

**Recollections of a long and somewhat uneventful life,
by Stephen A. Bemis**

RECOLLECTIONS

OF A LONG AND SOMEWHAT

UNEVENTFUL LIFE

STEPHEN ALLEN BEMIS

RECOLLECTIONS

OF A LONG AND SOMEWHAT

UNEVENTFUL LIFE

BY

STEPHEN A. BEMIS

Privately Printed

FOR THE MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, 1932

COPYRIGHT 1932 BY

JUDSON S. BEMIS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Introduction

My father, Stephen Allen Bemis, was born February 6, 1828, at Fitchburg, Massachusetts. My mother, Hannah Jane Thomas, was born January 27, 1835, at Cazenovia, New York. They were married May 31, 1854, at Chicago and lived in Chicago until the following year, when my father rented a farm near Sycamore, DeKalb County, Illinois, where they lived until he made his second trip to California in 1860.

I have often wished that my father had kept a diary of his two trips to California, the first one with his friend, Porter S. Coolidge, made via the Isthmus, and the second made some years later and after his marriage, when my two elder sisters were little girls. Quite recently I found a bundle of old letters from my father to my mother, and from her to him, and also letters from his brother, Judson M. Bemis, all dated in the 1860's, '70's, and '80's. Most of the letters written in the '60's had to do with the last trip and with family matters. His family, my mother and the two little girls, were living at his farm near Sycamore, Illinois. From these letters, which are not many, a few meagre records of the tedious trip across the plains are taken. A complete diary of this trip and of the first one would now be considered a very valuable item of Americana, and were such a diary published it would have a ready sale. A perusal of these letters gives a picture of the small party of adventurers who undertook the trip from Northern Illinois to California, driving stock consisting of cattle and horses at the rate of about twelve to fifteen miles a day. The live stock was considered unsalable at fair prices in Illinois and therefore the trip was undertaken. There is no written record of the financial outcome but my father told me that the actual monetary returns were meagre and the venture I think resulted in financial loss. This is confirmed in the letters to my mother, written from San Francisco, which indicate that he had little money left and he was obliged to go to work in San Francisco. They further indicate that he was hard up, and he debated a long time whether he would return to Illinois or send for her and the two little girls to come to him. He did the latter with the result that the family lived in San Francisco for some six years. He sent mother about five hundred dollars for

the expenses of the trip to New York, thence to Panama and thence to San Francisco. He also sent explicit directions as to all the details of the proposed journey, and it was undertaken promptly.

JUDSON S. BEMIS

7

Recollections of a Long and Somewhat Uneventful Life, by Stephen A. Bemis, St. Louis, Mo., 1911 CHAPTER I

It was Job, in the midst of his trials, who exclaimed, "Oh! that mine adversary had written a book." Now, the writer does not know that he has an adversary; nevertheless, it is a truism that one seldom passes through this world without creating some antagonisms. And if such is the case, the present writer would not lay claim to the virtue of always having been in the right. In truth, he may have been more often in the wrong than in the right—Who knows? The past has disappeared, and whatever mistakes have been made cannot now be rectified, so by-gones must be by-gones.

The family previous to my mother's death consisted of the following:

Stephen Bemis, Miriam Thurston Farwell Bemis Children: Stephen Allen Bemis, Mary Hepsy Bemis, Judson Moss Bemis, 8 all residing in the town of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, where all the children were born; Stephen Allen Bemis, February 6, 1828, Mary Hepsy Bemis (now Mrs. Lattin, a widow), December 21, 1830, Judson Moss Bemis, May 18, 1833.

Our father died at the age of eight-five, or thereabout, at Oregon, Illinois, in the year 1889. Our mother died at Daysville, Illinois, at the age of thirty-three years, six months, and ten days. Her demise occurred on January 24, 1840.

Our parents, in their young married life, belonged to the Congregational Church at Fitchburg. It will be remembered that about this time, 1812 and 1813, Adoniram Judson and his young wife embarked from Salem, Massachusetts, on the barque "Caravan" for Calcutta as missionaries, under the auspices of the Congregationalists of Massachusetts, and that during this long voyage

Mr. Judson and his wife changed their views in regard to the question of Baptism. Mr. Judson was a Congregational minister, his parents were Congregationalists, and he was sent out by the Congregational Board. All his sympathies and affections were bound up with the life of that great denomination.

Mr. Judson expected to meet in India the eminent English Baptist Missionaries, Carey, Marshman, and Ward. In the immediate neighborhood of these men he proposed to institute a Congregational form of church life among the heathen. He would have to explain to the natives these denominational differences. As his mind was cast in a scholarly and argumentative mold, controversies might arise between him and the Baptist missionaries; so he sought to fortify himself with arguments before meeting with those formidable champions of the Baptist Church. Hence his investigations on ship-board, and the more he investigated the more he was convinced that the Baptists' contention was an impregnable one.

He pictured to himself the grief and disappointment of his parents and friends at home. He knew that he might find himself and his wife stranded in a strange land, for who could expect the American Congregational Board to sustain a Baptist missionary? He could have but little hope that the Baptists themselves, feeble and scattered as they were, would or could come to their support. The question arose in his mind, "Are these doctrines so important after all?" but he found no consolation in that sort of refuge. If baptism is a symbol of burial and resurrection, then immersion only fills the requirements. His wife finally wrote to a friend at the old home, "We are Baptists not because we desired to be but because we are compelled to be." As a result, Mr. Judson and his wife were baptized in the Baptist Chapel in Calcutta, on the 6th of September, 1813, by the Reverend Mr. Ward, an English Baptist. Then it was that the Baptists of America became his supporters in the mission field in Burmah.

As I have said, our father and mother in their early married life were Congregationalists, and but for this episode that took place in denominational circles when Adoniram Judson and his bride, Miss Hasseltine, were sent to Burmah as missionaries by the Congregational Board, they might have remained as members of that denomination in their after lives. But this change of base on the part of

Mr. and Mrs. Judson created quite a furor in America and our parents commenced to investigate for themselves, with the result that they left the Congregational Church and joined the Baptists. Their three children in this year of our Lord, 1911, hold their memberships as follows: Stephen A. Bemis, Baptist; Mary Hepsy Lattin, Methodist; Judson Moss Bemis, Congregationalist. This, however, must be said: There are no contentions whatever in the second generation, as lines of demarcation are less rigid in these latter days.

Ruskin says, "There is a true church wherever one hand meets another helpfully, and that is the only holy or mother church whichever was or ever shall be." Possibly this may be an extreme statement, but there is no question but that among evangelical churches, more of comity and good fellowship exists than in the first part of the last century, when denunciation of one body by another was indulged in by the clergy and fostered by the laity, often estranging one brother or sister from another. And if we go back to the days of the Savior, this same spirit existed. One day going along, one of the disciples said to the Master, "We found a man casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him because he walketh not with us." And Jesus answered, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us."

I can well remember that a sermon was seldom delivered wherein the Baptists were not held up to scorn, and the Methodists, on their part, returned the compliment with interest when it came their turn to vociferate.

Now, in the twentieth century, one might listen for a year to the Baptists and Methodists and never hear a word in denunciation of one another. Surely this is a great advance in the line of mutual forbearance, and more in sympathy with the attitude of the Master while on earth.

I can well remember when an uncle and my mother, my uncle a Methodist and my mother a Baptist (brother and sister), would get into an argument, and so heated would it become that my mother would shed tears; and afterwards when she related to our father the hardness of her brother's heart, he would exclaim, "I wish he would tackle me once, I'd fix him." Such an occurrence would hardly happen between brother and sister in these latter days.

My recollection of the old homestead in Fitchburg is very limited. About the only feature I do remember connected with that place of residence is as follows: In those days, the culinary department was the product of the fireplace with a big crane to hold the teakettle, and I remember one morning, as the teakettle had been taken from the crane and put right back of my mother's chair, that I climbed up on the back of the chair and when she arose the chair went over and I with it on to the teakettle. I was somewhat scalded, and I call to mind that father immediately killed the cat and placed the skin of the cat over the burn, which proved to be very effective.

13

CHAPTER II

The average boy, in his earlier adolescent stage, is more or less a nuisance about the home, and so becomes the object of much concern to his parents, especially to his mother, who, in the nature of things, is more cognizant of the shortcomings of the boy than the father. The boy, of course, is an immature man, and if he gets started aright is almost sure to come to something more and better than if he were allowed to follow his own bent. Not only the boy himself but his associates must be reckoned with as to the effect of untoward influences, and it often transpires that boys become a sort of law unto themselves. They have a standard of ethics that would be considered highly objectionable by their elders, especially as their superiors are without knowledge as to what is transpiring from day to day. Hence the associates of the lad become a source of anxiety to the parents, who are not let into the secrets of this close corporation that exists, and often the parents are entirely in the dark as to what their sons are engaged in during their off hours. "Boys will be boys," and the endeavor should be, so far as possible, to see that their surplus energy is exerted in the right direction.

14

It was about the year 1834 or 1835 that our family removed from Fitchburg to Big Flats, Chemung County, New York. I remember we passed through Troy, New York. It was then that I first saw white bread and I called it cake. Everything was rye and Indian-corn in those days at home. I also

remember that we were on a canal boat for a portion of the way on that journey. Beyond those two incidents I have no recollection.

My mother's brother, Henry Farwell, resided at Big Flats on a rented farm, a large one for that country. There was a small house adjoining their residence and we moved into that. Our uncle's family consisted of the following: Henry Farwell and his wife, Sally Farwell, to whom were born children, as follows: Jackson, Charles B., John V., Simeon, and Maria Louise. At this writing all have passed away, parents and children, with the exception of Maria Louise. She is a widow now, Mrs. E. W. Edson of Los Angeles, California, in this year of our Lord, 1911. Uncle Henry and his family were Methodists. Jackson Farwell, the eldest son, was a farmer. The second son, C. B. Farwell, was at one time United States Senator from Illinois.

Our father was not a farmer but during the residence at Big Flats he followed the occupation of chair-maker and painter. It was here at Big Flats that I, a boy of six or seven years of age, began to develop those early traits of character that were so unlovely and a constant source of anxiety to our parents. I remember one night, when they were absent at prayer-meeting, I had the curiosity to ascertain what kind of wood the house and furniture consisted of, so when they returned there was a notch in every piece of furniture and every door in the house. I have forgotten what the punishment meted out to me for this act was, but I deserved more than I got; there is no question about that.

Our uncle and mother had a sister named Mary Farwell. I remember she was termed an "old maid" by the two families, but she was afterwards married at our uncle's house to a man named Lane. She lived to be one hundred years old and died only a few years since at Upper Gloucester, Maine, where her daughter, Mrs. Estes, now resides.

Sister Mary and I began to attend school at Big Flats, and one morning Judson was allowed to go with us to school. The teacher was well acquainted with our family and when we entered school that morning Judson exclaimed, "Oh, Mis'er Kingsbury! I got a new frock made out of mother's old one." You can imagine the chagrin of my sister and me at this outburst of family confidences on the part of our younger brother. It was most humiliating, and before the whole school!

