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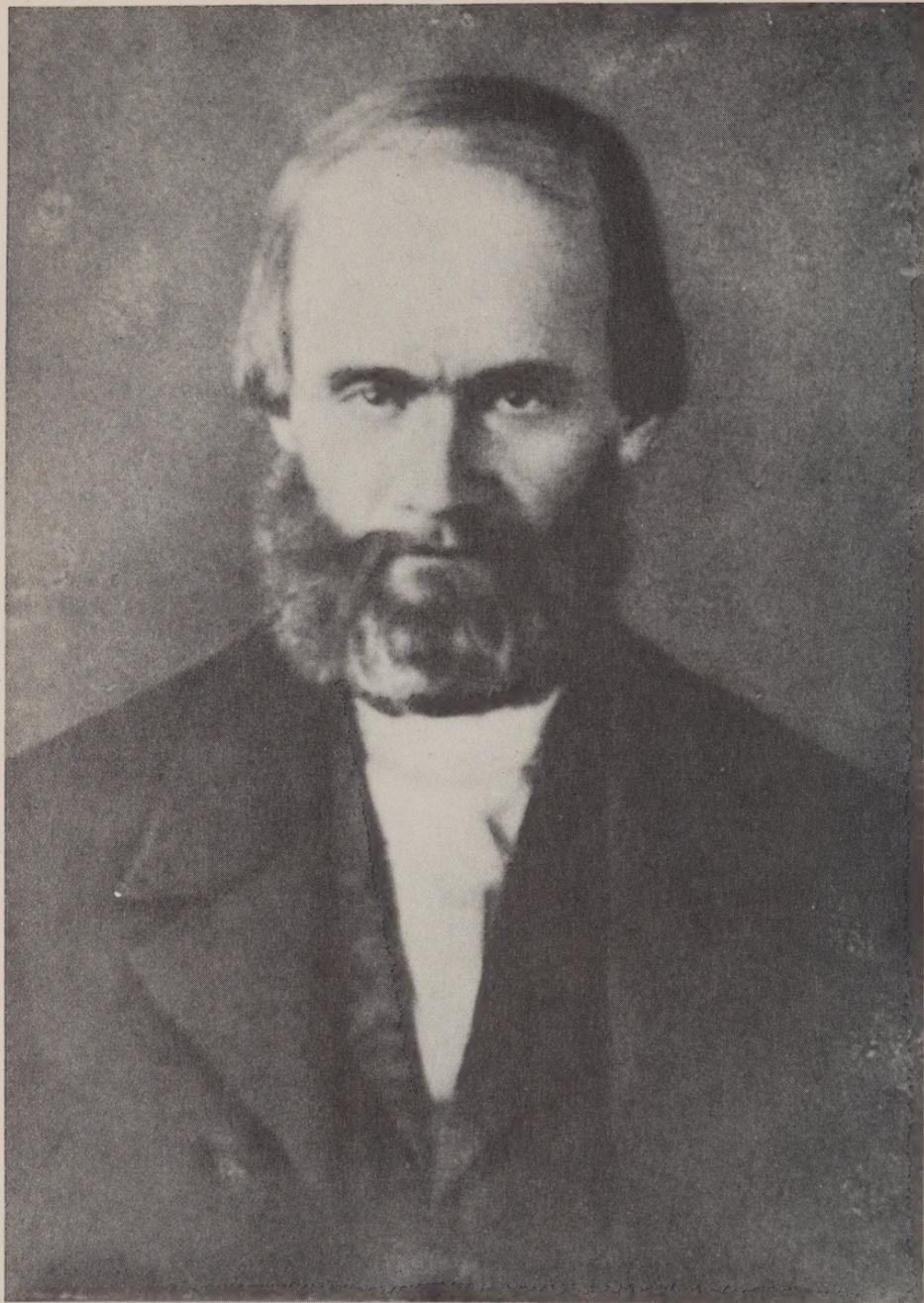
The Diary of
James J. Strang

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James A. Straub



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JAMES J. STRANG

From a daguerreotype taken when he was about 42 years of age while he was preparing the expanded edition of *The Book of the Law of the Lord* printed at the Royal Press, Saint James, Michigan 1856.

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*The Diary of
James J. Strang*

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By
Mark A. Strang

WITH A FOREWORD
BY
RUSSEL B. NYE

Michigan State University Press

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To
James Jesse Strang

who devoted his life to the service of mankind and declared: "*Of all that dwell on earth, God has made me the most happy.*"

Foreword

James Strang was born on March 21, 1813, at Scipio, New York. His father was a farmer, not overly prosperous, who in 1816 moved his family farther west to Chautauqua County in search of better land. Here young Strang grew up on his father's farm and got the rudiments of an education from the rural schools. He read widely, taught school for a while, studied law, and was admitted to the New York State bar in 1836. However, he had little real interest in the law and rarely practiced it. Instead he took a post as village postmaster, edited a country newspaper, and served as a temperance lecturer. In 1836 he married Mary Perce, a Baptist clergyman's daughter whose sister had married a Mormon and moved west. In 1843 Strang and his wife followed them to a small Mormon settlement near Burlington, Wisconsin.

Strang himself joined the Church of the Latter Day Saints not long after his arrival in Wisconsin. He went to Nauvoo, Illinois, the headquarters of western Mormonism, where he talked with Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the Mormon leaders, and where Joseph baptized him. There is no doubt but that the Smiths were impressed by their convert's intelligence and ability, and Strang by them. Joseph Smith, appointing him an Elder of the Church, sent him back to Wisconsin to develop a Mormon colony at Voree, on the White River. However, not long after Strang's visit, both Smiths died at the hands of a mob and the Mormon organization was thrown into confusion.

The ensuing struggle for authority within the leaderless western Mormon church attracted Strang. He possessed a letter from Joseph Smith which, if the wording were properly construed, seemed to name Strang as his successor; furthermore, Strang reported that an angel had appeared to him in a vision to appoint him to prophetic office among the Mormons. Some months later the group at Voree dug up a set of plates with strange inscriptions, similar to those of the Book of Mormon found by Joseph Smith in New York State some years before. Strang translated them, with the help of Urim and Thummim (two stones set in the rim of a magic bow) to find that their message reinforced his claims to leadership. However, the Nauvoo Mormons preferred to follow Brigham Young in his "wild plan," as Strang called it, "to go into an unexplored wilderness among savages." Most of the Mormons went with Young on their tremendous trek across the plains to Deseret. A few went with other leaders to Pennsylvania and Texas, but James Strang's Voree group stayed with him in Wisconsin.

In 1846 Strang heard that Big Beaver Island in Lake Michigan, some twenty miles off the Michigan coast, was to be put up for sale by the federal government. The next year he and four of his Mormons visited the island and found it attractive, habitable, well-timbered, fertile, and in the midst of good fishing waters. In 1847-1848 four families from Voree wintered on the island and in the next year the colony began to move to it in force. After 1848 settlers came in a steady stream, not only from Wisconsin but from many of the smaller Mormon settlements in the eastern states. Following the pattern laid down by a set of deciphered plates known as the Plates of Laban (later amplified in Strang's *Book of the Law of the Lord**) the Beaver colony vested absolute authority in a king, who was "prophet, seer, revelator, translator, and first president of the Church, governing by revelation of the

* Strang, James J., *The Book of the Law of the Lord*. Saint James, Mich., The Royal Press, 1856.

word of God, and deriving his authority solely from God." This, of course, was James Strang.

