

1858-1861

Just to be taken on the crew of the *Shubrick* was a promise of adventure for Henry, and it gave an assurance of safety for the comfort of the people at home. Named for the admiral who was chairman of the Lighthouse Bureau, the vessel was a 'first' in two or three particulars. She was the first tender in the lighthouse service to be sent to the Pacific coast, and the first to be powered with steam. She was a hybrid, with a square-rigged foremast, yet was accounted good-looking, with black hull and funnels, and great red side wheels. She was armed with half a dozen cannon, and with a hot-water gun specially designed to discourage prowling Indians. Henry's father went over the vessel with him and met certain members of the crew, a few days before sailing.

The start was auspicious, and so were the first three days at sea. But on Christmas day, at a point off Hatteras, the *Shubrick* ran into such a storm as Henry had never experienced on the India voyage. The little tender, 'cockleshell' he called her — she was 140 feet long, and carried a 371-ton burden — got caught in the trough of the waves and took a dreadful battering. Deck engine, deck lumber, and extra spars went overboard, and the seas stove in the starboard bulwarks and part of the wheelhouse. When the call came, between ten and eleven at night, for all hands to put overboard whatever would lighten the load, Henry worked with a Negro deckhand heaving sacks of coal. It was a perilous Christmas. But by daylight seas were calming, and five or six days later the *Shubrick* put into Charlotte Amalie, the port of St. Thomas, one of the Virgin Islands, for refueling and refitting.

To spare his parents anxiety Henry made no mention of the hurricane. To them he admitted no more than 'head winds and a rough sea' so far — a not very successful ruse, for, when news of the storm came out in the *Evening Journal*, or 'Evening Disturber' as Collins Walton called the paper, it excited the Georges greatly. Writing home Henry slipped into the peaceful pictorial vein of the *Sea Journal*, and his description is not to be improved

upon: 'Here I am this winter's afternoon (while you are gathered around the parlour stove, perhaps thinking and talking of me) sitting in the open air in my white sleeves almost roasted by the sun. I wish that you could view the scene which surrounds us. The noble mountains rising from the water, covered with perpetual vegetation of the tropics and varied in colour by the shadows of the clouds which seem to climb their sides; and the little town with its square red-roofed, Dutch houses and white forts, surrounded by the palm and cocoanut trees which line the head of the bay; the ships and steamers which deck the harbour; and the boundless sea stretching away to the edge of the horizon, glittering in the sunlight — form a picture which I know you would enjoy.'

While the *Shubrick* lay in the harbor, Henry had an interview with the commanding officer. Apparently before leaving Philadelphia he had been in some way disappointed about the \$40 wages. At any rate Captain de Camp now promised 'that if he could hit on any plan which would enable him to raise my wages to their original standard (\$35.00) [sic] for the time occupied going out, he would do so, and I am certain of getting more as soon as we reach our destination.' Putting to sea again, 9 January, Henry wrote the letter to his parents quoted at the end of the last chapter: the boy had his face to the wind, confident for the future as never before.

Rounding Barbados, the *Shubrick* touched Pernambuco and put into Rio de Janeiro. This should have been a high point of the voyage for an enthusiastic traveler. Yet all that Henry managed to write, and this in a letter not sent, was that he had paddled the harbor, 'from one island to another in a canoe, the exact model of the famous one constructed by Crusoe,' and that he had gone ashore in Rio only once, and then seen very 'little of the town, for it was too infernally hot to walk the narrow streets.'

Again a failure to report to his parents was a covering up of unfortunate events. There was reason, for this time the crew of the *Shubrick* faced a more appalling danger than a storm at sea. Yellow fever was raging in Rio — a dread disease for a Philadelphian. No case developed before the *Shubrick* sailed, but after twelve hours at sea three men were stricken, and during the five-day run to Montevideo five or six more went down. All survived except one, a lovable fellow named Martin, the second engineer, whose agonies made the last few hours out of Montevideo a race for help.