The little house in which we lived was over a 16 declivity, so that the cellar in the rear opened out from a lower point. It was at this back door that I had to do the churning once or twice a week, all alone, and the obstinacy of that cream to turn into butter has haunted me from that day to this. I would walk around that churn, first one way and then the other, and then I would go backwards; then I would count the movements of the dasher up to a hundred and often to one thousand—but no butter. Then I would pause to think of some other plan in order to keep up the procession. It was then and there that I would have entered into a solemn promise never to eat any more butter as long as I should live if only I could have been relieved from the eternal and long abiding circular work around that churn. But all things of a sublunary nature must come to an end, and my churning days were finally over.

While at Big Flats, I remember one Fourth of July Uncle Henry and his son John and myself crossed over Hawes Hill, so called, nine miles to Elmira, to celebrate. While on the way, John and I got into a controversy (he was about two years my senior) as to which was the heavier, a pound of lead or a pound of feathers. To my mind there was not the slightest doubt on the question. It was very palpable, from my standpoint, that a pound of lead must be the heavier, and so we argued back and forth on this most momentous question. He was getting the 17 best of the contest when my uncle came to my aid with a remark that the lead was undoubtedly the heavier and that settled the question beyond all peradventure and of course I won out on that proposition.

The day finally came when the two families began to turn their eyes westward for cheap land and a permanent home; so in 1837 my uncle made a trip to Illinois, on Rock River, one hundred miles west of Chicago, and bought a claim for \$900.00, and, returning home, commenced preparing for the journey to the great West the following year. The household goods were shipped by canal to Buffalo, thence around the Lakes to Chicago, thence by team to Rock River. And our families, with two or three wagons, took their departure for the “Land of Promise” in the summer of 1838 to Buffalo, thence by steamer to Detroit, thence across the state of Michigan by wagon, a long and sandy road and a hard one on the teams.

One day, when we halted to feed the horses, the natives came looking about to gratify their curiosity. My mother and my aunt generally rode together for company. They wore those long poke bonnets common in those days. A couple of natives came peering about and, looking up under the poke bonnets into my aunt's and mother's faces, remarked that it was very evident their husbands never married them for 18 their beauty, which, of course, was a true statement.

Finally, we turned the southern point of Lake Michigan and arrived in Chicago one day, late in the afternoon. It was necessary to cross the south branch of the Chicago River to get a camping ground on the west side. We crossed at a point which is now Randolph Street, and were ferried over with a rope ferry. At that time Chicago had about three thousand population and only about a half dozen houses on the west side of South Branch. We went a little way and camped on the Common. Chicago had an unenviable reputation for fever and ague and we got out of that town very early the next morning, and did not stand on the order of going, either, and pointed ourselves westward as rapidly as possible. If we had remained on that camping ground and preempted a moderate piece we might have become wealthy, but such was not our purpose; we thought ourselves fortunate in getting away as we did.

We arrived at our destination on Rock River, near Daysville, just before the cold weather set in. It was after dark and we found the log shanty on the premises occupied by a lot of razor-back hogs, as they were called. After they had been routed out by the aid of a hoe, we prepared for the night as best we could. My mother and aunt slept in the wagon that night and devoted themselves to tears, bewailing the hard fate after the long journey from York 19 State to Northern Illinois. It is said a woman's tears will disarm a man quicker than all other procedures. The next morning, seeing the condition of the two mothers, my uncle said they would hitch up the teams and go straight back to New York with all possible speed; but Aunt Nancy, as we called her, said, "No! we have come here and we are going to stay," and stay we did. It was the beginning of winter and all hands set about the necessary preparations for making things comfortable. My uncle put up a log house a short distance from the shanty and my father set about putting up another adjoining the shanty where we landed.

Those were days of small things. This claim, bought the year previous, was only a claim and the land yet had to be preempted and bought in at the government sale at \$1.25 an acre. Preemption meant occupation by residence, a house put up on each 160 acres and occupied, proof to be forthcoming at the general sale, all of which was duly complied with and carried out according to law, after which taxes were levied. It was with the greatest difficulty that enough ready cash could be collected to liquidate taxes. Money was scarce; farmers were obliged to haul their wheat to Chicago, one hundred miles, to get the funds necessary, and those who had no wheat were obliged to haul the wheat of others to market at Chicago, for which they received twenty-five cents 20 per bushel from the storekeepers who had taken the wheat in payment for goods and groceries. Forty bushels was a load, and it required seven days to go and come, the men bearing their own expenses, so that, with much economy, the teamster with good luck might get back with possibly five dollars in his pocket for seven days' work, himself and team, and the taxes had to be liquidated. It is said that there is nothing surer than death and taxes.

I remember, having taken a load of our own wheat to the Chicago market, I was to bring home a little lumber and some other small necessities. On my return father asked me, "How much money have you got?" I answered, "\$9.00," and he said, "You have done well." But I did not always get that sort of encomium, by any means.

My business in the winter was to chop the stove wood, and I call to mind one severe Saturday, having the fuel for Sunday to provide for, I found a bunch of rotten wood frozen hard. It chopped so easy and nice, although frozen solid, that I provided a good supply, but, lo and behold! on Sunday morning it would not burn. Then and there I received from my father his favorite denunciation on such occasions, "You blockhead!" Remembering the Sabbath day, that was all that was indulged in, and I thought I got off pretty cheaply, especially as he was obliged to tackle some sound wood to keep the 21 fire going. Another of my duties in those days was to provide at night what was called "a raking-up stick," a short bit of solid wood to bury in the hot ashes so we would have fire in the morning. This was before the days of matches, and I call to mind that repeated question of my father, "Stephen, have you got the 'Raking-Up Stick'?" "Yes, Sir." For if the fire went out over

night it signified I must go one-half mile to the neighbor's to replenish. For tea and coffee, sage tea was our substitute. My recollection is to this day that I became quite fond of it, although I do not remember to have hankered for it in after life.

My father was quite strict in a way, and on every Sunday he would require my sister and younger brother to read and commit to memory out of the school reader^{*} the eloquence of former worthies as portrayed under different names. I recollect only one heading, which reads something as follows: "My name is Norvell. On the Grampian Hills my father feeds his flocks, a frugal swain," etc. The other efforts I do not remember. My brother Judson may recollect some of them, possibly. Father did not always catch me on Sunday afternoons. Possibly I was away somewhere and he did not know the exact spot where I was to be found.

This reader is still in existence. Its title page is gone and it shows excessive wear. It was evidently an important book in the scanty library of my grandfather.—J. S. B.

22

After the log houses were completed, the two families were quite comfortable, and the time came when we were full-fledged citizens of the "Sucker State," to win or lose as our fortunes might determine.

But our mother passed away at Daysville, Illinois, a young woman. She was a victim of malpractice, evidently. It was the custom in those days in some families, before moving to Illinois, to be bled once a year, and my mother had subjected herself to that inhuman practice, but when we had transferred to the West that practice was very rightfully omitted. She was taken ill suddenly and died. I have attributed her early death to this practice of being bled at stated seasons. She was a godly woman and strong in the faith of which she was possessed; a woman of prayer, and many a time I have heard her voice in her room Sunday afternoons, and the burden of the prayer was for myself, being the child for which she was most concerned, not at all tractable and giving both father and mother great concern as to what my future might be, with fears for the worst.

She had a strong friend in the person of a young bride, who came from the East and settled in the town called Grand de Tour, six or eight miles distant. She was a Mrs. Aiken, and in after years

always went by the name of “Aunt Lizzie Aiken.” She was at the funeral of my mother and made a vest for me to wear at the funeral. She passed out of my mind until long years after. Some time in the eighties we had a denominational meeting in the Second Church at St. Louis, and I was introduced to her. “Stephen Bemis, did you say?” “Yes.” “And did you once live on Rock River?” “Yes.” “Well, I was at your mother's funeral and made a vest for you to wear at the time.”*

Miss Aiken, afterwards Mrs. Roe, some time during the latter part of her life, wrote a book, the title page of which reads, as follows:

Recollections of Frontier Life

by

Elizabeth A. Roe,

wife of the late Dr. John Roe of

Rock River Memory.

Rockford, Illinois

1885

A copy of this book I found in a secondhand book store many years ago. It was placed in the bookshelves under the designation, “Early Americana.”—J. S. B.

From that day until her death I always kept in touch with her. She belonged to the Second Church of Chicago. A remarkable woman! Her husband had passed away long years before, and, if I mistake not, while she still lived in Illinois. She was with our army in the Civil War, ministering to the sick and wounded, and afterwards went to Chicago and joined the Second Church, where she was long revered for her faithfulness to the Master. In fact, the Second Church of that city saw to it that she wanted 24 for nothing during her life. The last time I called upon her after the death of my

wife, and her own death approaching, I asked her if she expected to know Mrs. Bemis on the other side, and she made the quick reply, "Do you think that I shall know less over there than I know here?" So I am persuaded that she has met not only the last Mrs. Bemis, my wife, but the former one, my mother, her friend and companion of long ago. She took great interest in the cadets, and she told me that on a parade, not long before, a Company of five hundred came to serenade her and she called every one of them by name. This I thought was most remarkable.

The gaining of a livelihood from the soil in those early days was a most strenuous undertaking. Agricultural implements were few and hard to obtain. But corn was easy to raise and corn made pork, and with potatoes and garden truck, which was plentiful, the families were quite independent, in a way, though there was very little money passing.

After the death of my mother father married again and raised a new family. The lady was Mrs. Neville, a widow, having one son, who is still living, so far as I know, and resides in Ogle County, Illinois.

There came a time when my uncle and father each built a brick house. The neighbors combined together and made the brick and I worked one or two summers in the brick-yard. This house was located 25 one-half mile or so from the log house, to the eastward.

There was no Baptist Church nearer than Rockford, say twelve or fourteen miles above Oregon. Father used to go up there to church occasionally. But there was a Methodist Church at Lighthouse Point, one-half mile or so from the new location, and I was in the habit of attending there, especially as there were some girls in the congregation that I rather took a liking to, and they lived near the church. One Sunday evening, I had in mind to escort the two sisters to the services, and I sat talking to the father and mother, waiting for their appearance, but, lo and behold! they did not appear, and it proved they threw their hats out of the window and left me in the lurch. All the satisfaction that I ever got out of that episode was I was afterwards told that their parents severely reprimanded them, and that closed my affinity with Methodist girls, especially as they both had red hair and were not at all handsome according to my later ideas regarding beauty.

CHAPTER III

The day came when J. V. Farwell and his brother Charles B. left the homestead to go to Chicago and “grow up with the country.” I have now forgotten whether C. B., who worked at his profession while on Rock River, that of surveyor, or J. V. went first to the city on the lake, but they both left their home. J. V. took a position in a retail store at \$8.00 per month and C. B., who was possessed with an inclination for political life, went first into an insurance office; thence into the County Clerk's office; thence into George Smith's bank; and finally was elected to the United States Senate, where he served one term.

J. V., after serving his apprenticeship in the retail house, went into the store of Hamlin & Day, dry goods and groceries. Subsequently he allied himself with the house of Cooley, Wadsworth & Co., wholesale dry goods. Later the firm was merged into the house of Cooley, Farwell & Co., which firm became “J. V. Farwell & Co., Wholesale Dry Goods,” and took the position of the first house in the trade. Both Field and Leiter held clerkships in the Farwell house, and later established the firm of Field, Leiter & Co., in the same line, wholesale dry goods.