The Beaver Island Mormons prospered under Strang's leadership. Although he had formerly opposed the Mormon practice of plural marriage, he took a second wife in 1849 and eventually three more, all of whom lived with him happily. Though polygamy was never widely practiced at Beaver, it soon became an issue of conflict with the nearby mainland population at Charlevoix and Mackinac, many of whom were Irish Catholic fishermen, nor did sensational stories in the press add to the colony's reputation. There were an increasing number of clashes between Strang's Mormons and the mainland Gentiles, partly over fishing grounds, partly over Strang's attacks on the Irish for selling liquor to the Indians, and partly too over the political and financial success of his colony. In 1850 Strang was elected to the Michigan State Legislature and succeeded in forming a new island county of Manitou, thus separating his colony from the domination of the mainland Irish.

During the years 1850-1855 the Beaver Island Mormons were at the zenith of their successful experiment in colonizing. Strang held authority over about twenty-six hundred Mormons and had flourishing colonies started on the mainland; Mormon farms and fisheries brought in bountiful revenues; visitors to the island reported "much evidence of thrift and industry," good homes, good roads, fine crops and an apparently contented people. However, all was not well within the colony. There were a few malcontents and a number of misfits, and others who felt Strang's rule far too arbitrary. In the spring of 1856 three Beaver residents conspired against their leader, wounded him seriously, and escaped on a federally-owned patrol boat. They served only a few hours in jail and were never tried for the crime. James Strang himself, at the point of death, was removed to Wisconsin, where he died in July. After his departure the sheriff at Mackinac notified the leaderless Mormon islanders that Beaver must be vacated, and an ugly, half-drunk mob appeared to assist in

carrying out the order. Some of the Mormons went west to Utah, a few returned to the Illinois and Wisconsin colonies, and many simply scattered. Fishermen and farmers from the mainland took over Big Beaver, where today few traces remain of the Kingdom of St. James.

Biographers and historians have found it difficult to assess the personality, public and private, of James Strang, since he created such intense controversy and lived for so long in the center of it. After the tragic affair at Nauvoo and the deaths of the Smiths, the rift in the Mormon church and the struggle for leadership made powerful enemies for Strang within the Mormon movement.* During the days of the Beaver colony, Strang had bitter enemies on the Michigan mainland, for the running battle between his colony and the Mackinac fishermen had strong political, economic, and religious motivations. Since the Beaver experiment lent itself readily to penny-press journalism, the contemporary press almost never treated Strang impartially, and the articles and stories about the Beaver colony published after its dissolution invariably stressed the sensational and lurid. A clear view of the man and his career has been, and will perhaps continue to be, difficult to obtain.

James Strang, however, left us some account of himself by which he can be observed. He kept a journal from the age of eighteen to twenty-three, when, lacking the small change required to buy a new notebook, he dropped the project. He preserved the little book through his moves to Wisconsin and Beaver; his second wife, Elvira, saved it from the Beaver Island calamity and gave it to her two sons, from whom the pages, in two separate lots, reached the Coe collection in the Yale University Library. The publication of this diary, including new transcriptions of its sections in code and annotations by James Strang's grandson, furnishes new, important, and interesting evidence about Strang and particularly about some of the ideas which shaped his career. Though the journal

* Sarah, Strang's fourth wife, raised her son under another name in fear of retaliation against them by Utah Mormons.

ends shortly before Strang's departure for the West and his conversion to Mormonism, what it has to say casts a great deal of light on the character and aims of the man who later would be King.

What does the journal reveal? First, we see reflected in it the mind of a young man of intelligence and sensitivity, torn inwardly between ambition and humility, divided internally between an ideal of self and the ideal of service. Young Strang confides to his diary that he has "great designs," that he is filled with dreams of "royalty and power" as great as "any Cesar or Napoleon." Quick-minded, a shrewd reasoner and persuasive speaker, possessed of a way with women, Strang draws the portrait in his journal of a proud, passionate, almost arrogant youngster with a driving sense of purpose and accomplishment. Yet on other pages there appears another Strang—the quiet, lonely, bookish youngster, withdrawn and isolated, contending always with an inner sense of inadequacy and failure. This is the boy who believed himself "not born to fortune, fame, or influence, never the favourite of accident or chance," who dedicated himself with adolescent sincerity to a life of Christian humility and service.

These two sides of Strang's personality alternate through the diary entries, foreshadowing the mature man. From the diary one begins to gather some understanding of the man who possessed, as Strang obviously did, that great ability to draw men and women to him, and that sense of authority and purpose which built and unified the Beaver colony. From it too one gains acquaintance with the other Strang, the religious leader with the prophet's gift who wrestled with deep problems of Christian faith and spirit, and who vowed at nineteen to spend his life in humble devotion to his God and fellowmen.

There is more, of course, implicit in the diary. In the account James Strang left of his early years one may find the germs of those ideas which later became the controlling theology of his brand of Mormonism. Strang grew up in rural New York State, in an area "burned over" by the great evangelical revivals of the early nineteenth century. He lived

in a devil-conscious, deeply passionate religious society, beneath whose surface lay the tremendous emotional forces of frontier Baptism and Methodism. The Mormon movement began here; so did William Miller's millennialism, the perfectionism of Charles Grandison Finney, the rappings of the Fox sisters and the seances of Andrew Jackson Davis. Strang was born into an atmosphere of feverish primitive faith. He was himself, by temperament, a mystic (certainly his diary-essay on "The Spirit of Nature" is a record of real mystic experience) whose whole range of religious experience rested on intuitional, inward evidences of revelation. Yet Strang read Paine, Volney, and the rational deists, claiming with youthful vehemence that he was an "atheist" with the right of personal rational judgment in religious matters. The tensions created within a young man of Strang's temperament and intelligence by this inner spiritual conflict between emotionalism and rationalism—and by the outward conflict of a groping, independent thinker with the intensely emotional society in which he lived—must have been violent indeed. The journal shows more than a hint of these internal stresses.

Strang was, as his diary reveals, engaged with tremendous questions of theology and philosophy with which he was ill-equipped to deal. Neither Paine's rationalism nor York State fundamentalism furnished him with answers. He felt his way gradually toward his own system of belief, in which he saw God as beneficent natural law, as the "Spirit of Nature" reflected in a "serenely beautiful" world created without an "unseemly mark." The world's evil, he reasoned, came from the "unnatural," that is, from the act against "nature," the violation of "a natural habit." Paine, Volney, and evangelism took him this far, but could take him no farther on the way toward resolution of those much more difficult questions that followed, What is Nature? What is the "natural law of God"? And how does one perceive it? These same questions had already sent young Ralph Waldo Emerson on another quest, but Strang was a troubled country boy of doubtful education. As Emerson did, he ran into the stone

wall of idealism and materialism, without Emerson's philosophical training or qualities of mind to help him. The Mormon faith as he met it at Nauvoo and Voree undoubtedly supplied him with solutions and confidence that neither evangelism nor deism could provide. James Strang's spiritual search ended in a clear-cut and adamant monotheism, in direct personal relationship between individual and Deity. He rejected, finally, almost all the principles of orthodox Christian dogma; his faith was as far from the Mormonism of Utah as it was from his boyhood Baptism, closer perhaps, in its groping way, to a rudimentary kind of New England Unitarianism. In the pages of his journal we see his first few tentative steps on that road.