But, before the tender slipped into the mouth of the La Plata, Martin died piteously, in the presence of his young cousin, a fireman on the crew.

This was Henry's first knowledge of tragic death. It turned him to his pen immediately, and in time he made it an event in his literary life. In two letters to Philadelphia — Engineer Martin was one of the crew whom Mr. George had met and liked — he told the story simply and with feeling. The stricken man had wished to be buried ashore, and his mates had sympathized; after he died Captain de Camp had consulted with the cousin, and burial at some lonely spot along the coast, from which the body could be removed home whenever opportunity availed, had been the decision. But when Uruguayan officials refused under quarantine regulations, that plan had to be set aside, and after a short run to sea the crew of the *Shubrick* gave Engineer Martin a sailor's burial. Their effort failed. Though bored with holes and weighted with coal, the coffin floated, and a kedge anchor had had to be attached. Then, after 'the desired effect' had occurred and the vessel had returned to moorings, the tide brought the box back, right up to the side of the *Shubrick*. This decided the crew and captain. Now evading the watch of the port officials, they quietly took the body to a little valley not far from Montevideo and buried it as they had wanted to do. Henry's account of all this shows him to have been deeply moved but not at all superstitious: his letters explain the failure of sea burial by the simple errors of insufficiently weighting the box and insecurely attaching the anchor.

Yet the event grew on him, and in time, with the encouragement of the interest in the occult which prevailed in California, it took on mystery and terror. Eight years after the voyage Henry George retold the little tragedy in one of his earliest pieces of published

writings. Under the title, 'Dust to Dust,' he described a wild sky and scudding clouds as the background of Martin's dying; he said that at the moment of death a prayer rose spontaneously from the crew, and instantly the sun came through and the heavens were crossed by a rainbow 'of everlasting promise.' The author had it that the crew had been quite superstitious. The coffin had 'seemed almost instinct with life and striving to elude' the anchor; and then, 'as we steamed up the river, it was more than hinted among many of us that the strong desire of the dying man had something to do with the difficulty of sinking his body.' The return of the corpse to the *Shubrick* gave the magazine story its climax: 'Onward it came,

through all the vessels that lay beyond us — now lost to our view, now coming into sight again — turning and tacking as though piloted by life, and steadily holding the course for our steamer. It passed the last ship and came straight for us. It came closer, and every doubt was dispelled. It was, indeed, the coffin. A thrill of awe passed through every heart as the fact became assured.’ For Henry George as writer, the magazine story signifies a beginner’s effort to join the company of writers, Melville the greatest, who, in that day better than in any other period of American letters, were putting into fiction the power and the mystery of the sea. In the words of the story, ‘There is something in the vastness with which nature presents herself upon the great waters which influences in this direction even minds otherwise sceptical.’ After Montevideo the passage through the Strait of Magellan, and a brief anchorage there, left a magnificent memory of dark water, great rocks, evergreens, and snow on distant mountains. It left also a poignant one of missionaries working with the ‘not at all attractive’ Tierra del Fuegians — missionaries whom, he later learned, were killed for their efforts and eaten by cannibals of the vicinity. On the passage north the *Shubrick* touched at Panama, apparently nowhere else, before it came to its destination. Though a bold salute from Henry George’s pen on entering the Golden Gate would have been appropriate to the mood of his leaving home, he seems rather to have been a little appalled by San Francisco. All we have is a couple of lines sent off to Mrs. Curry. Plans and moves would have to be worked out, he told this friend. He added that San Francisco struck him as ‘a dashing place, rather faster than Philadelphia.’