27

J. V. Farwell was prominent in the Y.M.C.A. circles in promoting the interests of the Association, and also took an active part in bringing D. L. Moody to the front as an evangelistic worker. He was also one of the foremost in the process of bringing Chicago into a city of the first magnitude.

C. B. Farwell, after finishing his political career and returning to private life, joined his brother in the dry goods business under the style of “J. V. Farwell Dry Goods Co.,” which still exists and is managed by the sons of J. V. Farwell. Simeon Farwell was also a member of the firm up to the time of his death in 1911.

It was not long after these two cousins left their home for Chicago that I also followed suit. It must have been about 1846. I went to school and lived in the home of Samuel Hoard and did chores for my keep for a year or two. Unlike my cousins, I was not fitted for anything; they had quality and

adaptation for almost any position that came to their hand. While living at Samuel Hoard's, I was commissioned to go into one of the most foolhardy missions that could be imagined. Mr. Hoard, in addition to his interests in the jewelry business, was a seller of land warrants, and he had an agent at Dixon, Illinois, a town ten or a dozen miles from our home on Rock River. It will be remembered that in those days there was no way of transmitting silver except by 28 private conveyance and there were no banks through which to do business, so Mr. Hoard sent me out on horseback, with a pair of saddle-bags, to bring three thousand dollars in silver from Dixon. The country was infested with what were termed "black-legs," who were up to all sorts of mischief and thieving, and the very improbable theory of a boy traveling one hundred miles on horseback with three thousand dollars in silver, astride an old gray mare, was all that saved me from harm.

In going out, I stopped at my uncle's over night before going to Dixon, and the family were in mortal terror at the danger I was incurring, and all sorts of calamities were forecasted to befall me. But the following morning I went down to Dixon, and in the evening, just at twilight, I got on the mare and retired to a quiet spot in the town and the saddle bags were thrown over the saddle and I rode to my uncle's over night and arrived safely with my treasure. Then they were more frightened than ever at the great risk before me, of going to Chicago with that heavy load of silver. The next morning I commenced my journey eastward and made the house of some friends at a place called South Grove, and there was a panic in that household when I told them the facts in the case. This was the first night of my ride eastward. The next night was spent at St. Charles, at a tavern, with many strangers. This was night number two on 29 my way. The next day I arrived to within eight miles of Chicago, and I put up again at a tavern. In the morning I arose early, before breakfast time, and pushed on to Chicago. I arrived in the city about nine o'clock in a snowstorm and went straight to the jewelry store and unloaded my dangerous cargo. When Mr. Hoard came home to lunch that day he said, "Stephen, I counted that money and found it all right to a cent." After all these years have passed since that day, at every recurrence in thought of that trip, I have been panic-stricken in greater measure than when I was passing through the actual experience, and I have often wondered at my escape from the consequences that might very easily have occurred. A kind Providence was evidently roundabout my pathway.

It was after this, possibly a year or so, that I stopped attending school and obtained some odd jobs at the store of Hamlin & Day, where J. V. Farwell was employed, and I then obtained a job of buying wheat from wagons for a man named Orrington Lunt, who had a warehouse. After that I got a position in the forwarding and commission house of Thomas Hale. At that time all goods from the East to the West, heavy freight, came around the Great Lakes by sail or propeller. My work involved the checking of goods, iron, stoves, boxes, crates, and other merchandise from the boats to the dock, and delivering to the 30 city firms, and the forwarding, mostly by team, of such consignments as were destined to firms throughout the West.

I was in Chicago when the first railroad ran out to Oakridge, eight miles, over a strap rail. The story is told of a fishmonger who came to Chicago at a very early day, and had followed his vocation assiduously and never had a vacation. When this excursion was had to Oakridge, he made up his mind to take his long hoped for outing, so he got aboard the train and after going a mile or two out into the pure air of the country, he fainted. But an acquaintance happened to be aboard who recognized him and knew his occupation; he suggested the application of a dead fish to his nose, and this having the desired effect he came to all right.

While I still lived with Mr. Hoard, who was a Baptist deacon, Elder Jacob Knapp, the Baptist evangelist, came to Chicago and held a series of meetings. He was contemporaneous with Peter Cartwright, the Methodist evangelist. Both of these men were pioneers and of eccentric character and well adapted to present the claims of the Gospel to the people of the West in that early day. They were both of the aggressive type and might be rightly termed "fighters." They were not the kind to be intimidated in whatever they undertook. Hell was Hell to them, and only to be avoided by a quick acceptance of the truths of the Gospel, and sinners were urged not to stand on the order of laying hold of the hope that was set before them, lest the time might come when it would be too late. They were both on the fighting line and well equipped to present the pioneer with the necessity of making his peace with God and to do it quickly. Their contention was argument and blow, and the blow generally came first.

It is related of the Reverend Cartwright that when visiting New York City at one time he put up at the old Astor House, of early fame. As he was assigned to a room on the top floor he called for a hatchet. When he was asked what he wanted with such an article in the hotel, he said he wanted "to blaze his way downstairs." It is probable that some other method was adopted and the blazing process omitted.

Among the Baptists the clergy were called "Elders" in those days. When Elder Jacob Knapp came to Chicago he opened up without delay on the Universalists at a protracted meeting. They were particularly objectionable to the good Elder and inclined to talk back at him. Then the fire would fly at these interruptions of the sermon, for the Universalists did not hesitate to interrupt the Elder in his discourses right in open meeting. The Elder's horror of the Universalists was such that nothing in his vocabulary was too strong to express the depths of 32 woe into which a man of such belief would be plunged on his exit from this world, and there he was destined to abide throughout Eternity. This strong antagonism to the Universalists was so pronounced in the Elder's sermons that a man by the name of Jackson would get up in the congregation and defy the good Elder, talk back in other words.

It so happened that during the course of this revival a new hotel, called the Hamilton House, was to be opened with a ball, and of course dancing, etc., would be indulged in. Out of pure mischief the getters-up of this ball sent the Elder an invitation to attend, and during the early session of one of the meetings the Elder made this announcement: "I have an invitation to a ball and I always attend balls whenever asked to do so; so this evening Brother So-and-so- will lead the meeting while Brother Walker and I go to the ball." When he arrived at the hotel the first set had begun dancing. He dropped on his knees and began to pray. The dancers scattered in every direction, but the little fiddler, a hunchback, kept on fiddling. The stentorian voice of the Elder, however, was sufficient to drown the fiddler's efforts, and the result was that the ball was broken up and the Elder and Brother Walker returned to the church and made their report. He once said in one of his sermons, "When I come to a church to hold meetings and I find a deacon that has got horns on him, then 33 I take God Almighty's broadax and knock them horns off."

It was during these meetings that I made a profession of religion, and with a large number of others was baptized in Lake Michigan, at the foot of Madison or Monroe Street. There were no baptistries in those days, and the open water was the only method by which immersion could be accomplished. Of course the rabble was in attendance and as there were no police there to keep the peace I remember that missiles, such as old boots, decayed eggs, and the like, were thrown at the Elder and candidates promiscuously—but none of them hit me. The Universalists on the bank also were vociferating at the tops of their voices in derision at the proceedings.

The class of preachers represented by these two men, Reverend Cartwright and Elder Jacob Knapp, has passed on in these latter days. An occasional buffoon holds forth the Gospel as he sees it, but the fighting clergy has given way to the more peaceful presentation of the Truth. And I sometimes wonder which method is the more effective, these extreme terrors of the Law, or the more placid presentation of the Truth in these latter days: Heaven and Hell, or Life Beyond, or Hades? Which?

In those days, in the Forties, the Methodists were much the strongest in Illinois, and probably are still so, and the vacations of the itinerant ministers were 34 often availed of to visit the homes of their childhood in the East. The best and cheapest mode of traveling was first to go to Chicago, and take a steamboat around the Great Lakes, landing at Buffalo. The story is told of a Methodist preacher who, desiring to visit his old home, embarked from Chicago on the steamboat “Nile,” under Captain Blake. During that passage of a week or more an awful electrical storm came up in the night. So severe was the wind and the rain, the thunder and lightning, that fears were entertained of all going to the bottom. Captain Blake was a very profane man, and during the height of the storm he paced up and down the deck uttering the most furious imprecations or, in other words, “swearing a blue streak.” The good minister was so horrified that he made the request of the Captain to call a halt of those fearful oaths. The Captain gave a grim assent to the preacher's request. In the meantime, the storm increased in violence to such an extent that the minister concluded that things were going from bad to worse and became greatly distressed. The Captain had become so calm, with not a word out of his mouth, that the preacher thought he must

act or all would go to the bottom, so he went up and laying his hand on the Captain's shoulder said, "I don't know, Captain, but perhaps you had better resume your regular habits."

35

CHAPTER IV

Chicago in the 1840's was a city not at all attractive to live in; it lay so low, with drainage very imperfect and the grades not established. Every man built his store or his house according to his own ideas, and the result was the board-walks were up hill and down and a level walk for any distance was unknown. Lake Street, which was the principal thoroughfare in those days, was planked, as I remember; the other streets were not even planked. South Water and Market Streets were practically impassable in the spring when the frost came out. I have been along those streets under these conditions: At one point a fence rail would be seen sticking out of the mud and labeled, "No bottom." Along a little farther one could see an inverted umbrella sticking a little way above the surrounding bottomless pit, and labeled, "Man lost here." The theory was that a man in an endeavor to get through failed in the attempt and pulled his umbrella in after him until he had to let go. Subsequently the city was raised several feet out of the mud and grades were established. "Fort Dearborn" was the first name given this locality on the bank of the sluggish river near the lake.

It was while I was still at Deacon Hoard's that I missed becoming wealthy. In looking about for some permanent occupation, I hit upon the seemingly simple proposition of raising chickens or, in other words, establishing a hennery. I consulted with C. B. Farwell as to the feasibility and prospective success of such an enterprise. About a half a mile, or such a matter, southeast of the courthouse lived a widow whose name was Mrs. Clark. She had five acres of ground and a small house on it, which she proposed to sell at \$500.00 an acre, making a total of \$2,500.00 for the investment. C. B. Farwell indicated he would make the purchase, so I bought a book on the science of raising chickens, etc., with a full expectation of going into this industry. But \$2500.00 was a tremendous sum of money in those days, easier to talk about than to realize, and the project fell through. If C. B. Farwell had raised the funds and started me in on this business, the probability

is that it would have proved a failure, but if the real estate had been held, the thing would have been the making of two wealthy individuals. In after years, when I would meet C. B. Farwell occasionally, we had our jokes on the “might-have-beens.” I would not like to make an estimate as to the value of that five acres 37 today in the heart of Chicago as it now lies; but one thing is certain, it would have resulted in a greater financial benefit to him than all his subsequent savings amounted to in his life time, and he was accounted a wealthy man when he passed away a few years since. But what is the use of moralizing over what was a trivial matter in the long ago! It was not to be; so we drop it.

