the necessity of waiting until my accounts are settled before I go out of gunshot would be ruinous to me. Even on my arrival at San Francisco to which place I hurried, I was in great doubt whether I ought not at once to decline it, & it was only on learning the probability that Wolcott had forwarded my bond with the necessary security and on the urgent recommendation of Hooker that I concluded to defer a decision till my arrival. I have written to notify the department of my being here, and am going up to Oregon City and Salem as soon as the mail comes to see the Governor and ascertain if they have been sent to him with the commission as I was advised. If so I am bound in honor to qual-

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ify under any circumstances, for [John] Adair is a defaulter, and although I never applied for the office, nor did any of the family, I feel that I ought to do so under the circumstances even if I were turned out the next day. It seems that [President Millard] Fillmore gave me the appointment of his own accord, on being satisfied that the report of my intemperate habits was incorrect. And speaking of that, let me set you at rest on the subject. When we parted I told you that I had resolved not to drink anything as long as I remained on the Pacific—I did not consider or intend it as a pledge but as a resolve,—and in fact for a long time drank little or nothing—However when our expedition was up, and after being detained until too late to do anything, I found myself adrift again, I did drink considerably—less as a habit than when I was with other men who did. When I went to the mines, I solemnly pledged myself however that I would use no ardent spirits whatever, & I have kept it. I have not touched a glass of liquor in more than six months, & even of wine & ale I have been very sparing. And now that for the first time I write you since you told me of the affair, I renew the pledge to you on my word of honor, so that you can be easy on that score at least.

I was unsuccessful in the mines though I made my expenses. I think however I could do much better another year with my present experience, and if I lose this office, I shall return to them to remain. As to that the boys told me that Pierce had given Uncle William a promise not to remove me, and though I do not put much confidence in that, I have more in the urgent assurances of Hooker that I need be under no apprehension. He could not of course go into particulars but I felt satisfied that he would use his own influence to aid in having me retained. I told him that I should of course be glad of any assistance from my friends, but I could not consent that any other interest should be sacrificed on my account, as I had no right to ask favors from the new administration, and it might exhaust their influence to keep me in. There are some excuses for lenity towards me it is true, for Adair though a democrat has been suffered to remain through his whole term, and I was only appointed at the expiration of it on his proving a defaulter. This being a territory too and not a state & having therefore no right to vote is of less consequence, but there will be awful kicking if any whigs are left in. There is a split in the democratic ranks and at the head of one branch is Judge [O. C.] Pratt, with a tail of [S. R.] Thurston men. They

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are the most violent foul mouthed and abusive blackguards out of hell, and Pratt the d—dest rascal agoing & every possible effort will be made by them to clear the kitchen. To this set belong the old Methodist Mission backsliders and all of Pike and Posey counties, and a beautiful lovely and charming set they are & be d—d to them. Now I want to be perfectly candid with you in the matter, for I know you will wish to exert your self about it, and may possibly ask from Gov [William?] Smith's friendship his influence with the administration. If I am not removed I shall hold myself perfectly aloof from politics here and elsewhere, without a sacrifice of any principle. What turn matters may take hereafter I cannot forsee. — I am a whig, but I am a union man first. I have always held Seward in contempt and never would vote for him since his first election for anything. If as is possible, the old union whig party is dead, I am free to follow any banner I see fit, but I do not choose to commit myself in advance nor do I wish to make that any recommendation. But what I wish particularly to say is that feeling perfectly satisfied that I have no *right* to ask any favors, I do not wish any one as a mere matter of friendship to push his influence to retain me. The office is now worth 5000 $ a year, for the salary was raised to $3000 on Adair's account and the fees & commissions will probably amount to that in addition, the highest limit allowed. There will therefore be many applicants for it. If I can retain it without undue or unreasonable solicitation well and good. If not, I shall blame no one, nor complain, but go my way rejoicing that it is no worse. So much for that.

Now as to yourself. I had a long conversation with Stoneman at San Fran. who told me more particularly than you did the conduct of Mr. Secretary [C. M.] Conrad & Gen. Scott to you. As to Conrad, I knew he was a blackguard from a letter he wrote Gov. [J. P.] Gaines in reply to one drafted by me at the time the troops were withdrawn from this country, but I did think better of Scott. I did not work for him at this election and should not ever have voted had I known as much as I do now. However his fish is somewhat overdone and there is no use saying more of it. As to [Ethan Allen] Hitchcock, I did not call on him at San Francisco & should not even had I time. I did not like him last winter at Benitia and my opinion is not elevated since. He has behaved very badly about the troops which he promised to send immediately for our protection & to punish the Indian murders