Within an hour of the *Shubrick*’s putting in, 27 May, James George met him and took him home. At once his letters began to indicate that he was ready for anything, and not too strongly determined for Oregon after all. His mother had guessed this before he left home. To be sure, Mrs. Curry wrote immediately; and she was warm and cordial as ever, and full of regret that he had not reached the West coast in time for Martha’s wedding. But she conspicuously had nothing to offer in the way of a job, on the Oregon *Statesman* or any other paper. On Henry’s side, ‘the old Oregon fever has not entirely died,’ he said; and certainly he had not forgotten Florence. A month after arrival he charmingly told Martha that Florence had kissed him in a dream, and added that ‘I will be almost afraid to meet her for I know she will awe me into bashfulness and silence at once.’ Yet at the same

writing he showed that he was becoming excited, as San Francisco was, by Frazer River gold, and said that come spring he might go to the diggings far away.

All this projecting took for granted both that he would disregard his father's advice to stay more or less permanently in government employment, and that he could somehow make himself free of his commitment to a full year of service — seven months to go — aboard the *Shubrick*. According to family record, the eighteen-year-old steward enlisted the sympathy of Ellen George, his cousin's wife. At their home he went to bed, and she herself went to interview Captain de Camp. One may imagine a woman's story of an ailing youngster who needed care, and one may think that the three concerned — Henry, cousin, and ship's commander — all acted in full knowledge that desertion was a habit that had been more or less condoned in San Francisco Bay since Gold Rush days, when sailors, even sailors in the United States Navy, had hit for the mountains in droves. Whatever the pretense, the captain accepted Henry's 'retirement' without effort to bring him back. Though the record of the *Shubrick* showed other desertions, it made no mention of Henry's leaving; and the only damaging document in the dossier is an envelope addressed to him from Philadelphia and sent back with the marking, 'Run away.' His mother worried, and his father moralized a little; but it was his friend Jo Jeffreys who summed up the episode. 'I think you did make a decided "jump" when you left the *Shubrick* so suddenly,

though I hope you did not do so before you received what was due you. You must have been in a state of great anxiety when waiting for the expected visit of Captain de Camp, though I think the fact does credit to your ingenuity.' Presumably Henry never received any of his accumulated wages.

Certainly the young man was in a risk-taking state of mind, and San Francisco was the place for it. We have the word of a future governor that the financial crisis of the late '50s had hit earlier and harder there than in New York; and an editorial in the San Francisco *Hesperian* immediately after Henry's arrival, trying hard to be optimistic, contained such not completely cheerful observations as these: that the new gold rush to the Frazer River in British Columbia had given work to many unemployed, that it was beginning to stimulate business, and that recently there had been

fewer suicides in California. If it was true of nineteenth-century America generally, it was triply true of California during Gold Rush days that people gambled recklessly with their jobs. Positions were bandied as freely as stock certificates, and even those most vulnerable wage earners, the white-collar men, exchanged them readily as new chances offered.

Henry acted that way, quitting the *Shubrick*, and now his cousin did the same. The responsibility of wife and young children notwithstanding, James George abandoned his bookkeeping and entered a Frazer River venture with a San Francisco merchant. A century earlier, in days of Atlantic colonization, James would have been called 'factor' rather than partner, and the San Francisco man the 'principal.' The George side of the bargain called for setting up a store in Victoria, to do business with the miners. 'Trade acknowledges no political boundaries,' the *Hesperian* was now boasting, as California capital sought investment in British Columbia; and the magazine added that the boundaries of San Francisco's commercial 'empire will be as wide as those of western civilization.' As enterpriser in this forward movement, James offered Henry a job as store clerk. And by August, possibly late July, Henry was on the job selling goods across the counter, under the British flag another thousand miles from home. Perhaps he had been in California long enough to know that some of the biggest money of the earlier '50s, and some of the more stable accumulations, Leland Stanford's among others, had been made

by the storekeepers of Sacramento just behind the lines of the great gold diggings.

Yet Henry sailed from San Francisco none too anxious for store work; and at first he was probably more than half inclined to try on his own for river gold and a big find. Certainly his letters about getting rich quick, and the fact that he had to work his way north as a sailor, distressed the good people in Philadelphia. But by the time he arrived on Vancouver Island, floods on 'the terrible Frazer' had brought gold mining to a standstill, from which it never really recovered. He was lucky to have the store job to resort to, and to have the store for home. By putting up a sign for late and early customers, 'Please give this door a kick,' he offered something like twenty-four-hour service to his customers.