I was in the habit of visiting the old home one hundred miles west once every year or two during the period when in Chicago, but there were no attractions for me at the homestead. I had had a taste of city life and longed to taste more. I must have been with Thomas Hale some two or three years on a salary of \$400.00 a year. After the closing of navigation there was not much to do, so Mr. Hale did a little in stone-ware, white fish, grind-stones, and such, and he used to get occasionally a consignment of hemp from St. Louis. It was slim picking during the winter solstice. The business of each year was practically crowded into the open navigation months. I remember one spring I was sent to Green Bay on a little steamer, owned by Captain Bowen, with a lot of dressed beef for Mr. Clyburn, an old resident in the packing line, and I returned on the same steamer with the proceeds. I think this must have been about the year 1850. At that time Jenny Lind came to Chicago to give concerts, and I wrote to her for her 38 autograph,^{*} which she sent to me by mail. She was under contract with Mr. Barnum to give a certain number of concerts for a stipulated sum and her series of these concerts was a great success financially, for she created a great furor in America. So far as I know she is still living.

This autograph was given to me by my father many years ago. He had placed it in a daguerreotype frame. It was written on the stationery of Miss Lind. So far as I know this was the only excursion father ever made into the collecting game.—J. S. B.

I was getting along towards man's estate, and in church circles I became acquainted with a young girl, Miss Hannah Jane Thomas. She was an orphan and lived with her uncle, Mr. E. M. Doolittle, who was a shipbuilder and employed a large number of men. Of course, I often frequented her

home and became well acquainted with the family. Mrs. Doolittle was the sister of Miss Thomas's mother, so that she was in a sense an adopted child. She was about seven years younger than I. She was a Baptist and had quite a good many admirers for one so young. I remember Mr. Doolittle made up his payroll weekly, and I used to go to their house to assist him, and so I became quite a privileged character in the home. Both Mr. and Mrs. Doolittle apparently believed in me more than in any other of her admirers. I speak thus definitely for this girl subsequently became Mrs. Bemis.

But I began to be restless and was not satisfied, 39 looking about for new openings. In truth, my relations all said that I would stick to nothing, and this was true. They quoted the rolling stone that gathers no moss and all that. Good advice it was, but I did not profit by it. Some time in the latter part of '51 I formed the acquaintance of a young man, Mr. P. S. Coolidge, who was going to California and wished me to accompany him. But more of this anon.

The only time that I ever saw Abraham Lincoln was on the trial of the Rock Island bridge case. It was claimed by the steamboat people that the piers were so located with reference to the currents that they became a menace to navigation. The case was tried, as I remember, in the Federal Court, Judge Morris presiding, and one morning I visited the courtroom in the early session. Mr. Lincoln was walking about the room while the Jury was examining the photographs of the piers, showing their relative position in the currents. Finally, Mr. Lincoln halted in front of the Judge and said, "Please, your Honor, when the jury gets through looking at these pictures, we would like to proceed with this case."

I could wish the next fifteen years of my life might be exempt from any chronicling whatever. The "rolling stone," free from moss, was gradually exemplified in those years from 1852 to 1867. My cousins were gaining fame and fortune while I retrograded, and as I look back upon those years, at first 40 glance, they seem wasted, especially so as regards the financial features attaching to them. Another view would possibly show a somewhat more optimistic picture. I was learning lessons which, possibly, I could not have acquired in any other way. But the spirit of roving was still strong within me and I was not able to resist it, and so the gruesome tale must be told.

In January, 1852, Mr. Coolidge and I departed for California via New York. At that time the rail had not quite reached Chicago, so we took sleighs to a station possibly twenty miles or more away and started for New York. While we were detained in New York City awaiting passage, which I believe was about one month, with many others, we had the opportunity of seeing that metropolis and some of the noted men of the day, for instance, Commodore Vanderbilt, a slender man in physique, always wearing a white necktie. He was a great lover of horses and it was his pride to drive the best trotting horses America afforded. In those days he would allow no one to pass him while on the road. Robert Bonner was another noted horseman. Mr. Bonner was the owner of the paper called the "New York Ledger," with a very large circulation for those days. Daniel Webster visited the city while we were there and he held a levee one day which we attended. He was a large man with heavy eye-brows and deep-seated 41 eyes. We were much impressed with the dignity and masterfulness of the man. He had the softest hands, softer than any woman's.

On arriving at New York we found the steamers all full for weeks and weeks ahead, so we purchased tickets to go around Cape Horn, but later we exchanged those tickets to go via the Nicaragua Route, Vanderbilt's Line. The steamers were not equally balanced on the Atlantic and the Pacific. The steamer "Prometheus," on this side, was a small one. We took tickets to Greytown, the Atlantic port, and expected to lay over two weeks on the Isthmus to meet the larger boat which came down from San Francisco once a fortnight. The sailing dates on these steamers from San Francisco were two steamers a month. We reached the Nicaragua Isthmus all right and took our way leisurely over so that we might sail with the passengers who were to leave a fortnight later.

We saw much that was interesting as well as dangerous on the Isthmus. First, we ascended the San Juan River in a small boat, for the river was full of rapids, and we were obliged frequently to land and walk by the rapids while the boat was pulled up the stream until placid waters would allow us to go on board again. The atmosphere, especially at night, was so thick one could almost cut it with a knife. Impenetrable swamps were frequent, inhabited by 42 all sorts of reptiles, etc., and the atmosphere was laden with the miasma so that one could taste it. It was going up that river that we laid in a store of malaria that affected many a little later on. Finally we arrived at Lake Nicaragua, a

sheet of water possibly forty miles in length, and a steamer was in readiness to bear us on our way. When landing from the steamer only twelve miles of land, which was soon traversed, separated us from the great Pacific.

When we finally arrived at San Juan del Sur, the Pacific Port, to our consternation we found the large steamer coming down from Golden Gate was burned, so there were about seven hundred passengers, with no means of conveyance. The company sent down an old boat called the "Monumental City," but this boat could only take the passengers that were ticketed through two weeks after us, so that those two hundred or more who had been on the Isthmus for a fortnight waiting were left out. Finally we were offered passage on a brig as a substitute, which we accepted.

My recollection is that we were about forty days on that Isthmus and it was at San Juan del Sur many were taken ill, and some critically ill, among whom was my partner, Mr. Coolidge, and one can imagine what it was to be sick under such conditions with fever and flux. However, I did the best I could for him, but he was hard to manage, determined to eat everything, which would have carried him off if he had been allowed his way. He often said afterwards but for me he would have succumbed. However, when we got to sea he recovered rapidly.

By this time passengers via the "Daniel Webster," sailing a fortnight after us, began to arrive, so there were seven hundred men and women stranded on that inhospitable shore. Plantains fried in butter were the favorite food for those who were well. The butter had to be obtained in bottles and it was beyond treating with a knife. Those who were ill had to subsist on rice water, which became both food and drink, and my partner was among the number. He wanted water to drink and fried plantains to eat. Every day I had to go over the hills, one-half mile or so, to obtain water. I brought the water in bottles slung over my shoulder, the bottles wrapped in cloths, which had the effect to cool the water somewhat. At night my partner would ask what I was going to give him for supper, and I would immediately invariably reply, "Some rice water," and then he would break out in lamentation and woe, "Was there ever anyone treated so badly as I?" That regime was all that saved his life, and he realized it when he got up again. It was under such circumstances that human nature showed itself in anything but attractive qualities; every man for himself, and those who had families

were equally needy and 44 restless. But the day finally came when our company boarded the brig and put out to sea and from that time my friend began to improve, and with that improvement he became most voracious for food, no matter what it was, so it was something to eat. My recollection is that only one man died of all the passengers on that brig during our voyage. He was buried in the usual way at sea, laid on a plank and sand bags tied to the corpse and slid off into the sea. And the usual ritual was read over his remains. The duty fell on me, as I remember. But we were bound for port and the brig kept moving.

The great difficulty in sailing up to San Francisco in those days was the fact that we were almost sure to be becalmed and lie for days and days on a glassy sea, and as water casks were very scarce things there was danger of perishing from thirst. But this brig on which we embarked had a good supply of water casks, so the Captain stood out one thousand miles to the south of San Juan del Sur to get into the trade winds. Without the water casks in sufficient number, this would not have been feasible. When we struck the trade winds the ship was tacked about and we sailed thirty days without changing a sail before a good wind, and arrived in San Francisco the day after the old tub "Monumental City" got in. We learned later that fourteen percent of those seven hundred passengers died between New York and 45 San Francisco. The detention on the Isthmus and the privations on that old steamer were responsible for this loss of life.

Perhaps some of my friends may be curious to know what our food consisted of during that sail from the Isthmus to San Francisco. In the first place we had what were called "Acapulco Biscuits," which could not be broken or eaten except with the aid of some tool. Fortunately we had a pair of pincers, with which we broke off a bit at a time, and then soaked it in tea. Then we had "duff" once a week. This duff was made of flour which was inhabited; good sized mulligrubs were frequent, but we did not mind them very much. Then we had beans, and every bean sheltered a young animal. So you can imagine that in order to appease hunger we were obliged to sacrifice life. The Acapulco biscuits were too tough to be penetrated by any outside influence, so we were immune on that article of diet.

A sea voyage, such a one as we were confronted with, while monotonous in a large degree, was not without its lessons, and there was even a certain amount of pleasurable endurance attending it. Cut off from the outside world, having no connection with any being, we were a little world unto ourselves. Much of our time was spent in anticipation of getting something to eat on our arrival at the "Golden Gate," and the preferences that our 46 appetites might crave, after being deprived so long of any opportunity of gratifying our desire for food, were the principal topics of our conversation. Nothing very elevating, certainly, in thinking of but little aside from something to satisfy the longings of appetite. We are cast in a human mold and our aspirations often arise no higher than our environments; and wherein we are most affected there we congregate, and dwell upon such subjects as appeal to us through some lack of the thing desired. It was then and there that we reveled in the prospect of satisfying our bodily wants, and the anticipation of gratifying those wants became our daily thought and discourse.

In those days, the eagerness to get to California, by hook or crook, by land or sea, or any other old way, was the uppermost topic of conversation by the countless number of aspirants fired with the desire to participate in this egress from the east and the middle west to the shores of that land bordering the Pacific. Every mode of getting there, by land and sea, was brought into requisition and availed of by very many. There were many successes among the mountains of failures; many of those who found the "dust," on their return home, carried their treasure in their belts about their waists; some would exchange their "dust" for coin in San Francisco; very few would trust the banks by taking exchange for 47 their findings; all wanted to feel the substance and carry the load. So it happened that when the steamer "Golden Gate" departed from San Francisco to the Isthmus the returning miners were well loaded with their weighty treasure. The "Golden Gate" was a large boat and very popular; hence she ran full both to and from San Francisco. On this trip down she had her full quota of successful miners, returning home loaded with their golden treasure, some in hand satchels, some in belts about their waists. A fire occurred about fourteen miles from the Mexican shore, and the steamer headed for land, and then it was the treasure lost its value and became a burden. Coin and dust were scattered about the decks. "Who wants gold?" "Here is a plenty." But nobody wanted it; it went begging. Gold would not buoy them up in the ocean depths,

in fact, it would assist in carrying the owner to the bottom of the sea. A terrifying panic ensued; the treasure was cast hither and yon, with none "So poor to do it reverence." "Who wants gold?" "Help yourselves!" Nobody wanted it. But there was a large negro on board and he had an insatiable desire to die wealthy. It had been a mania with him for long years, so he grabbed two satchels filled with treasure, one in each hand, and jumped overboard and anchored himself beside the ship and is there yet unless the fishes have devoured him. In any event, the two hand bags lie in the depths of the 48 sea. The fishes had no use for gold, but the negro died wealthy and the dream of his life was realized.