Mark A. Strang, who has edited this journal and whose introduction to it follows, is a son of James Phineas Strang and a grandson of James Jesse Strang and his fourth wife Sarah. James Phineas, the only child of that fourth marriage, was born, after his father's death, in 1856 at Black River Falls, Wisconsin; he married Lydia Houtz, herself a child of a polygamous marriage. His mother Sarah, soon after her son's birth, married a Dr. Wing, moved to Utah, bore five more children, studied medicine, and became a practising physician. From Sarah Strang as well as from his father, Mark Strang gained much of the information necessary for the task of editing his grandfather's diary. Most of all, he brings to it the sympathy and understanding needed for such a delicate and demanding assignment.

East Lansing, Michigan
June, 1960

RUSSEL B. NYE

Preface

Hundreds of thousands of words have been written about James Jesse Strang. Nearly all of the published material has been based on what others have said about him. The purpose of this little book is to present some of the significant things he, himself, said in order that a more accurate appraisal of his character may be made. While all of the writers have conceded him an immense intellect and exceptional education, some, upon failure to understand a specific act, have shifted their own bewilderment to him by the use of such phrases as, “. . . a man of erratic brilliancy. . . .”¹ and, “. . . his brilliant though sometimes erratic mind. . . .”² A careful reading of his own published writings might lead to the conclusion that his occasional change of position on a controversial proposition in the light of new information or extended reasoning indicates not a wandering mind, but a high degree of intellectual integrity and courage, the most significant attributes of a sound mind.

Two powerful groups of enemies arose naturally from his activities. One was the followers of Brigham Young, rival aspirant to the leadership of the Mormon movement. The other was the wealthy liquor interests and their agents, the whisky traders, whom he thwarted in their despoliation of the

¹ Quaipe, Milo M., *The Kingdom of Saint James*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1930, p. 99.

² Riegel, O. W., *Crown of Glory*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1935, p. 28.

Indians. Source material, inspired by one or the other of these groups, has always been readily available to sensational writers bent on producing lurid fiction and astonishing so-called historical articles. On the other hand, nothing of general circulation has been published setting forth his religious thought and philosophy based on his own writings.

THE DIARY will help to supply the need expressed by some writers and researchers for actual, dependable facts regarding his thinking. It has been transcribed with extraordinary care from large photostats of the original. An imperfect transcription of part of it was published in 1930.³ It contains so many errors that competent researchers deem the transcript unreliable and some harmful misconceptions of his character have resulted. A considerable portion was written in his private cipher. As far as this writer knows, it has never before been deciphered and published.

The purpose of the *INTRODUCTION* is to supply essential background material, biographical facts, and significant quotations from his other writings, without which *THE DIARY* can hardly be read with satisfying appreciation.

The idea of exposing a man's private thoughts poses a complex problem in ethics and propriety. Each reader will condemn or applaud this exposure, according to his own code. The writer begs the question by finding an affirmative answer to another: Will it be a service to mankind? This solution falls within James Jesse Strang's governing test: "I am resolved to devote my life to the service of mankind." Some readers will seek and find items upon which to base additional unsavory criticism. Some will read for entertainment alone. Some will take special pleasure in, and perhaps gain wisdom from, the reports of intimate experiences which were never intended for eyes other than his own. It will be a rare treat to many discerning readers who realize that what a thinking man writes in his diary is not tailored to fit the question: What will people think? but is an honest recording, for his own guidance, of concepts, percepts and precepts arising from

³ Quaife, *op. cit.*, pp. 195 ff.

unprejudiced analysis of experience and from meditation and research conducted with total intellectual integrity. Some will discover bits of truth and understanding that will help in the solution of their own problems. Serious-minded readers will find the material thought-provoking, stimulating, and inspiring. Those who have, in their minds, dared to stand face to face with the truths of being will handle the material gently and will arrive at their judgments with delicate and sympathetic understanding.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to Yale University Library for permission to use manuscript material, and especially to Mr. Archibald Hanna of Western Americana Collection for his gracious cooperation in obtaining excellent photostats, and with deepest appreciation to Dr. George S. May, Michigan Historical Commission, who administered the final boost when he read the manuscript thoughtfully and recommended it to the Michigan State University Press, and to Professor Russel B. Nye for his constructive criticism and his scholarly foreword.

And for generous assistance in assembling information from which the background material, biographical facts and notes were drawn, grateful acknowledgement is made to Mr. Theron Drew and Mrs. Barbara Drew, Burlington, Wisconsin; Mr. Stanley L. Johnston, Lansing, Michigan; Mrs. Hazel (Strang) McCardell, Edmonton, Alberta; Mr. George Christian Bump, Burlingame, California; and Mrs. Elleine H. Stones, Chief, Burton Historical Collection, The Detroit Public Library, none of whom is in any way responsible for the opinions or conclusions expressed.

MARK A. STRANG

Contents

	Page
FOREWARD BY RUSSEL B. NYE	vii
PREFACE	xv
INTRODUCTION	xxi
THE DIARY	i
BIBLIOGRAPHY	65

Introduction

"Thinking, not growth, makes manhood." ISAAC TAYLOR

James Jesse Strang was a precocious child. He was born on a farm near Scipio, New York, March 21, 1813, with a frail body, an oversize cranium, and an immense intellect. At the moment he became conscious of being, he was seized by an overpowering urge to know the truth and he fearlessly gave rein to the obsession throughout his life. Of his infancy he said, "Long weary days I sat upon the floor thinking, thinking, thinking! occasionally asking a strange uninfantile question and never getting an answer . . . My mind wandered over fields that old men shrink from, seeking rest and finding none."¹ Before he heard of Omar Khayyam he asked:

"What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence?*
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!"²

He was reared in the superstitious atmosphere of sensational, devil- and hell-ridden religion yet he eagerly sought to penetrate the unknown and to play the light of reason and truth on the prevalent absurdities of belief. Born without fear he continued so through life, although he sometimes won-

¹ Strang, James J., *Ancestry and Childhood of James J. Strang*. (MS) p. 5. Transcribed by his son, Charles J. Strang. Copy in private collection of Mark A. Strang.

² Fitzgerald, Edward, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. New York, 1916, The Dodge Publishing Company, XXX.

dered whether his sublime courage was a blessing or a curse. At such a moment he wrote in his diary :

“I have no dread
And feel the curse to have no natural fear
Nor fluttering throb that beats with hope or wishes
Or lurking of something on the earth.”³

Perhaps he would have lived longer if he had taken the ordinary physical precautions. Although most of his life was spent on the frontier where violence ruled, he was never known to carry a weapon of defense. His extraordinary intellectual courage and zeal made possible his original ideas and startling precepts, many of which were developed from conclusions and assumptions recorded in his diary as stepping-stones and guideposts.