He had a very good time, at least for a while, and he seems to have thought there might be a prosperous future in the store. Thrusting his chest

out a bit, he had printed a business card which brought a desirable reaction from Jo Jeffreys: 'It looks quite important for you, old fellow. I wish I could lend you \$500.' Even members of the family who disliked the venture got some exaggerated ideas; Uncle Joseph van Dusen's firm considered sending the George cousins a shipment of Philadelphia goods for sale. 'Bless you, my dear little sister,' wrote Henry after Jane had said something naive about his residence, I had [no bed] to make. Part of the time I slept rolled up on my blanket on the counter, or on a pile of flour, and afterwards I had a straw mattress on some boards. The only difference between my sleeping and waking costumes was that during the day I wore boots and cap, and at night dispensed with them.' The fun of the venture came many ways: he attended an Indian wedding and a powwow; a returning miner gave him a 'big boat with sails'; and he looked forward to the ice-skating season.

But a British Columbia winter never came for Henry George. In the late fall some quarrel or difference, not permanent but painful, occurred between the cousins. We are told only that later he was contrite and admitted he had 'behaved badly towards Jim George.' He abandoned the store, borrowed money, and sailed steerage from Victoria back to San Francisco. He had never before been so completely alone in the world as at the end of 1858.

The one visible increment of the northern venture was a good start on his later famous set of chin whiskers. Years afterward he told audiences that on the voyage to Victoria he had for the first time had his eyes opened to the meaning of Chinese immigration on the West coast. An old miner, whom he quizzed, admitted that for the present the Chinese were merely working the diggings abandoned by white prospectors. But the workingman foresaw that in time Chinese competition would bring wages down for everyone. Though this kind of anxiety had not yet become the daily operation of Henry's mind, he remembered later how deeply the prognosis had impressed him: 'The idea that as a country grew in all that we were hoping it might grow the condition of those who had to work for a living must become not better but worse.' In the wilderness this was the Adam Smith lesson of the Philadelphia printer again, but made ominous by the threat of the Orient, not too far away for its huge labor force to affect matters crucially. The lesson of old countries and low wages was relearned at an impressionable time for the learner. During the British Columbia

interval, Henry George turned nineteen and went out of a job, almost simultaneously.

One phase of his affairs, his relations with the Currys, the northern trip had clarified completely. During the summer Martha, the oldest sister, had come with her new husband to Victoria, and the old friends had had a good visit and an exchange of confidences. Martha reported that Florence was not in love. Not in love with anyone else, appears to have been the idea Henry was to get; and the hint that the young lady was keeping an open mind about him, this year and a half since coming to Oregon, seems to have been strengthened by a bright letter which Florence herself wrote a little later. 'Remember, Hen,' invited the girl who had been on his mind for years, 'if you ever come to Portland, that our hearts and homes are ever open to welcome you. I shall expect a letter in return to this, and expect to have the correspondence continued.'

Yet Henry delayed writing, and perhaps never wrote again to Florence Curry. When he took passage to San Francisco he passed up an opportunity to stop in Portland. And if a low state of pocket- book and wardrobe possibly explains his not visiting at the governor's residence, this would not have prevented him from writing later from San Francisco. One recalls a self-judgment in the phrenological examination: Henry believed himself 'strong in his

attachments . . . yet may occasionally fall out of them.' By all the signs, he had fallen out of attachment to Florence; and the possibilities of Oregon, for love or for work, never seriously entered his calculations again.