Those "who go down to the sea in ships and do business in the great waters" are a class unto themselves. There is a charm in the isolation even of being apart and separate from the world and land. The ever-moving waters are fascinating and alluring to the sailor, and he learns to despise the land-lubber, and considers himself vastly superior to those who live and do business on the land and have never come in contact with the mighty deep, either in peace or war. Some of the most thrilling struggles known in history have been fought out on the sea, and those nations who have cultivated naval contests stand today in the forefront of prominence and power. The art of war has, as it were, centered upon the restless deep. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts."

The day came when the little brig passed through the "Golden Gate" with colors flying, and Frisco with its seven hills loomed up before us. Then we learned that the old "Monumental City" preceded us by only one day. What a motley mass was there congregated from all parts of the world! Every nation, tongue, and kindred were represented. Law and order were unknown. The only fear of wrongdoers was the "Vigilance Committee," and that became a wholesome fear, for there was no halting the 49 demands of justice in those days, and to hang a culprit before breakfast was thought nothing of. The gambling houses were places of resort every night, and the roulette tables in full swing, with tables having piles of silver and gold to tempt the unwary, were in plain view. Bedlam reigned supreme. Guns and pistols were monitors of day and night.

It was a gala day every fortnight when the steamer came in, for every one expected letters from home, or friends coming to the land of gold. When the steamer was sighted and the flag hoisted

on Telegraph Hill, which overlooked the city, and the canons boomed, then it was that all the inhabitants would rush to the docks to get sight of a possible friend or relative. "Steamer Day" was a day of tumult and excitement, and when the mail was distributed the line formed, frequently two blocks long, each one going for his letters and waiting for news from home, and very few were disappointed in this regard. Everyone had to go to the general delivery for his letters and all were glad to stand in line for hours to get one letter from home. The sad man of those "Steamer Days" was the one who was not remembered by those he had left behind; "no letter" was like a blow in the face and he would not be comforted.

Our appetites on landing were fully developed, and the anticipations indulged in while on sea were 50 fully realized. We never could get enough, and three meals per day were separated by such long hours that we wondered if forty-eight hours in lieu of twenty-four were not a regular day in that far off land. After gorging ourselves for a week or more, we began to look about for something to do but there were a dozen applicants and more for every vacancy. I saw young men, highly educated, fitted to fill any position in finance or profession, going about seeking jobs which they would have scorned at home, ready to do anything to keep body and soul together. In vain did they roam from day to day to find something, but without success. My partner departed for the mines, but I remained in the city. I could find nothing to do, but had a friend in the shipping business, and made my home on one of his vessels for a while. As I look back on the past days of hurly burly excitement and restlessness which prevailed among those who had undergone these hardships for the sake of the gold that glitters, to come into possession of it, I am forcibly reminded that man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, and that there is something more lofty beyond the turmoils of this life to strive for, the wealth that fadeth not away. But I was not above my fellows in those days of inexperience and rashness.

There were hundreds of episodes in those journeys by sea, many pathetic, some laughable. I relate two 51 of these episodes as I remember them. One passenger at breakfast was not exactly suited with his morning coffee. He called to the waiter, saying, "If this is coffee, bring me tea, and if it is tea, bring me coffee." Any change he thought would be for the better. At another time a passenger went to the purser and asked him for a bed on which to lie. The purser asked him where he had been

sleeping during the early part of the voyage and he replied he had been sleeping on top of a sick man, but the man was better and would not stand for it any longer!

We had now arrived at that far-off shore and the future was before us, and we must render an account thereof, even though the story becomes humiliating, clearly showing that the writer was not above his fellows; we were all in the same box, all were human and more or less inexperienced.

52

CHAPTER V

My partner, Mr. P.S. Coolidge, did not remain long in the mines but went to Mission Valley, thirty miles or so from San Francisco, and engaged with a ranchman, where he remained until returning to the States. For my part, I found nothing to do for some little time. I had an opportunity to go to Australia as super-cargo on my friend's ship, but finally declined and went to work as waiter in Samuel Longley's restaurant on Clay Street at \$75.00 per month. At the end of each month there was paid to me a "slug," so called (\$50.00), a twenty-dollar gold piece and a five-dollar gold piece. The work was not pleasing but was the best that I could obtain. I did not like it. You have doubtless read the fable of the farmer's clock. After doing service for many years, the pendulum, swinging backwards and forwards, to and fro, day in and day out, year after year, went on a strike and refused to go, the work became so monotonous. There appeared no future in store for this swinging pendulum. The other parts of the clock remonstrated, and voted to keep on, but the pendulum was obstinate and would not budge. Finally the 53 argument was brought to bear something in this wise: "You, the pendulum, have only one swing to make at each moment, no additional duty to perform, for each moment brings only the service of that moment and there are no other responsibilities attaching. Why not continue to fill out the measure of your days in the performance of honest work? Come, now, let us start up and renew our labors. The farmer expects us to keep the proper time." Finally, as the story goes, the pendulum began to swing at its usual pace, and the running of the clock was resumed. In the morning the farmer found that the old clock had lost half an hour in the night. After reading that fable, I reasoned something in the same line: Every moment brought with

it only one duty to perform; I did not have to crowd into that one moment the duty attaching to the next. So, on the whole, I became resigned to my work and somewhat encouraged.

It was in the fall of 1852, while in California, that I cast my first vote for President, for General Scott, who was defeated by Franklin Pierce. And the query after the election passed was, "We all know Franklin Pierce, but who is General Scott?"

But I was not to escape the effects of those forty days on the Isthmus. The time for a reckoning came, and I was taken ill with the Isthmus aftermath. Fortunately no fever accompanied. Owing to proper medication I did not have a long siege and when I 54 recovered I was a new man in all respects. My tastes changed and I became fond of vegetables, soups, and all sorts of fruits. In fact, what I now craved was directly the reverse of my previous likings. I have said in my haste that those years were lost to me, but in the light of my later experience those years proved my salvation, and I attribute the robustness of constitution that adhered to my physical frame in later years to the great change that came to me after passing through that ordeal, so that I can now say positively those years were not lost but were years of great gain, owing to the physical regeneration which I experienced in the process. My cousins have passed on to the other shore and I am still here in health and strength. Who shall say that this time passed for naught? I have had and am having my remuneration in consequence of what I passed through.

After a time, Mr. Coolidge paid a visit to the city and persuaded me to accompany him to the ranch, where I remained for some months, but finally went back to my restaurant life. But neither he nor I were satisfied. We had longings to return home, so in the spring of 1854 we took passage via the Panama Isthmus to New York and arrived safely. I went back to the house of Thomas Hale, Commission Merchants; my brother, J. M. Bemis, was employed there.

On the 31st day of May, 1854, I was united in 55 marriage to Miss Thomas, the girl I had left behind. We commenced housekeeping in a very modest way, and we remained in Chicago until the following year. But the rolling stone idea was still pursuing me, and Mr. Coolidge and I rented a farm for five years, near Sycamore, DeKalb County, Illinois, and we engaged in farming and

stock raising until the spring of 1860. It was while living there that I renewed my allegiance to the Master. I had grown cold and indifferent in those previous years, and neglected my religious duties, and Mrs. Bemis and I joined the little Baptist Church at Sycamore. Two daughters were born to us while living there, Fanny Ann, now Mrs. Chester Simmons of Minneapolis, and Miriam Farwell, now Mrs. Alonzo Hull, residing at Coronado, California.

Early in the spring of 1860, with quite a lot of horses and cattle, more or less unsalable, it was decided to cross the plains to California. My brother-in-law, Frank E. Thomas, accompanied me on this lengthy trip, I having dissolved partnership with Mr. Coolidge. Both his wife and my family were left in Sycamore.

As the reader will realize, a change from sea-going voyages to a land journey was a radical one. The writer had been to the West Coast and back by water and now essayed to go over by land. This trip, cumbered as we were with stock of all ages, horses 56 and cattle, young and old, was necessarily slow and tedious. The average distance traveled was ten to twelve miles per day. In forced marches, on account of lack of water, or for other reasons, we made as much as twenty miles, but when such was the case the day following would result in much lessened distance. Our route lay through Illinois, Iowa to Council Bluffs, thence across the Missouri River into Nebraska, and so on up the Platte River to its source. During the year previous to 1860 the Indians had been very hostile, but they were quiet and tractable the year we crossed. We were almost as completely cut off from the world as though on the ocean, and news from home was seldom received. We had tents for sleeping at night and a sheet-iron stove for cooking, and there were about one dozen men accompanying. Our food was biscuits and bacon with coffee. This overland trip was also a great appetizer, as much or more so than the voyage up the Pacific, and I am persuaded, as I look back on the great past, that this overland journey has had a salutary effect on all my after life, resulting in added stamina and robustness, so that probably we are justified in the assumption that all benefits were not sacrificed by the roving disposition indulged in.

My province was to go ahead of the caravan and locate camping spots. I had a horse and sulky. These camping spots, of course, had reference particularly 57 to water but fuel had to be considered

also. The principal fuel, however, was what was termed “dried buffalo chips,” which, by the way, make a good hot fire. My recollection is that we arrived at Susanville, on the eastern slope of the Sierras, about September; something over five months from Sycamore to Susanville, California. We crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains and made a halt in California not far from Marysville and suspended all movements so far as stock was concerned. Subsequently, Mr. Thomas and I went to San Francisco and bought out a firm there and engaged in the wood and coal business. This business was continued for the greater portion of the time we resided in California. In the first part of 1861 we sent for our families. We were Californians, sure, at last. Mrs. Bemis and I took our letters from the Sycamore church and we united with the First Baptist Church of San Francisco. Later a new interest was formed, called the Second Baptist Church, H. A. Sawtelle, Pastor, and we joined the movement. San Francisco was always a hard religious field and is to this day. There is something about the atmosphere out there, and especially in the principal city of the coast, which is not conducive to thoughts having reference to this present life as related to the life beyond.

In the early days nine out of every ten persons were actuated in leaving their homes and their 58 families by the thirst for gold, and those who migrated there in later years were more or less permeated with the hope and expectation of bettering their financial position. Many who expected to remain for the balance of their lives, or for a lengthy season, left their letters uncalled for at their old home church or took them and carefully deposited them in the bottoms of their trunks. I have heard ministers frequently say if they could only have the privilege of searching those trunks they could pick up a congregation very quickly and that a large Baptist contingency lay hidden away in those recesses. This feature possibly holds good in a measure; very many emigrants who move to a new country forget their first love, much preferring to remain tardy in taking up the work they left behind. In California there have been more lapses in this regard than in any other portion of the country. How our environments do affect us, and how cold and indifferent we thus become under such influences as attach to that so-called “Land of Gold”! I have no doubt that these adverse features are disappearing in the advancing years, in a measure at least, but the fact remains that Frisco is a hard field for religious endeavor.