During the first twelve years of his life he received only six months of formal education,⁴ but he learned to read at his mother's knee before he was able to manipulate a book and by dint of incessant reading he entered his teens an authority on the Bible, mythology, history, religion, and philosophy. Yearning for more than book learning about natural phenomena he turned his attention in his early teens to field observation and scientific experimentation. He was not disturbed by the prevalent fear that science might destroy pet superstitions, beliefs and prejudices. He had “no dread . . . no natural fear” of the truth. He approached the study from the position that the chief function of science is to find out what is and what *can* be done about it and with it; that the chief function of religion is to determine what *should* be done about what is; that science, dealing with facts which can be perceived through the physical senses, can draw *conclusions* capable of verification by the senses; that religion, dealing with scientific facts in conjunction with abstract ideas which

³ Strang, James J., *The Diary of James J. Strang*. (MS) Transcribed by Mark A. Strang and reproduced in this volume, p. 59. Henceforth this work will be cited as *The Diary*.

⁴ Strang, *Ancestry and Childhood*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

do not reach the mind through the senses, can develop only *assumptions* incapable of positive proof; that to weigh the validity and usefulness of these conclusions and assumptions and to develop from them wisdom and understanding and happiness is the domain of philosophy.

His familiarity with these separate realms of thought is illustrated in one of the guideposts in his dairy; "Thus far I have had a very pleasant winter, yet Mr. Smith says I tell a falsehood when I say the last year of my life was the happiest, and when I say I enjoy more happiness than I endure misery he is nearly out upon me. The difference is he is a restless Christian and I am a cool Philosopher."⁵

His rural environment afforded an excellent field for his explorations. He tried to relate each experiment and observation with some generally-accepted law of nature but his findings often stimulated his natural bent toward challenging maxims. In his reading he had found that self-preservation was usually referred to as the first law of nature, but finding most everything around him effusing happiness, and felicity appearing as the objective of nearly every phenomenon, he concluded that happiness, if not the first, was the most worked-at law of nature. The voluptuous swelling of buds, the glory of blossoms, the profusion of pollen, the gladness of bursting seed pods, the singing and soaring of birds, the gamboling of lambs and colts, the laughter of children, the singing and dancing and rollicking of lively people free from artificial piety; all these and more proclaimed to him the intent of nature to be happy and to promote happiness. It is apparent in his adult writings, especially when acting in the capacity of lawgiver, that he understood the laws of nature and the laws of God to be identical. His recognition of the law of happiness and gratitude as an essential ingredient in happiness inspired his thankfulness precept which replaces grimness with gladness.

"There is a natural buoyancy of spirits in the constitution of man, which will not live down to the demands of mis-

⁵ *The Diary*, p. 38.

anthropy. It is the native thankfulness of the heart, for blessings bestowed, favors conferred, and happiness enjoyed.

“In that false system of religion, which condemns all the pleasures of life as sinful, and enjoins on us the self-infliction of gloom, pain and misery, in this life, as the price of happiness in another, this natural thankfulness is condemned as sinful.

“Give it a voice, and it will speak the praises of God; motion, and it will act the gratitude of the heart, inspired with an afflatus from the heart of the Redeemer of men . . .

“Be admonished, therefore, that whatsoever you do, you do it in reference to the law of God, being guided thereby in all things; rendering due thanks and praise unto him for all his goodness, and assembling your neighbours with you to be joyful in the Lord.”⁶

The passing of his fifteenth birthday found him absorbed in the study of biology. His field observations were specifically directed toward the procreative process and the natural phenomenon of sexual union. He had expected to find the law of perpetuation of the species in command, but again he encountered the law of happiness and also the law of action which involves the expenditure of energy and the great equalizer, the force that maintains the universal equilibrium, the law of moderation. He found no evidence that the thinking creatures, other than human beings, had any notion whatever that a connection exists between sexual union and procreation and concluded, therefore, that neither a feeling of duty to nor a desire to perpetuate the species is an element of the motive for the act. On the other hand he saw ample evidence of pleasure like that displayed in vigorous physical activity, running, jumping, climbing, romping, and concluded that the urge involved was the desire to enjoy the buoyancy of spirit and satisfaction and exhilaration that results from the expenditure of energy. And he observed that the more concentrated and explosive the release of energy the greater the ecstasy.

He realized that personal experience alone could inform him whether this conclusion applies also where people are

⁶ Strang, *The Book of the Law, op. cit.*, pp. 104, 105.

involved since they are supposed to know more and to have a greater sense of duty. As if by magic the opportunity presented itself in the person of the lovely Nancy Crawford. Combining her familiarity with the operation (she was about five years his senior and the mother of a child) and his eagerness to learn, they explored the subject together that summer with enthusiasm and delight.

Here his excursion into the realm of science took an unexpected twist and landed him back in the halls of book learning. His parents took alarm at the connection and at excessive financial sacrifice bundled him off to the Fredonia Male Academy. It was a tribute to the thoroughness of his self-education that he was able to pass the entrance examinations with flying colors at the Academy for it was known as an exclusive, high-scholarship school of advanced learning.

After he had had about three years in which to cool off and acquire a dependable perspective he wrote, under the caption "Old times," a sedate account of the Nancy Crawford episode in his private cipher as a personal guidepost should infatuation ever again threaten him. It appears deciphered in the transcription of his diary in this volume.⁷

His study of the laws of nature which began in this period had profound influence on his thinking. All through his writings he refers to them interchangeably in such terms as, "God's laws"; "Laws of the Lord"; "The laws of life"; "The constitution of man"; "Natural habits." There is unmistakable evidence in his writings of his firm conviction that the universe is governed, not by caprice, but by immutable laws instituted by a single intelligence and, taking into account man's power and liberty of choice, provided with effective sanctions in the form of rewards, rewards of progress, success and happiness for conformity and failure of reward for nonconformity. To fully appreciate his writings and understand his precepts it is necessary to know that in the inner sanctuary of his mind the "Spirit of Nature" is God and the laws of nature are God's laws.

⁷ *The Diary*, pp. 12, 13.

At the Academy, his great heritage, his insatiable yearning for knowledge, soon regained its dominant roll in his life. The school library was to him a treasure surpassing Coronado's golden dream of the Seven Cities of Cibola. He expanded his reading far beyond the limits of his childhood, for he found books and periodicals in great variety formerly unavailable to him. In addition to acquiring the usual academic culture, he became an accomplished debater and public speaker.

He came home from the Academy full of grand designs for a spectacular career and eager to share his broad outlook and his knowledge with old acquaintances and associates. His reception was a cruel disappointment and disillusionment. The young people rejected him for his erudition and the older ones, the pillars of church and society, shunned and rebuffed him for what they deemed his heretical opinions, even to the extent of expelling him from the church he had joined in childhood to please his mother.⁸ None could stand before his logic, his booming voice, his piercing eyes, but they nearly overwhelmed him with the weapons of the cowardly and the weak: ridicule, slander, libel, calumny, ostracism. He faced the bleak years of adjustment to a hostile world with courage and determination. He had to learn to make a living and he had to select a goal and chart a life course in an environment of vindictive opposition. His vitriolic outbursts in his diary against the depravity of man show that he came to the brink of despair at times, but always climbed back clinging to his dreams of empire. It was during the years occupied by this soul-searching and soul-torturing quest for a way of life and a satisfying philosophy that he wrote his diary, and what he wrote there is so packed with meaning distilled from experience, vast research and devoted meditation, that the thoughtful reader may ponder it long and well with rewarding results.