During the winter of 1858 and 1859, moreover, a series of hard events underscored the fact of personal isolation. On his return to San Francisco the boy had the comfort and security of visiting Ellen George, who was teaching school until decision could be made that she should take her children and move to Victoria. Apparently Henry's trouble with James did not change his relationship with Ellen. But in February, James's business having improved, she went to join him; and presently Henry learned that she had taken sick and died in British Columbia. Meanwhile word came from Philadelphia that, under depression stringency, his father's salary was being withheld for a month — the aging clerk went to the Customs House every day nonetheless — and the family was strained and worried. And finally, later in the year, came the news of the sudden death of Joseph

Jeffreys. Jane's attachment to Henry's old friend made the event doubly sad, and Mrs. George grieved also. 'Oh his bright mind,' she wrote her son, 'his loneliness, his sensitiveness, his love for you, made me feel an interest in him of no common kind.'

Henry owed Jo a great debt for understanding and counsel. Wishing him luck when he left Philadelphia, this friend had said things no one else could very well say. On the matter of liquor: 'You and I have different natures, Harry, and what I may leave without regret you are too apt to cling to with all the ardency of your too-ardent soul ... You have enjoyed yourself — that is right — you have endeavored to repay yourself for restraint and confinement ... and in the wild excitement you have perhaps forgotten your aims, your hopes, your ambitions, and here you have been wrong.' About the Frazer River move, and Henry's shuttling around generally, Jo judged harshly, but admonished in affection: 'If you enter a house as a clerk, stay at it, in God's name. If you should unfortunately resolve to follow printing, follow it with all your abilities and energy until there shall no longer be any necessity for it. You will allow me to say that your great fault (and I think it is your worst one) is that of half-doing things, *in this sense*, that you vacillate about the execution of that which alone

secures permanent success and lasting fame ... Now you are competent for any labour to which your inclinations may direct you. You are not competent to succeed at a dozen employments, nor can you expect to amass a fortune by labouring at them alternately.' Not even his worried parents spoke to Henry half so sternly, nor understood the hazards of his zigzag course quite so well. His friend's death must have seemed to Henry the greatest loss he had suffered so far.

On the side of his West coast career, moreover, the year following his leaving Victoria brought him twice within a hairbreadth of disaster. He was a forlorn fellow who came back to San Francisco laden with debts instead of with nuggets, and possessed of very little beside the hand-me-down coat he wore and a blanket. Up to now, whether in Philadelphia or Calcutta, in San Francisco or Victoria, Henry George had operated always as a member of the George family. Every job and every adventure, possibly excepting the voyage to Boston, had hinged on the influence of his father or his uncles or his cousin. But now on his own, he was reduced to a human unit on the job market in San Francisco, which was during that year an especially crowded

and lonesome place to be. As one among thousands returning from the Frazer River, he might well have had no choice except to go to sea again.

A stroke of luck saved him for the winter. By pure accident Henry met in San Francisco David Bond, an old friend from King and Baird's. The printing-house connection led to a printing-house job. Henry was soon at work in Frank Eastman's office, at \$16 a week, the best wages he had ever made. There was no reason not to luxuriate a little. He settled comfortably in the What Cheer House, a temperance hotel for men which he described as 'the largest if not the finest hotel in the place.' Nine dollars a week paid for 'a beautiful little room and first-class living.' It was a grand relief. At this stage of great satisfaction with San Francisco he sounded out Jane, who was completing a teacher-training course at home, about possibly coming on. 'Women are sadly wanted here,' he urged, and school-teachers are well paid — fifty dollars a month for 'A, B, C teachers,' and one hundred dollars, Ellen's salary, not unusual and not the highest pay. Only the desolation of the Christmas and New Year's holidays dampened Henry's spirit at this stage. One year away from home, he reacted to recent free-

dom with a season of austerity: he cut out smoking, paid no attention to girls, and even lacked the inclination for the theater or other amusements, he wrote his people.

For two or three months — about long enough for Mr. George to congratulate his son on returning to his trade and to confess his own reverses — this pleasant situation held. Then, coincidentally with Ellen's departure, business slackened in the Eastman shop and Henry lost his job. He got by for the rest of the winter as a weigher in a rice mill. But in the hard spring of 1859 the mill closed, and on top of this Mrs. Curry wrote that, even if she heard of newspaper jobs in Oregon, she was 'afraid that your free spirit would be disgusted' with the work.