H. A. Sawtelle, the pastor of our church in those days from 1862 to 1867, became very doubtful as to the propriety of holding to the doctrine of what is termed "close communion," and he wrote a book in 59 contravention of that practice, held by regular Baptists. I remember one of the headings was the sentiment, "The Lord's Supper for the Lord's People," whoever they were, or wherever they might be found, or under whatsoever name, and the expressed opinions of a goodly number of other Baptist ministers, both in America and Europe, were equally pronounced against the soundness of the practice of so-called "close communion," especially as the most orthodox in our church never hold that Baptism, that is to say Baptism by immersion, is a saving ordinance. But there are many who insist that the form must precede the celebration of the ordinance of the Supper, and the impression has gone out into the world that Baptism must necessarily be considered a saving ordinance, because of the tenacity with which this doctrine is or was held; hence, the so-called "close communion" doctrine. At the time of which I write, 1862 to 1867, to be pronounced an "open communionist" was a good and sufficient cause for one being cast out of the synagogue. Mrs. Bemis and I were of that number. We held to that belief during her term of life and I still hold to that opinion; and, now, in this year 1911, in the great majority of Baptist churches in the North the old-time formula of invitation to "those of the same faith and order" is never heard. In fact, it has become practically obsolete, so that the stigma of exclusiveness is fast passing away in our denomination. In truth, all evangelical churches are now beginning to see "eye to eye" and are striving together for the interests of the Savior on the earth, being united in faith, love, and forbearance towards one another.

61

CHAPTER VI

Time was passing; the Civil War was in progress. The western coast was threatened with privateers and much concern was in evidence as to how California would be affected. A preliminary count was taken as to how many would be available for draft if the necessity arose, and it did look at one time as though the west coast would soon become a scene of conflict. Business was adversely affected, and uncertainty in general prevailed. At the most discouraging point in the war, when

the Confederates were scoring victory after victory, it so happened that I had a contract with the government to supply the United States Mint with wood and charcoal. The Mint did not suspend running, but payments for supplies were discontinued, and it became a serious question whether I could meet this crisis without aid. In fact I could not, but I had a good friend in the person of P. Sather, the head of one of the prominent banks of San Francisco. I went to him and made my statement and he generously stepped into the gap and carried us through, until the government resumed payment of current bills. I had dissolved partnership with my brother-in-law, Mr. Thomas, so that really ⁶² the bank had no one but myself to rely upon and Mr. Sather took it upon himself to see me through, and the transaction worked out to the satisfaction of all concerned. I have often wondered since how it was that he came to my rescue with so few words and no security forthcoming to him in the undertaking. We were members of the same church and no doubt he came to the conclusion that the outcome would justify the risk.

As the conflict wore on its weary way, the danger from privateers grew less and the prospects of a draft also grew less imminent. The people began to take heart, and the government at Washington decided not to issue a draft on the west coast for the replenishment of the army at the seat of contest, especially as the cost of transportation would be very heavy, including time and money. So the conclusion was reached in the War Department at Washington not to disturb the west coast until such time as the conflict might break out on the Pacific and as that time never came, great relief was experienced by all of the dwellers west of the "Rockies."

Both California and Oregon received large numbers of emigrants from the South preceding and after the opening of hostilities. While they were firm sympathizers with the Southern point of view, yet they were unwilling to remain at home and enter the lists for the defense of the Southern contention, so they ⁶³ did the next best thing, and followed Horace Greeley's advice, "Young man, go west," only with this difference, young and old participated in this movement, and they carried with them their southern proclivities, firm and pronounced under all circumstances. And if the exigency had fully arisen and war had ensued on the Pacific, there would have been found two sides, equally positive in their conviction, even to the point of the sword. But all of this is past

history and we have a united country. The raw edges which predominated so many years are now wearing away and will continue to disappear as the years go by.

The day came when I sold my coal and wood-yard interests and I engaged in the manufacture of stearine candles with a Mr. W. H. Scoville, which could doubtless have been a success if sufficient capital could have been raised, but it proved a failure. However, I lost nothing on this venture except my time.

Our only son was born in San Francisco March 26, 1867, and as soon as it was deemed safe for mother and boy to journey we took our departure for St. Louis, via Panama and New York. In the fall of 1867 the Trans-Continental Railroad Line was finished, but we did not wish to tarry for that and so took the steamer and arrived in St. Louis some time in June, my wife and I and three children.

St. Louis at that time was an undesirable place in 64 which to live for several reasons. During the war there were two factions, equally insistent upon the quality of patriotism that should be exercised. Many of the residents were southern people, and came from the South, and were very pronounced in their allegiance to the secession movement, even ready to take up arms in support of their convictions, and strenuous efforts were made to have the city and state cast their lot with the South, together with all that such a decision might involve. But many of the citizens were of the opposite opinion and threw their influence, their time, and their means into the gap to uphold the Union and as we know the city and state were saved from the vagaries of secession. There was an odium which attached to the city for long years because of the divided sentiment that prevailed during the contest, and, of course, the city suffered much in various ways on account of these dissensions; improvements were neglected and the growth was retarded in a material degree.

The underground sewage system had just been commenced and was in its incipiency. Drainage was from the house over the sidewalk into the gutter and pestilent swarms of flies and mosquitoes were engendering disease. It had a bad reputation in the cholera seasons. In the year 1866 the cholera was very bad, and altogether St. Louis was not a city to be sought after as a place of residence.

However, from a 65 business standpoint the outlook was more attractive, and by virtue of its position was prospectively coming to the front in course of time.

Before leaving San Francisco, meeting a friend one day on the street, I told him of my expected departure for St. Louis, and he exclaimed, "What! Going into that hole?"

It was while we resided in San Francisco that a serious infliction came to us. Our eldest daughter was taken with a disease of the hip which became a source of much anxiety and expense, and from being a straight and apparently strong girl she was seized with this trouble, and our afflictions were almost more than we could bear. A softening of the bone had been going on almost unknown to us until we were awakened to the terrible truth. We did what we could to check the trouble, with only partial success, for there was no remedy available or possible to undo the deterioration that had been going on and while she in a measure recovered from the ill effects, and raised a large family of children, yet I often picture to myself what she would have been had this affliction never come upon her. But we were not tried beyond the point of endurance. Of the six children born to us, all are living this day in comparative health and strength.

Our fourth child, Mary Sawtelle Bemis, was born October 7, 1868, and was married to Thomas J. 66 McLemore, a widower with one daughter, October 7, 1897. Our fifth child, Alice Ring Bemis, was born July 16, 1873, and was married to Charles Pomeroy Ladd, June 8, 1893. Our sixth child, Florence Edson Bemis, was born June 6, 1875, and married to Elliot Kingman Ludington, June 9, 1898.

We had now made our last move and had become permanently located in the great city of the Southwest, and I became at first an employee in the firm of Bemis & Brown, bag manufacturers. One of the first duties that came to my hand was to dispose of a lot of army clothing no longer required in the defense of the nation. I was without experience in mercantile or manufacturing departments and about forty years of age. Mr. Henry Digby was a silent partner in the house, a little building located on Commercial Street, near Pine Street. I think it was about twenty-five feet in width and three stories high. Subsequently we moved from Commercial Street to Main

Street into quite a commodious building. Within a year or so after my arrival my brother moved to Boston and Mr. Digby and I were left in charge. A cotton yarn mill had been erected at the corner of Barton and Columbus Streets. In those days many of the countryfolk wore jeans of cotton warp and wool filling, woven by hand looms, the yarns being dyed mostly yellow. The firm did quite a little business for some years in these cotton yarns. In the meantime I was learning the bag business and picking it up as best I could, a thread here and a thread there. I had not been long in St. Louis when my brother said, "If we don't sell ten thousand bags per day we don't think we are doing much." My recollection is that we had two old secondhand newspaper presses and possibly a dozen sewing machines. At that time the business was about eight or nine years old, my brother having started with Simeon Farwell, a cousin of ours, in the year 1858, but Mr. Farwell was bought out before I came and Mr. Brown taken in. The firm ran along for a year or two, when the name was changed to Bemis, Brown & Company. Then came the buying out of Henry Digby, then followed the buying out of Mr. Brown about 1872, then the panic of 1873, the firm then being styled Bemis, Brother & Company, which ran along until 1885 when we moved into our present quarters and incorporated under the style of Bemis Bro. Bag Company, which remains until this day.

It was in the year 1885 that a remarkably singular occurrence in my history happened in St. Louis. In the church at San Francisco the pastor, Henry A. Sawtelle, J. S. Ring, a deacon, and I were very close friends. Mr. Ring had passed on some years previous at San Francisco, and we had an etching taken from a photograph and enlarged to almost life size. This likeness hung over the sitting-room sofa in our chamber, and on my return from the office about six o'clock, as I was resting on the sofa directly under this likeness of Mr. Ring, I went off into a partial doze, when I heard a voice plainly and distinctly utter these words: "We three will soon meet again." The voice roused me and I immediately told Mrs. Bemis what I had heard, with the remark, "Something is going to happen." The next day we were apprised of the death of Henry A. Sawtelle, and the hour of his passing away was identical with the time that the voice came to me. Since then long years have elapsed, but no reunion has occurred of the three. The memory of that voice, which I did not immediately recognize, has never been forgotten. The day will come when this meeting will take place, be it a longer or a shorter time before fulfillment. I do not attempt to explain this

phenomenon but only mention it as a fact. The hour of hearing the voice coincident with the time of Dr. Sawtelle's departure certainly was very significant. He passed out of this life November 22, 1885, at Waterville, Maine.

We did not take our church letters when leaving San Francisco for St. Louis for several reasons, one of which was we did not know which church we might conclude to unite with. We preferred to become acquainted with the church of our choice before uniting. At first we attended the Third Church, then located on Clark Avenue, Reverend Scofield, pastor, 69 and had almost made up our minds to unite with this church. Later we found the Second Church was more to our liking and finally became regular attendants upon the services of this church, then located on the corner of Locust and Sixth Street, where Barr's store now stands, Reverend A. H. Burlingham, Pastor.

It was not until 1870 that we finally joined by letter from the church we left at San Francisco. We were known as "Open-Communion Baptists," which at that time was counted as a reflection on us. It was distinctly understood that we would only join under our true colors. Dr. Burlingham himself was in heart an "Open-Communion Baptist," but the mass of membership was uncompromisingly committed to the other side of the question. To have been otherwise would have ruled the church out of the denomination at that time. Our position being known, we were looked upon rather askance. However, we were told it would be all right, provided we kept quiet about our-so-called "peculiar views."

After joining the Second Church there was much controversy on the communion question and the animadversions were caustic and severe, especially by the Southern press, which was more fierce in denunciation than the Northern. The "Tennessee Baptist," published at Memphis by Dr. J. R. Graves (if I have his initials correct), was particularly outspoken 70 in his denunciation of the heresy of open communion. Language often failed him in describing his horror of such lax orthodoxy. It would appear that he had heard of me in connection with the Second Church, and he wrote a long and caustic article in his paper in which he denominated me as a "Benedict Arnold" who had crept into the Baptist fold in St. Louis, much to the discredit of the church at large, but especially so to the Second Church of St. Louis. I never made any reply, as he was one of the

hotheaded sort, and I wisely concluded to leave it to the leaven of time to work out the justification of this so-called heresy. The lapse of forty years has done more in revision of sentiment on this question than many arguments would have accomplished in those days long ago.