He concluded that the goal upon which he must concentrate his aspirations, and the only one worth the effort, was *immortal fame*. And he recorded this conclusion in his diary, thus: "All the works of man are destined to decay . . . all

⁸ Riegel, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

the works of art and alike the systems of intellect fall before the tooth of time. And fame, fame alone of all the products of man's folly *may* survive."⁹ To guard against the fate of those notorious figures of history who headed for fame and landed in the halls of infamy, he restricted his course to acts essentially beneficial to others and recorded these restrictions in his diary: ". . . I intend to make serving the people my business through life . . ." ¹⁰ and more formally, "I am resolved to [devote] my life to the service of mankind."¹¹

His goal was fixed, his course was charted, and his knowledge of history justified his belief that the world steps aside for the man who knows where he is going. Yet the realities of physical existence baffled and buffeted and frustrated him from the beginning. He had no manual skill nor the physique to compete in the labor market. His instinctive sense of fair play would not permit him to be content to live on the bounty of his struggling, farmer parents and he knew that as a farm hand he was not worth his keep. Although his great head was packed with book learning, the recorded wisdom of the ages, he had no profession through which he could convert it into food nor any magic by which he could transmute it to clothing and shelter. He saw no hope of surviving by his hands, therefore he must live by his wits, by thinking, thinking, thinking, and if survival was to have any meaning, to be worth the struggle, he must continue his exploration of the domain of metaphysics, keep fresh his grand designs and make continuous progress toward his goal.

His diary is a frank report to himself on this struggle. He lashes out at his frustrations: "It [another year] is gone. I hope not lost. But it is gone in the way of the world, and passed as others have passed their days who have died in obscurity. Curse me eternally if that be my fate."¹² "Behind is almost blank, while ahead is only thick darkness. Should I

⁹ *The Diary*, p. 49.

¹⁰ *The Diary*, p. 6.

¹¹ *The Diary*, p. 9.

¹² *The Diary*, pp. 50, 51.

die now I have lived in vain. O! the curse to have done nothing for posterity.”¹³ He notes his failures and their causes: “By the way I am a 4th corporal after having failed of an election to a higher office. The cause of my failure was my refusal to buy men’s votes with rum . . .”¹⁴ and his passing triumphs with their rewards: “I am appointed to deliver an address on temperance on the first of July. . . . It’s done. After this experiment with my experience in debating I may safely ever consider myself perfectly at home in public speaking.”¹⁵

He grieved at what he found in the hearts of mortal men but he steadfastly refused to be influenced by it or to be deterred from his determination to serve them. “. . . all I see in other beings have been to me as rain into the sands.”¹⁶ “. . . it is enough to make one wish himself excluded from the face of man . . . to see the human heart a mere puff of air and at the same time a pit of corruption . . .”¹⁷ “From my infancy I have been taught that mankind were totally depraved and my own observation and experience have demonstrated that the heart of man is an impure fountain from which bitter waters are perpetually flowing.”¹⁸ “Is it possible that any one should wish for eminence who believes all this? Yes it is possible: it is true . . . I am resolved to [devote] my life to the service of mankind.”¹⁹

Notwithstanding his grand designs, his hope for fame, and his presuming to uplift his fellow men, he was humble as all great intellects are humble before omniscience. Although he never groveled nor crawled nor begged, he often noted his lack of the wisdom and strength of character he craved: “In the last year I have learned all I profess to know. That is that I am ignorant and mankind are frail, and I do not half

¹³ *The Diary*, p. 61.

¹⁴ *The Diary*, p. 22.

¹⁵ *The Diary*, p. 42.

¹⁶ *The Diary*, p. 58.

¹⁷ *The Diary*, p. 9.

¹⁸ *The Diary*, p. 21.

¹⁹ *The Diary*, p. 9.

know that:—nevertheless I shall act upon it for time to come for my own benefit.”²⁰ He was acknowledging his needs and dedicating his future to the acquisition of more wisdom and to the development of more strength and endurance. The word “ignorant” in this passage was mistranscribed as “eager” in *The Kingdom of St. James*.^{*} This mistranscription gives a meaning to the passage that Strang’s words do not convey. The importance given to this mistranscribed passage by Quaife himself is indicated by his reference to it on page seven of his book as “the key, there is much reason to think, to his future remarkable career.” Subsequent writers, notwithstanding Strang’s avowed resolution to devote his life to the service of mankind, have, on account of this error in copying his words, mistakenly and without checking the transcript against the original, assigned selfish motives to him and have portrayed him as a character dominated by greedy, ruthless ambition. Much of the literature developed around Strang since 1930 has been influenced by this mistranscription and many of the books and articles have quoted or commented on it while ignoring his many verifiable statements that indicate an unselfish, altruistic, benevolent personality.

As constant warnings always to be prepared to meet aggression he recorded some of his bitter experiences: “All Forestville combined against me and swore my ruin . . . The Grand Jury sat . . . Forestville spit its venom in vain. Its highways and lanes and ditches were emptied to go and cry against me. All hell was raked for false witness. Young men . . . harangued the multitude. Old sinners . . . appeared in open day and pleaded jurors to perjure themselves and ruin me. Clergymen and their pious followers prayed the overwhelming vengeance of the allmighty on the heaven daring Infidel who providence had thrown in their power . . . It is done. Eighteen of nineteen jurors say ‘Not Guilty.’ I shall never forget the friends who were faithful at that moment. For my intention to my enemies, let the light of a future judgement reveal it.”²¹

²⁰ *The Diary*, p. 17.

^{*} Quaife, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

²¹ *The Diary*, p. 57.

Events and pronouncements that followed indicate his relentless abhorrence of evil but no malice toward men who employed it against him. Triumph was his sufficient reward and vindication his sufficient revenge. Indicative of that "future judgment" twenty-one years later, after he had triumphed at the polls and in the Federal Court and had achieved a generous measure of fame and fortune, in a confidential letter to his brother he reminisced :

"I began early with some notions of improving the conditions of the human race, of bettering my fellow men ; notions perhaps a little impracticable but nevertheless benevolent and such as could be entertained only by those philanthropists who are willing to sacrifice and suffer for the sake of others ; notions which if they are never received among men, will be rejected because they are too heavenly.