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on Klamath, instead of which he sent four companies I think to Fort Vancouver where there was no more use for them than in Heaven, besides one or two to Port Orford, a little hole in the coast in which it is said he owns lots and where he has had dragoons infantry, topags, artillery & what not surveying roads etc for more than a year past.[3] I saw Hooker but for fifteen minutes, but spent an evening with Stoney D—n it but it does me good to meet an army man. There is something in the grip of one's fist that goes to the marrow of a man's heart, and your old friends have been so much mine that I seem to be hugging you when I meet them as I suppose they feel towards me. Stoneman too is a glorious good fellow, hearty knowable & very much attached to you, as to do you justice all are. I'll tell you one man I like, & that is Stone. I think more of him than of almost any body of his age I ever saw. If he does not make a great man one day, it will be because he does not get a fair show. Poor Kennedy & old Miller had both lost their number in the mess since I was at Benitia. Griff I did not see. Only think of the old heathen's writing me a letter of seven pages. I saw Cross who was with us in coming across the plains & Major [Andrew I.] Smith, the Doctor's brother who puts me in mind of him a good deal. Your report that the bloody Rifles still hold me in pious remembrance corroborates the words of the prophet that the memory of the just shall live. I wish I could see their old mugs once more. Remember me to them one and all with the heartiest Merry Chistmas I can give. By the way the ancient Steeve is in San Francisco in the Marshall's office—He has left his wife here and I learn that she is going home. Hathaway broke his leg last winter in jumping off the second storey piazza of Irvings old house. I presume he is recovered long since. As soon as I get warm in office I am going up to see them at Vancouver. Actona is abandoned to my great discontent. I shall move the office down to the lower burg. Adairville [upper Astoria] is deserted & Leonard & Green live below at Hinsill's old Store. The Frosts are in California.

Oregon City, Dec. 26. I am up here at Oregon City again—came up to see if my bonds had been executed, but if so they have not arrived. I shall wait until the arrival of the next mail

3. See *Senate Executive Documents,* 32 Cong. 2 Sess., 1852-3, vol. 2, pp. 103-122 for official report of the Port Orford venture. General Hitchcock's published diary throws little light on this episode. *Fifty Years in Camp and Field: Diary of Major General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, U.S.A.,* W. A. Croffut, ed. (New York, 1909), pp. 384 ff.

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before giving a definitive answer to the department. As yet I have merely notified them of my arrival in the Territory. To give $ 50,000 bonds here is as you can imagine, out of the question. If my friends in New York are willing to back me, well and good. If not I shall be under all the less obligation to them and continue to paddle my own canoe as best I can. I am rather anxious now that I am here to get the place, for as soon as I can write out my account of the Klamoth country to send on for publication, and finish copying my journal of the Rifle Regiment tour, which if I remain here I *will* do this winter & send to *you*. I mean to go seriously to work at a book on Oregon intended to be of a permanent character. I ought to have done this before, but I have hitherto had no settled quarters of my own since I have been in the country. Now however the disposition to scribble is strong upon me as you will imagine from the length of this letter.

What you say about your being in debt distresses me. I hope to heaven however that you will under no circumstances be induced to part with or mortgage your farm. Wolcott writes that Hall McAllister wishes to purchase it. To lose a source of certain income would be ruinous for you can never in human probability replace it. I am afraid that you lived far too extravagantly at Sonoma with your drag. etc. For God's sake Alfred be prudent and keep within bounds If you can't live on your present pay as an aid & the rent from the farm what will become of you if you lose your little capital & are reduced to the former alone—especially as that may be diminished hereafter. I am certainly a poor example of prudence & economy, but if you knew the regrets that beset me for my past want of providence, you would think me a good warning at least. It is a bitter mortification that I, the oldest should at this time be not only unable to help the[e] out & to add something to mothers comfort but am living from hand to mouth with so little hope for the future. Griffin is constantly abusing me for not taking the farm when I was in San Francisco, but I am satisfied I did right, for to carry it on without means adequate in advance would have been madness & the result of your tenants experience shows that even a large sum could readily be sunk there. Nor would I have ventured to borrow the money for the purpose where failure would have risked every thing—credit & all—What little I still owe is a nightmare to me & with God's grace I will not run further into debt. I shall try and obtain employment for the winter here and as soon as I

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can return to the mines & stay there. I presume that with the new administration Gov. Smith will return to California & you with him I hope the prospect, of both will then brighten. They are dull enough now . . . .

I shall close this to be ready for any chance to send to Astoria. The river has been entirely shut up, but it is now raining and there is every probability of a severe freshet. The snow is eighteen inches deep over the whole country & if it goes off rapidly Oregon City may go too.

Give my respects to Gen. [Persifor F.?] Smith & remember me to any of my old friends you see. I shall write if possible when the mail comes in to let you know what I do about the collectorship. Take care of your self & may the skies be brighter when we again meet. GEORGE

I have written you several times though you seem to have got but one. Your letter of August 12 is the last I have got & this reached me on arriving at Humboldt Bay about the 1st.

* * *

Portland Oregon Dec. 31, 52

Happy New Year

Dear Wolcott

On reaching Oregon City I found the Judges there returning from court at Salem. They had a confab with Holbrook, the dist. Atty & Col Beston [John B. Preston] the Surveyor General & it was determined that I should give bonds there. Accordingly two of the wealthiest men in Oregon were applied to & consented at once. The bonds were executed & I took the oath & received my commission. This whole thing was unexpected, as I was unwilling to make application for the security to men on whom I had no earthly claims, but the other officers were very anxious for me to qualify & took the matter on their own shoulders. The result was the more gratifying as a d—d contemptible loco foco—a methodist missionary had been around cautioning people not to give security for me. This however renders me the more anxious that the security required should previously have been furni[shed] at home, in which case I should cancel the Oregon bonds. If however I do not get it by this mail I shall not expect it. Now if any substantial influence can be made with Pierce to leave me in, well & good—I think I shall have strong military aid & have written to Alfred & Col. Hooker to let them know that I have accepted. The Salary etc are limited to $3000 not 5000 as

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