At the last service held in the church at Twenty-Seventh and Locust Streets, a sort of commemorative session, wherein past history was elucidated in connection with hopes for the future, several brethren made remarks, I among the number. I dwelt upon the time when we were admitted into the Second Church in the year 1870 coming as we did from an "Open-Communion" Baptist Church at San Francisco. In relating this experience I laid some emphasis upon the circumstances attending our express purpose to join this church to some of the leading brethren, stating the fact that our letters were from 71 an "Open Communion" church, and that I was told it would be all right if we would keep quiet. I then remarked that we had kept forty years, and no criticism had come to us, and we were still of the same opinion as when we entered the church in the year 1870. There were no adverse comments in that vast audience, although there was a large sprinkling of members from sister churches present, and some who were conversant with the issues of those days on this question, who must have recalled the bitterness exhibited at this so-called heresy.

It was during the pastorate of Dr. Burlingham that the church bought a lot on the corner of Twenty-Seventh and Locust Streets, and first proceeded to erect the chapel, which was completed and ready for occupancy on Christmas Day, 1874. Dr. Burlingham's resignation occurred in November, 1876. In the choice of this location, Twenty-Seventh and Locust Streets, an immeasurable mistake was made, possibly an error of judgment, not altogether unusual. The move from Sixth and Locust to Twenty-Seventh and Locust Streets, about twenty blocks, was thought by the majority of the trustees to fully discount the future growth of the city for a long time to come. How shortsighted they were became very apparent in a few years thereafter. There was one trustee, however, Wm. M. McPherson, who was fully alive to what the city was to become. He 72 strongly advocated the location on the northwest corner of Grand Avenue and Washington Boulevard but his contention did not prevail. It would be like going into the Wilderness. The University Club House now occupies this corner. If this location had been decided upon the Baptist map would be very different

from what it is today. The Third Church would not be where it now stands, and this location would have been a central one for the next quarter of a century, and no necessity would have existed for going into our present place of worship, corner of Kingshighway and Washington Boulevard, resulting in a saving to the church of at least one-quarter of a million dollars. Wm. McPherson was certainly a far-sighted man and he could peer into the future with unerring judgment. But bygones are bygones, so the church addressed itself to the exigency before it.

In June, 1877, Reverend W. W. Boyd was called to the pastorate, and under his administration the main body of the church was pushed forward to almost completion and the date of dedication practically set, when on January 3, 1879, it was destroyed by fire. There was insurance on the property for \$100,000.00, which enabled the church to go immediately forward as the outer walls were left practically intact. On November 26th of the same year the church was dedicated. Dr. Boyd resigned the pastorate in 1887. In September, 1888, the Reverend J. W. Ford was called to the pastorate and continued until September, 1893, when he resigned. Then Dr. Boyd was recalled in May, 1894, and continued until 1904, when he resigned. Then a call was extended to the Reverend Dr. W. C. Bitting on November 1, 1905, after a ministry of twenty-two years at the Mt. Morris Baptist Church, New York City, and now in 1911 he is still pastor.

Previous to the call of Dr. Bitting a large lot had been purchased at McPherson, Kingshighway, and Washington Boulevard, while Dr. Boyd was still pastor, but no improvements were entered into until after the latter's resignation. On December 8, 1906, ground was broken for the new building, including the tower, the gift of Mr. F. H. Ludington, and on April 27, 1907, the cornerstone was laid with appropriate ceremonies. This group of buildings, unique in design, has become noted throughout the country and many visitors to our city are loud in their praise of the fitness and beauty of the plans so beautifully combined. They stand as a monument to the faith and hope of the church.

About the year 1900, Mrs. Bemis became ill and I gave up business so that I could be with her continually. She grew no better as time passed. We resorted to a change of climate and scene, all to no purpose. I finally took her to Seattle, Washington, where our 74 daughter, Mrs. Hull, resided, but

she continued to decline rapidly and on January 21, 1903, she passed on to the other life, at about sixty-eight years of age. If she had lived to the following June, our Golden Wedding anniversary would have occurred. But it was not to be. Her malady was a peculiar one. Technically speaking, it was called "Paralysis agitans" which is incurable, of course. It was a sad blow, but considering the nature of her illness and the hopelessness thereof, it became a relief to her as well as to her family for her to pass on to the other life. There were constant tremors all over her body, interior and exterior, but, wonderful to relate, if she was called upon to sign her name, which often happened, all trembling left her for the moment and her signature became normal, but immediately after the signature was completed the tremors resumed with doubled force. When she would sleep the tremors ceased, but upon awaking the full penalty must be paid for the brief exemption realized in sleep. The malady is a very rare one, and the physicians so expressed themselves. But in her new home no trembling is admitted, all is calm and peaceful in the presence of her Savior, where the storms of life never penetrate. She lived a consistent, Christian life, and, no doubt, when entering upon her new abode was met by the approving Master—"She hath done what she could."

75

As time passed, and previous to the transfer of our business to Fourth and Poplar Streets, St. Louis, where we now are, 1911, in the year 1880 we established the first branch factory in Minneapolis, with two removes before coming to occupy our present location in that city. The next branch was established at Omaha, Nebraska, in the year 1888. The next in order was at New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1891, with one remove to our present location in that city. The next branch was inaugurated in San Francisco in the year 1898, with two removes to the present location there. Then followed the Indianapolis branch in the year 1900. Then the Memphis branch was instituted at Memphis in 1902, with two removes to the present location. In the year 1903 the Kansas City branch was started with one remove to present location. Then followed the Seattle branch in 1904, and the Winnipeg branch in 1906.

The Home Cotton Mills were started as a yarn mill in St. Louis in 1876, since which time it has been enlarged say three times, with a present capacity of 25,000 spindles.

The Jackson Fibre Company, near Jackson, Tenn., a cotton mill, was established in the year 1900, a capacity doubled up to the present time to 50,000 spindles.

The Indianapolis Bleachery, in connection with Brower & Love Brothers, who were cotton spinners, 76 opened about the year 1900 and has since been enlarged say three times. In 1910 we purchased the Love brothers' interests, together with the cotton mills of 35,000 spindles, so that both enterprises are now run under the incorporation of Bemis Bro. Bag Company.

No new capital, so far as I remember, has ever been enlisted in any of these enterprises, excepting our part of the capital stock of the bleachery at its inception. The managers of the several branches who have grown up with the company have been allotted stock at different times, as they proved their efficiency by application to business and faithful service for the interests of all concerned. To say that all of the managers who have been with us have proven of the right stripe would be a stretch of the imagination, but the exceptions are remarkably few. It has been our policy in appointing managers to lay hold of those who commenced with us as boys, and such as applied themselves to their duties honestly and with a purpose in mind. They have then been advanced from time to time and entrusted with larger responsibilities as the years went by, and they are now reaping the benefits attaching to honest effort in our various establishments.

77

Notes Made From Certain Family Letters and Reminiscences of Stephen A. Bemis

The trip from northern Illinois to California was begun in April, 1860. The party consisted of nineteen men with father and Mr. Hamlin and Mr. Frank E. Thomas, my mother's brother, the three whose venture it was. The others were doubtless employees and still others who were desirous of making the trip and of having company on the way. Their custom was to start moving at 7:00 A.M. and to stop for the night at 4:00 P.M., for the purpose of making camp and preparing for the night. A letter dated Omaha, May 11, 1860, states that they had to lay over seven days in the Des Moines Bottoms because of the lack of rain; in other words, they had to wait for rain to make grass to feed the stock. The stock fattened on this hard work and green grass diet except for the team

horses which began to show a loss in weight. The instructions in this letter were to write him at Ft. Laramie, then a long way off, and the letter enclosed five dollars, probably a bill, 78 which was no doubt a welcome remittance to my mother.

The emigration was heavy, with most of the emigrants headed for the mines near Pike's Peak, Colorado. On June twelfth there were fifty persons in the train, the additional number undoubtedly attracted to the party for company's sake. Twelve cows were milked twice daily. Each man in the immediate party watched alternately half the night once a week. There were thirteen wagons entrained and at night the custom was to make a half circle of wagons on a river bank in the form of a barricade against possible attacks of wild beasts or Indians. At Ft. Laramie mention is made of some begging Indians who were evidently troublesome. There was a kettle of sour beans left and "the boys got the Indians at them." They went at them in earnest at first, but at last had all they wanted, but the "boys" would not let them stop eating until all the beans were gone. Toward the last the poor Indians were eating one bean at a time.

By July seventh there were eighty men in the train and also eighty others, women and children. The train seemed to grow daily and there were fifty wagons all told, moving at the rate of one hundred miles a week. Two large wagon trains moving east were met. They were going back to the States for supplies to be taken west. The emigrants for 79 California at this point, Ft. Laramie, were numerous.

The letters indicate that other letters were miscarried or lost and it is evident that there are gaps in the correspondence. The next letter is from Marysville, California, dated September 9, 1860, where good meals could be had for twenty-five cents, large melons for a shilling (12 1/2c), and men's wages were \$25 to \$40 a month. Mention is made in several letters of one of the party, whom we shall call Reuben, who became enamored of a black-haired young lassie and they were for marrying; the climax in their love affairs seemed to come while the party was crossing the mountains, but no clergyman or Justice of the Peace could be found so the ceremony had to be postponed. However, after descending the western slope into California there was no difficulty and Reuben essayed to proceed with the marriage. However, the young lady found that men were

very plentiful in California and although she was not very attractive physically her hand was sought by several; that is to say, members of the fair sex were in demand and some of the men looked better to her than Reuben. She left the party at this point and forthwith Reuben followed her. At this time father admitted in a letter to mother that although Reuben was the best worker and most reliable man in the train he now considered him a fool; this little black-haired girl had changed him completely. 80

At this time the weakness of the financial structure of the enterprise became apparent. Cattle proved to be worth in California hardly any more than they were worth in Illinois and father expressed the hope that the whole venture might possibly break even. The horses, however, were in better demand and mention is made of a possible profit on these of \$100.00 a head. At this time father said that he might make another trip in the spring of 1861, bringing only blooded cattle and such horses as he could sell readily at a profit. His partner is mentioned for the first time, one J. R. Hamlin. At about this time, too, there was a rumor that the Bemis and Hamlin train had not come through; in other words, that it was lost. This rumor reached mother in Illinois and caused her much distress.

The letters in the collection referred to in the introduction written after the arrival of the party in California are not many and are rather uncertain in tone as to what father's plans were. It was probably true that he was casting about trying to find some sort of business to engage in, at least temporarily. At the same time my mother was living at the farm near Sycamore, Illinois, with the two little girls, one of whom, Minnie, had scarlet fever, with no one to nurse her but her mother, and all the while the other arduous duties connected with farming were pressing. The "farm-hands" had to be fed and butter 81 and cheese to be made. Her letters at this time showed great distress of soul; she was urging father to send for them and he was doing his best to earn money to do so. She admits in one letter to father that after her daily labors and trials she would go to her room and pour out her troubled and lonesome spirit in letters to him. During these trying times father's brother Judson, who had recently started in business in St. Louis, made her two remittances, one of \$15.00 and one of \$10.00, which she badly needed, so she says in a letter, to buy children's shoes and other

necessities. In a later letter father asked her the amount of these remittances from his brother with a view to reimbursing him.