"And for having such ideas and seeking to practice upon them, I have been set upon, maligned, and my footsteps dogged as a shadow from the days of my childhood till this day. They have caricatured virtues which they lacked ; belied my actions, and misconstrued my motives, until I was nearly crushed by the infamy they heaped upon me. I was made the sinner and they the saints who loathed all vice. And this is my revenge ;—To triumph in the forums of the same public where they sought and well nigh accomplished my ruin. Beyond that I am indifferent to either wealth or public honors. I have twice as much of either as I know what to do with. Moreover I am fully persuaded that my future fame depends upon the calling which God has put upon me, and not upon any office which man can bestow. I have made my mark upon the times in which I live which the wear and tear of time in the unborn ages shall not be able to obliterate."²²

Sprinkled through his diary are traces of his development

²² Strang, James J., unpublished letter to his brother David, headed November 25, 1852, Saint James, Beaver Island, Michigan. Photostatic copy in the private collection of Mark A. Strang, by the courtesy and generosity of Stanley L. Johnston of Lansing, Mich.

from agnostic to skeptic to cynic to infidel to atheist: "Mr. Smith calls on me to pray and talk religious subjects and sometimes I consent just to please the people. It is all a mere mock of sounds with me for I can no longer believe the nice speculative contradictions of our divine theologians . . ." ²³ and later in his private cipher: "I am a perfect atheist but do not profess it lest I bring my father grey hair with sorrow to the grave." ²⁴

But, happily, he also records his discovery of a supreme being (a spiritual entity in contrast with the material, human-like deity he, as an atheist, had denied) which he could accept with his reason and adore with his emotions. In the deep inner recesses of his mind, where his thinking was his soul talking with itself, he called the supreme being the "Spirit of Nature" but when trying to communicate his thoughts to others, custom made it necessary, albeit distressingly frustrating, to employ the word "God" to which usage and abuse throughout the centuries has given as many meanings as there are individuals to use it. In his enthralling description of the intellectual experience in which he recognized the illusory attributes of matter and the permanency of spirit he wrote: "I turned my eyes to the stars for light and the works of nature for instruction: the darkness dispelled: the shades retired: the illusive works of man disappeared as I passed on, and the Spirit of Nature moved me with a holy inspiration. The sun had not yet appeared nor the moon arisen in the east but there was a glory in the light shades of evening like Milton's twilight in heaven. The face of nature was serenely beautiful, not an unseemly mark appeared. The human ken is short and the light of nature shone but dimly, but it was not an illusive light." ²⁵

During the five years of struggle covered by the diary he studied law and thereby mastered a profession which provided the means of material survival, and moreover, he laid

²³ *The Diary*, p. 10.

²⁴ *The Diary*, p. 21.

²⁵ *The Diary*, p. 36.

the foundation of a system of philosophy and religious thought as clean and clear and chaste as Grecian architecture from which flows to the many who seek it in his writings a perpetual current of dynamic happiness, not tranquillity like a silent pool but gladness like a singing stream.

His thinking, indeed all orderly rational thinking, leads inevitably to a single cause. Whether by reason, instinct, intuition, inspiration, revelation or assumption, he saw that cause as totally beneficent to mankind. Faith is the actuating force in religion. His single fundamental article of faith is the belief that Primary Cause, Principle, the Almighty, the Spirit of Nature, God is good and therefore worthy of man's full confidence and adoration. Thus he nullifies the superstitious dread of the jealous, vengeful, vindictive gods of primitive tribes, of mythology, of Christendom, the exploitation of which has in all generations enabled the few to enslave the minds of the many. Man may respect what he fears but he cannot love it. Faith in and acceptance of God's love imposes the obligation and creates the desire to love him and such love to be genuine and unselfish must also embrace his creatures, fellow men. The only acceptable evidence of the individual's acknowledgement and voluntary acceptance of this obligation is his effort to emulate God, that is to say to conform, to the best of his lights, to the character of God.

James Jesse Strang's system of religious thought and philosophy is built around the fact of God's love to man and man's duty to love God and fellow men. These are his words :

"The design of the Almighty evidently is to found his government in love; and to make that the chief sanction of his law. Love is the first thing required of all men; love unto God. . . ." ²⁶

"As God has founded his government on the dominion of love, and as our principal relations in life are to God as our superiour, and to our neighbours as fellows, love to our

²⁶ Strang, *The Book of the Law, op. cit.*, p. 18.

neighbour is as necessary to a faithful observance of his law, as love to him."²⁷

Being a trained lawyer he used the word "sanction" in its technical meaning as the legal term for the enforcing clause in statutes and the implied consequences or threats of penalty and promises of reward in unwritten law. In its function as the sanction of God's law, love is the reward for obedience and the lack of love is the penalty for disobedience. As to abatement of penalties for laws already broken ". . . conformity of man to the character of God . . . is the true idea of salvation . . ." ²⁸ which is as much as to say, "Save yourself by complying with God's laws now; nobody else can do that for you." Even ". . . God's mercy cannot save and render happy, those who will not exercise a proper government over their passions and propensities."²⁹

In his translation of the Mosaic law he restored to the decalogue the Commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"³⁰ which does not appear in the decalogue as printed in the King James Version or the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

It is worthy of note that Abraham Lincoln, his contemporary, also a self-educated man, a lawyer and another of the world's great thinkers, found the demands of religion condensed to the same two precepts as expressed in the words of Jesus, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self."³¹

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³¹ *The Bible*, King James Version, Mark 12: 30, 31. See the article, "What Do They Believe?" by Jerome Nathanson in *A Guide to the Religions of America*. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1955, pp. 167, 168.

In his diary Strang reports his discovery “. . . that the depravity of man originated in his unnatural habits [conduct out of harmony with the laws of nature] . . . that . . . a return to those which are natural would effect a cure.”³² Development of this thesis led to his conclusion that no need exists for ceremony or ritual, mediation or vicarious salvation.

“There can be no such thing as a conformity of man to the character of God; *which is the true idea of salvation*; till with a high order of wisdom and intelligence, and a power of choosing between good and evil, man continually prefers the good, and abhors the evil; preferring good to evil, not from the fear of the punishment which evil deeds entail, but on account of the innate loveliness of undefiled goodness: of pure unalloyed holiness.”³³

He points out that much of the erroneous thought prevailing in the churches and several obnoxious dogmas arise from the basic fallacy that God can do all things. “All these mistakes and follies flow naturally from the error of imagining that God can do anything whatsoever that the mind of man can conceive, and is only restrained by his own attributes from doing many things which to good men seem most desirable and right, which he does not do.”³⁴

“It is necessary to be thoroughly impressed with this truth: that God cannot do all things; that some things are essentially and immutably impossible; impossible to omnipotence, as well as to worms of the dust; that almighty power extends only to doing such things as, in their nature, are possible.”³⁵

“. . . God, like man, can only produce results by the use of sufficient means . . . whatever other attributes man was created with, he could not be with experience. That every being must have for himself. None can derive it from another. Had the conduct of man been subject to such a control that

³² *The Diary*, p. 21.

³³ Strang, *The Book of the Law*, *op. cit.*, p. 155. The italics are supplied by this writer.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

he could only choose, and do the right, his time of life would have given no experience. Unless he was capable of choosing or refusing either the good or the evil, he could no more learn by experience than could a machine. He could have no wisdom. He could only act the wisdom of the maker, as does the clock. Therefore, the very condition of things [man being a creature of choice and choosing evil] through which sin entered the world, and death by sin, was necessary, in the progress of the work, of making man perfect as God is perfect. Not that sin was necessary, but peccability, or the liability to sin."³⁶

This is his logic: It is obvious that man cannot be perfect without wisdom. Experience is an essential ingredient of wisdom and therefore of perfection. It is impossible for God to create man with experience. Therefore man was not created perfect. Perfection is man's perpetual goal and his happiness is commensurate with his progress.