Evidently Henry was too discouraged to write home. We have only the unnecessarily shamefaced confession, decades later, that for a couple of months he was 'in fact what would now be called a tramp.' Like thousands before and since, he set out for the gold country, for Placerville — often called Hangtown — in the region of the Mother Lode east of Sacramento. He did not get that far. At some point in the interior he picked up farm work and he slept in barns, regular California hobo style. An exact contemporary, a self-confessed tramp who worked four months on a ranch near Sonoma,

earned \$26 per month and keep. In the early summer Henry made his way back to San Francisco. As ill chance had it, he arrived too late to follow up the one real job opportunity the Currys ever arranged for him — could it have been their reply to a distress signal? — a place like the one they had half offered him before he left Philadelphia, setting type on a Portland paper. He considered going to sea once more; and then again David Bond came to the rescue.

The new job this time was with a weekly newspaper of a kind that flourished with peculiar exuberance in San Francisco. Though the *California Home Journal*, subtitled *California Literature, Romance, and the Arts*, is an unknown in the larger history of journalism, the one available remaining issue — one on which we may be quite sure Henry George labored — suffices, with other evidence, to place it in the general class of literary papers of which the *Golden Era* is the most renowned. These papers existed on quite a different footing from that of such regular newspapers as the *Alta California* and the *Bulletin*, with their daily, weekly, and other editions, and their main attention given to commercial and political news. As business undertakings the literary papers were generally a risky, short-lived lot. Yet somehow Henry's particular paper, which sold for 12½ cents — 'a bit' — an issue, kept going for several years; and in his eyes the proprietor, Joseph C. Duncan, was a friendly employer and an admirable one.

Months earlier, while he was working at Eastman's and living at What Cheer House, young George had had an urge to do a lot of reading, some of it the new literature of California; and now working on the *Home Journal* he had special reason to expand that interest. In the first instance the need to read had come from within himself, after a year at sea and at storekeeping; and the hotel he lived in gave him easy access to a collection of books famous in California history. As a kind of moral substitute for a bar, the proprietor of the What Cheer House, a New England Yankee, maintained a library and a museum of California wild life, for the edification of his guests. Among two or three thousand books and a generous supply of European, East coast, and California newspapers, Henry had a splendid opportunity. Biographies, Greek and Roman classics in translation, histories, and such British and American fiction of the century as the works of Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray, and Irving, Cooper, and Hawthorne were

all available to him. Perhaps we should discount his own later impression that he actually read most of the books on What Cheer shelves. But we know that sometime he did a lot of reading, and the What Cheer House library may account for at least a part of it. One book he did not read demands mention: though Henry spotted Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in the hotel library, he passed by a future favorite book, and it is safe to say that he had not read one line of book economics at this stage of his life.

To the satisfaction of discovering books in California for his pleasure, the job on the California Home Journal added the interest of first contact with literature in the making, and with literary criticism. Though the weekly invited 'tales, romances, historical sketches, and articles on science' without restriction to region, in San Francisco style Mr. Duncan made a policy of stressing California interests, and his columns contained such items as articles on Chinese gambling and reports of notable persons who came to the state. Regionalism with rainbows of local color was

the essence of early California literature, and Henry George's first durable and interesting job connected him with that kind of thought at a point of grass-roots origin.

Not only his work but the incidentals of his life indicate that by now George was becoming fond of the state where he had chosen to try his fortune. By temperament Henry was the kind of young man to delight in the spectacle San Francisco has always offered, and to let it grow on him. On Sundays, free from the composing room, he rambled in the hills outside the city. Telegraph Hill, before it became popular, charmed him most: the clouds and fog, sun and shadow, the green hills of springtime — he loved the whole color and feeling. Now finding a group of friends whom he enjoyed, he went to the theater occasionally; and with Isaac Trump, known to him since *Shubrick* days, he took a room on Dupont Street for a while, in the most polyglot section of town. The boys equipped themselves more or less Bohemian style with a couple of cots and chairs, a trunk for a table, a bottle for a candlestick, and a Dutch scene print for a window curtain. There they entertained their friends — when the rent was not overdue — with talk and fooling reminiscent of the Lawrence Society. Years afterward Henry George recollected with nostalgia their table-tipping and their talk about the mysteries of life, up and down the scale from ghost stories to the ideas of the Swedenborgians.