His first venture in San Francisco was in the wood and coal business. In this enterprise he and his brother-in-law engaged. He lived at the Benton House, a three-story structure on Commercial Street, between Montgomery and Kearney Streets. The dining-room was on one side of the entrance and the sitting-room on the other. It is evident that he accumulated enough in a reasonable time to send mother the funds with which to make the long and tortuous trip. After mother's arrival there is no written record of the wood and coal business or of any other business, but evidently there was enough earned to support his family and they continued to live there until 1867. 82

During all the years preceding 1867 the letters to and from his brother Judson show the cordial and friendly relations that existed between them. There were letters from his brother urging him to come home via St. Louis when his California plans were uncertain, and letters from him to his brother urging the latter to come to California and start a bag business there. One of these letters was responded to with a request to send to St. Louis samples of such bags as were used in California. His brother at some time, and probably on numerous occasions, asked him to come to St. Louis and enter his employ, which he did in 1867, after the birth of his son, who is the writer of these notes. There is no record of the trip to St. Louis, which was made via Panama.

Some time before father came to St. Louis, his brother wrote to him and said that the firm should in that year (1860) sell \$100,000 worth of bags, and if that should be accomplished the profits should be 5%, that is to say, \$5,000. In that year the business was moved to No. 1 Commercial Street (later called Commercial Alley) between Chestnut and Market Streets. In another letter from his brother written in 1862, it is indicated clearly that the bag business was started in February, 1859, and not in 1858. His brother's life in St. Louis from 1859 to 1867, is touched on in several letters. In 1862, he was boarding on Beaugard Street (now Chestnut 83 Street) and a year or two later he was living at Barnum's Hotel.

Father's memorandum books made soon after his arrival in St. Louis show calculations as to weights and cuts of bags. He was evidently busily engaged from the time of his arrival in some capacity and his letters show that he traveled about more or less to Louisville, Beardstown, Illinois, and other nearby places. The firm was then Bemis, Brown & Co., and beside the bag business a considerable amount of army clothing, blankets, and other army supplies were dealt in.

My father's business life after his move to St. Louis was that of the ordinary business man of those days. There were probably many incidents that were intensely interesting, but on the whole it was the life of a busy man intent on making a success in that line after the many moves and changes he had made. The business hours were long and as one was not obliged to live at a great distance from the business district most of the business day could be devoted to work. The working day on Saturdays was very little different from that of other week days, it being, I think, only one hour shorter. Business letters were written with pen and ink until about 1884, when the first typewriter was used in the office, and for a long time after that he wrote his letters with pen and so did his brother, who then was located in Boston. Later on, '84 when typewritten letters became common, he would write his letters and have them typed until he became used to dictating them.

He related once that a \$5.00 bill had been taken in the course of business and on the margin was written,

“This is the last bill of a fortune that was left to me some years ago!”

At another time there was a shipping clerk in his employ, named Frank Bemis, who was no relation, however. It seems a customer of the house had asked to have bought for him and shipped a case of whiskey. Frank Bemis was an ardent opponent of liquor, liquor traffic, and everything pertaining to it, and refused to do anything toward shipping the case and would have nothing to do with it.

Father never smoked but once; some friend recommended a cigar after luncheon as an aid to digestion, so much to the astonishment of the office men he strolled in one day puffing vigorously

on a cigar. In a short time he began to feel the effects of it and was very sick the rest of the afternoon. This took place probably about 1880.

His business relations with his brother, which began in 1867 and continued until his gradual retirement, which came about eighteen years before his death, were always of the best; each had a high regard and a brotherly affection for the other, always they trusted each other implicitly in every way. They were hard-working business men and they divided their duties in a way that left to each of them a part of the business to conduct.

As the business grew, each of the brothers became interested in the younger men associated with them and as these younger men grew and developed in the business after it was incorporated in 1885, they were given positions of responsibility and they shared measurably in the prosperity of the company.

My father's acquaintance with my mother probably began in the early 1850's in Chicago and was probably brought about through their association in church circles; there is no written record of their courtship. They were probably living near each other. The only writing indicating their acquaintance is one note, partially mutilated, found among some old letters and without the year being mentioned in the date. It is reproduced herein* and it is interesting because of the strictly formal character of the note and because of the penmanship, which is almost like copper-plate in its character. It gives evidence that he was conducting his correspondence with his fiancée with extreme formality and care.

The handwriting of my father as I have always known it was distinctly "back-hand," but this was not the case prior to 1871 or 1872, as evidenced by his letters prior to that time. After 1871 or '72 it 86 was not altered to any appreciable extent again but remained always the same in its character and in the formation of the letters.

I have often wished that we who are now grown to the ages that our parents were in their middle and old age could know more intimately what the lives of our parents were like in their young manhood and young womanhood. The disposition of children is generally to think of their parents

as always having been staid and formal in their manners and actions. If all of us could, on reaching maturity, know of the trials, temptations, and struggles, the aims and ambitions of our parents when they were young, it would be helpful and instructive to us. Many things that our parents experienced and lived through are, and always will be, unknown to us, the things that helped form them and their characters.

I never knew my father to show any emotion but on two occasions; one was when I was about fifteen years old, when he took my mother and me aside and confided to us that he was in financial straits. His personal affairs, because of certain speculations, were involved. He at that time broke down in the telling of it. Our residence at 3114 Pine St., St. Louis, had to be sold. The other time was when I left to make a tour of Europe in 1889 with my boyhood friend, Thomas W. Booth. During morning prayers in praying for my safe journey his voice broke. Still, 87 although he showed little or no emotion in the ordinary conduct of his life, it does not follow at all that none was felt.

The last few years of my father's life when he was not active in business were spent mainly with his daughters Miriam (Mrs. Alonzo Hull) of Seattle, and Mary (Mrs. Thomas J. McLemore) of Escondido, California. He made his home at different times with each of them. His last few years were spent with Mrs. McLemore. He considered her residence his home. These two looked after his material wants with the utmost care and consideration during his declining years.

In concluding these brief notes on his life, it is fitting to mention with veneration the memory of him and his devoted wife. Their lives were dedicated to their family and their church. They were governed by principles which were true and tried, and by which they had been brought up. The best that can be wished for their descendants of the generations now living and of those which are to come is that they will hold as firmly to the same good principles, which principles are bound to be as good now and in the future as they were in the past, regardless of the seeming change that has come over the conduct of some younger people of this day and age whom we see all about us, many of whom profess to think that the elements of good conduct have 88 changed and that the

firm standard by which the older generations were governed may be safely set aside in the interests of the pleasures of the moment and the hour and the day.

The principles of an historic, Christian faith were grafted on the lives of Stephen Allen Bemis and his wife, Hannah Jane Thomas, and it is the prayer of those who have the interests of their numerous descendants at heart that regardless of the sects to which they may adhere the same elemental and fundamental principles may live in them. JUDSON S. BEMIS

STEPHEN ALLEN BEMIS HANNAH JANE THOMAS BEMIS 1854-1897

89

Antecedents and Descendants*

The numbers refer to a book, "The Bemis Family in America," T. Waln—Morgan Draper, San Francisco Calif.

NOTES MADE BY STEPHEN A. BEMIS

Stephen (6), son of Stephen (5) and Achsah Pollard Bemis. Zaccheus (4), Philip (3), Joseph, Jr. (2), Joseph (1).

Stephen (6), our father, was born in Westminster, Mass., March 20, 1804, bearing the name of his father, who was born at Westminster, Mass. He had three brothers that grew to manhood, William, Samuel, and Zaccheus; five sisters, Sophia, Dolly, Hannah, Achsah, and Betsy. Achsah died in Chicago at the home of her son, George Clark, in 1893. He, Stephen (6), removed to Fitchburg, Mass. Married April 30, 1827, Miriam Thurston Farwell, born at Fitchburg, Mass., July 14, 1806, died at Nashua Twp., Ogle County, Illinois, January 24, 1840. She was the daughter of Simon and Hephzibah Farwell, the former born Aug. 15, or Oct. 23, 1776, died there Aug. 31, 1808; the latter born at Fitchburg, Mass., Oct. 15, 1771, died there Oct. 15, 1811.

90

Stephen (6) was one of the founders of the First Baptist Church of Fitchburg, Mass., in 1831, and at the Fiftieth Anniversary, 1881, he was one of the three survivors. In 1833 he resided near Elmira, N. Y. Five years later, 1838, he settled in Nashua Township, Ogle County, Illinois, and in

1840, April 4th, he was married the second time to Mary Early Neville, who was born in Pickaway County, twelve miles from Columbus, Ohio, May 3, 1812. Her father's name was Henry, and her parents had been residents of Harper's Ferry, Virginia. She died at Oregon, Illinois, July 3, 1886. In 1849 Stephen started for the gold fields of California and there met his brother, Samuel. Samuel later resided in Colorado and died in 1878. His brother Zaccheus was drowned. William resided at one time in Orehill, Conn.

Stephen Bemis (6) was a farmer while in Ogle County, until he removed to Oregon, Illinois, in 1883. He was a Baptist; his father was a Universalist. He died at Oregon, Illinois, March 1, 1889.

His children by his first marriage were: Stephen Allen (7), the subject of this book, born Fitchburg, Mass., Feb. 6, 1828; Mary Hepsey (7), born Fitchburg, Mass., Dec. 21, 1830, married at DeKalb, Dec. 25, 1857, Nathan (born Chenango County, New York, May 2, 1834), son of Ransom Lattin; Judson Moss (7), born Fitchburg, Mass., May 18, 1833.

91

His children by his second marriage, born at Nashua, Ill., were: Henry Harrison (7), born Feb. 24, 1841; Achsah Ann (7), born Oct. 19, 1842, died April 20, 1843; Cassius Clay (7), born Feb. 5, 1844, died during the Rebellion; George W. M. (7), born Oct. 18, 1847; J. Clinton (7), born April 2, 1852; John Early (7), born Dec. 9, 1855.

STEPHEN A. BEMIS

Children of Stephen A. Bemis and Hannah Jane Thomas Bemis:

Fanny Ann Bemis, born Oct. 11, 1855, Sycamore, Ill.; died Oct. 14, 1930; married Dec. 24, 1875, Chester Simmons, born Dec. 26, 1850; died Feb. 26, 1921.

Miriam Farwell Bemis, born Sept. 27, 1857, Sycamore, Ill.; married May 16, 1877, Alonzo Hull, born Jan. 12, 1844; died Aug. 6, 1929.

Judson Stephen Bemis, born Mar. 26, 1867, San Francisco, Calif.; married Sept. 8, 1896, Martha Nelson Sikes, born June 2, 1869.

Mary Sawtelle Bemis, born Oct. 7, 1868, St. Louis, Mo.; married Oct. 7, 1897, Thomas J. McLemore, born Feb. 23, 1852; died Jan. 13, 1929.

Alice Ring Bemis, born July 16, 1873, St. Louis, Mo.; married June 8, 1893, Charles Pomeroy Ladd, born March 15, 1868.

Florence Edson Bemis, born June 6, 1875, St. 92 Louis, Mo.; died July 28, 1921; married June 9, 1898, Elliot Kingman Ludington, born June 8, 1876.