His basic assumption is that God is good. In that belief he continues:

"Sin, having entered the world, the benevolence of God demanded that an effort be made to save the sinner; and justice did not demand that he should be immediately destroyed; or that he be destroyed at all, if he could be separated from sin; and thus made a blessing, rather than a curse."³⁷

To be separated from sin lies solely within the choice of the individual. The Biblical narrative of the life of Jesus, whether it be a factual report or an allegory, shows the way by example. ". . . Jesus Christ was a mortal man, subject to the same infirmities as other men, and tempted in all things like his brethren . . ." ³⁸ "He . . . loved righteousness and hated iniquity . . ." ³⁹ "Not one even of the least of all the Commandments or precepts of God did he ever trans-

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 153.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

gress . . .”⁴⁰ It is not Jesus’ death but the emulation of the story of his life in which he achieved conformity to the character of God that places the individual in possession here and now of the happy eternal life that is his heritage.

The process of being separated from sin which is the actuality of being spared the consequence of sin begins with the *choosing* to abide by God’s laws. But because of man’s perverse passions, his love of license, his pride in his power of choice he will not place himself under the laws of God unless and until he comes to love good and abhor evil. Then it is not a sacrifice but a gain for that is the pathway of life and happiness.

“By means of this law the way of life is ever so guarded that none can lay hold on immortality, except those who have, through the experience of temptation, a settled and unconquerable hatred of sin, and an unchangeable love of righteousness, so that the keeping of the Law of God, instead of being a restraint on them is their chief desire and greatest pleasure. No other can enter into life.”⁴¹

Man is endowed with the power of choice. To conform to the character of God man must know what that character is. To comply with the laws of God which include the immutable laws of nature man must know what those laws are. To fully understand God and to learn all his laws is the work of eternity. That need not be a doleful, hopeless thought but a joyous one for it implies that the most blissful of all intellectual activities, seeking and finding wisdom, may be pursued forever. It would be a dismal day indeed if one should ever come when there were no more pearls of truth to find.

Although he was a master of logic and argumentation and, in his youth, tried to reason out the answers to all problems, his intellectual approach to the facts of life forced him to the conclusion that much of the pure knowledge, ultimate truth, that reaches man is not the product of logic but of the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

faculty, *perception*. He came to rely upon this faculty more and more with the development of his insight and receptivity to spiritual intuition and inspiration until he looked upon it as evidence of a mystic unity of every individual consciousness with the mind of the Spirit of Nature, the seat of omniscience. Throughout his adult career he was a staunch defender of revelation and held that truth is being revealed today as it was in antiquity to those who choose to develop and employ their capacities to perceive. He wrote: "Enter into the closet of your friends' hearts, open the door that shame and the fear of being called superstitious has shut, induce men to speak to you as they commune with their hearts, and how many will you find, who have never beheld the spiritual? How many who have never been spoken to by the invisible? How many who have never been led by the intangible? This world is now a vast crowd of living witnesses of the spiritual, . . . This truth is a spring that can never be dried up."⁴² He understood faith to be the conviction of the reality of things unseen and his faith was sublime.

Within a few months after the last entry in his diary he was admitted to the New York bar and married Mary Perce, the daughter of a local Baptist minister. Under her influence he reluctantly settled down to a life of mediocre respectability as lawyer, postmaster, editor and, with mental reservations, reunited with the Baptist denomination. Mary was not only a model of social behavior as the daughter of a minister was expected to be but she was also an inflexible bigot as a model church member in those days was expected to be.

Under this pressure and the added material responsibility of marriage he deferred his great designs and, as a measure of self defense, he adopted a maxim he had previously recorded in his diary: ". . . a maxim of mine that it is better to submit to anything than to protract desension forever . . ." ⁴³ and found it valid in one respect that it put an end to futile argu-

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴³ *The Diary*, p. 22.

ment of non-sense propositions, that is to say propositions not capable of verification by the senses such as the Virgin Birth and the Trinity.

Mary found her comfort and ease in the unquestioning acceptance of doctrines and ethical practices well established in Christian tradition and could not tolerate the idea of introducing something new; while James longed for the excitement of challenging maxims and exploding dogmas and was obsessed by a Messianic urge to give to the world a set of fresh new truths. Although there is in the diary a hint of sly intrigue, the marriage of these two young people notwithstanding their diametrically opposed attitudes toward life points up the fact that reason and romance have but little in common.

The seven seething years under the blanket of mediocre respectability were not entirely wasted. Each time he reread the highminded declarations in his diary his self-esteem lowered. The book often fell open at entries such as these: "I should rather be the best hunter in an Indian tribe than a common place member of the New York bar."⁴⁴ ". . . I am sorry I have not made more improvement in preparing for my great designes . . ."⁴⁵ "True I have done nothing in all my life and am a fool yet . . ."⁴⁶ "I know it is in my power to make it otherwise."⁴⁷ What had become of his grand designs, his ideals, his lofty aspirations? He knew they were not utterly destroyed; submerged but not stifled; betrayed perhaps but not irretrievably alienated. When he looked in his mirror he was ashamed and to ease the pain of what he saw there he vainly grew a beard, a great reddish brown, lambent beard. He liked the beard and kept it but he still had the sorry mental image of himself lagging in commonplace comfort and obscurity while the frontier of the land as well as the glorious frontier of the mind passed him by. Yet he had

⁴⁴ *The Diary*, pp. 27, 28.

⁴⁵ *The Diary*, p. 15.

⁴⁶ *The Diary*, pp. 49, 50.

⁴⁷ *The Diary*, p. 51.

devoted many hours of the nights and days to serious meditation on the truths he had so early discovered and he knew that his fundamental convictions had grown steadily stronger with the passing of those discouragingly empty years.

Finally the deadly inertia was broken when he lost the postmastership and its easy security. On July 18, 1843, he loaded his books and his wife and two children into a spring carriage and headed for Wisconsin Territory determined to catch up with the new frontier, to lead, however difficult, and never again to follow, however easy. When they started west he was in the driver's seat and never thereafter relinquished the reins.

He had little to say on that long dusty journey but there was plenty for his resurgent mind to feed on. Contemplating what he was tempted to think of as his lost years he found that even that lean period had yielded its blessings. He had developed a rugged physique equal to any hardships the frontier could impose. He had learned much about legal procedure, journalism and politics. And from these activities and his desultory efforts at temperance and political reforms he had learned that it is better to talk to the wind than to people who will not listen, for you do not make an enemy of the wind.

He established his law office at Burlington, an outpost near the edge of a vast area of unclaimed public domain. There he found the crest of the tide of western migration, a mass of disturbed land-hungry farmers, prospective business, professional and service people and unattached adventurers seeking opportunities they had failed to find at home. They were disturbed as groping wanderers in a strange land and they were disturbed in their minds for they had broken with the past and were afraid of the future. They had freed themselves from the orthodox rules of thought and conduct and the resulting economic conditions that had obstructed their progress in the past. To ease the uncertainty and dread of this new-found freedom they were grasping for a set of rational prin-

ciples to cling to. They faced the hard fact of the prime responsibility of freedom, the necessity to think.