In this kind of life the young immigrant's 1859 gave way to 1860; and 1860 meant in his anticipation September and the age of twenty-one, when he would cease to be an apprentice and as a journeyman could command twice as much as his present \$12 wages. In this case the realization proved no less than the hope. When he did come of age he promptly joined the typographical union, and during a short interlude off the *Home Journal* he earned his first full California wages as a substitute printer on the San Francisco dailies. Then before the year's end Mr. Duncan took him back and made him foreman printer. His wages jumped to \$30 a week, and for a few months Henry George had one of the more prosperous intervals of his life. All in all he owed a great deal to the *Home Journal*: it had tided him over in San Francisco from the crisis period of his relocation into the crisis period of the nation; it had restored him to his proper work, and justifying his

coming West the paper had carried him over into a phase of attachment and feeling for California as a place to live.

But an immigrant is an individual with two loyalties of place, and in Henry George's case the home loyalty, though it was a declining one, had vigorous spokesmen in the persons of his mother and his sisters. Naturally the womenfolk could not be easily reconciled to Henry's absence. During his first year away the Victoria business had been distasteful to all the Philadelphia Georges; and then when hard luck hit in early 1859 the women especially begged Henry to come home. They could not bear to think of his settling down and sometime marrying, so far away. The boy's answer was partly money and partly long-run opportunity in the West. Not the cost of passage home, 'the rub isn't there. It's what shall I do when I get home. Wages are low and work is hard to get, and I might be unable to obtain anything for some time, while here I shall always be able to scratch along, at any rate, and have some chance of doing something more.' The wanderer now found a phrase for the destiny that separates families and delays hopes: 'It's all for the best, you know.' He entered it in many letters to Philadelphia.

Two events worked some reconciliation among his people to his being away. One was the secession of South Carolina from the Union, in the fateful November of 1860. From the first fortnight of that crisis Mr. and Mrs. George, more accurately than many others, especially more so than

people in California, anticipated bloodshed between South and North. They foresaw that in San Francisco the hazards would be less for a son of military age than in Philadelphia, and they admitted that he had better stay. The mother was not to stick to this judgment, and Henry was to want to go to war. But speaking for her husband and herself she wrote, on the last day of 1860, that they had concluded it was better for him to be on the West coast 'for a little while' at least.

The other event of reconciliation was entirely personal, and had occurred about six months earlier: Henry confessed faith and joined the church. During his early months in San Francisco he had attended the Unitarian congregation, and liked it. Had Thomas Starr King, the Boston preacher who was to make himself the spiritual leader of Civil War patriotism in San Francisco, al-

ready taken that pulpit, it is hardly likely that Henry would have pulled himself away. But Unitarianism caused head shaking at home, and probably he had his own reservations. He tried the Episcopal churches, but found them too High Church. In the end he discovered a resting place when a friend took him to a Methodist church. Though he was not moved to much letter writing about his conversion, he assured his parents and sisters that they were not to be concerned about the sectarian location of it. Little difference to what part of the fold one belonged, he said, so long as one felt a true belonging. This confession drew from home heart-felt letters of gratitude and relief and appreciation.

Neither the humble little church in San Francisco nor Methodism as a religious movement was ever to prove a place of great loyalty or activity for Henry George. But his parents were not wrong to rejoice at what he wrote them. For their wandering son, now pretty well transplanted in California, had of his own inclination turned back to their values. This involved a commitment he was to keep in his own special ways of devotion, in crucial times, in historic places, as life advanced.