He attended some meetings conducted by Mormon missionaries and comparing them with temperance, revival and political meetings in New York he was astonished at the sober, intent interest displayed by the people. Like a prospector who had finally struck it rich he knew he had arrived. Here in the vanguard of civilization he had found his El Dorado, a listening audience.

The remarkable success of those unlettered, uncouth, inept, itinerant preachers fired his imagination with the possibilities awaiting his eloquent oratory backed by his superior education, his logic and mastery of language and his stimulating ideas. It was with difficulty that he held his zeal in check while he planned his course.

History and current events and his own experience taught him that the quickest way to political success was to climb on the band wagon when one was going in a suitable general direction. The sensational Mormon movement looked like such a vehicle. In its brief history (it was then in its fifteenth year) it had attracted tens of thousands of adherents, had built Nauvoo, the largest city in Illinois, and had made its founder, Joseph Smith, Jr., one of the most notable men in America. Strang's encyclopedic knowledge of the history of religion gave him an excellent background against which to analyse the phenomenal growth of the Mormon church. He found that its leaders had applied the church-building technique used in all successful religious movements throughout history, namely: mystery, magic and miracle. The central loadstone in Mormonism he found to be the mysterious origin of the *Book of Mormon*.

Nevertheless, he pursued his investigation, for in his evaluation of history, although much misery had been produced in the name of religion by malignant leaders, many and great blessings had been brought to mankind by churches so built under benign leadership. He held that actions are to be judged according to motives and that it borders on ingratitude

for a beneficiary to question the means by which God's blessings are brought to him.

This conception appears to have provided, in his mind, ample justification for the stratagems later employed by him in building his organization as he applied the history-proven church-building techniques: mystery, magic and miracle; vision, apparition and revelation; allegory, metaphor and parable; sign, symbol and surrogate. He recognized the importance of symbols in the constant struggle of men to communicate with one another. The most useful tools of thought are mental images but we cannot form clear mental images of abstract ideas because they cannot be distinctly outlined. However, *symbols* of abstract ideas are readily imaged in the mind.

The symbol of the idea named "God" described in "The Creed of Saint Athanasius. . . adopted by nine-tenths of all Christendom"⁴⁸ was found by James Jesse Strang to be repugnant to reason and incapable of practical use because it, the symbol itself, is incomprehensible. "For as the Creed declares that the Father is Lord God Almighty, uncreate, eternal, and incomprehensible; the Son, Lord God Almighty, uncreate, eternal, and incomprehensible; and the Holy Ghost, Lord God Almighty, uncreate, eternal, and incomprehensible; it is most indisputably the Creed of three gods, notwithstanding the disclaimer, which says they are one God. Thus they worship God the father, 'without body, parts, or passions;' and God the Son, begotten by the Father, with 'body, flesh, and bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature,' sitting at the right hand of God, the father, who has no hand; and God the Holy Ghost, who proceeded from the Father and the Son, who is, nevertheless, eternal, though he could not have proceeded from the Son, until he was begotten; three gods, all unlike; and require men to believe these three, but one, on pain of being damned everlastingly. It is no wonder that those who preach this doctrine

⁴⁸ Strang, *The Book of the Law of the Lord*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

declare it a mystery. It is a greater mystery that men have been found to believe it.”⁴⁹

He proceeded to describe a clearly comprehensible and usable symbol of God and ascribed divine authority to his description by the time-honored practice of numerous Biblical citations which are included in his text but not repeated in this quotation: “The God of the Prophets and Apostles was in bodily form, with all the appropriate parts ; for he had arms, hands, loins, feet, face, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, lips, and tongue. The appearance of God was the likeness of man, when he appeared to Ezekiel, and called him to the prophetick office ; though he was surrounded with fire and a glorious radiance, from his loins upwards and downwards.”⁵⁰

The process of creating a symbol includes clothing it with the appropriate attributes. In this case in addition to those of the ideal material man he assigned such attributes as could be possessed only by the single Primal Cause. “. . . he alone hath immortality, and omniscience, and omnipotence, and omnipresence. He alone is one ; and they who obey his law shall be like him.”⁵¹

It is unnecessary to feel frustration or regret in the discovery that man can never fully master such ideas as omnipresence, infinity, eternity, God ; because one is forever learning new, exciting truths about them and progress is the mother of happiness. What could be a more pleasing prospect than the vista of inexhaustible progress toward the ideal. There is a temporary triumphal rapture in the realization of duty well done but day to day dynamic, accelerating happiness is the product of doing rather than finishing a good job.

In order to learn first hand the objectives of the Mormon church and the motives and character of its leaders he went to Nauvoo and visited for some time with Joseph Smith, Jr. and met members of his family and some of his lieutenants and many of his followers. He found Joseph, although “with

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 57.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

a very meager education,"⁵² highly perceptive and actuated by beneficent motives. He never had reason to change his firm opinion that Joseph was completely dedicated to the good of his followers without the slightest concern about the consequences to himself. And Joseph saw in James the type of brilliant leadership the church needed. James soon satisfied himself that the ultimate objective of the church was the same as his own, to bring peace of mind and happiness to the people, and decided to go along with the movement. He did not concern himself with doctrinal niceties. In fact he did not see a copy of the book, *Doctrine and Covenants*, until long afterwards.⁵³ He had his own message to deliver and was fully confident that it would push aside any ideas old or new that might appear to conflict with it. Soon he was baptized, ordained an Elder and authorized to "plant a stake of Zion in Wisconsin."⁵⁴

Thus began the career foreshadowed in his diary. His life is the story of a mind penetrating the darkness of the unknown and bringing back glimpses of truth and understanding to enlighten posterity. The history of the Voree and Beaver Island colonies he established and counseled is the story of his meteoric rise from "commonplace member of the New York bar" to King in Zion.⁵⁵ It is stranger than

⁵² Strang, James J., *The Prophetic Controversy* (A letter to Mrs. Howard Corey, headed Saint James, September 26, 1854). Reprint, Boyne, Michigan, 1886, p. 16. Originally printed at Saint James, Michigan, 1856.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Smith, Joseph, Jr., *Letter to James J. Strang*. (Headed Nauvoo, Illinois, June 18, 1844.) Preserved in the Western Americana Collection, Yale University Library. Printed in Quaife, *The Kingdom of Saint James, op. cit.*, p. 236.

⁵⁵ The title "King in Zion" designated the head man in the Church comparable to "Pope" in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, or "Potentate" in a fraternal order, or "Moderator" in the Presbyterian church. It was a religious office deriving its power from the consent of the church members. No secular authority nor any authority whatsoever over non-members was imputed to the office. Strang did, however, hold various secular offices from time to

fiction, interesting, exciting and stimulating, yet it is the most tragic of the true stories of the pioneer west.

One scholarly writer dedicates his book: "To James Jesse Strang, whose failure was magnificent."⁵⁶ Materially, perhaps it was a failure since his body was destroyed by assassins' bullets when he was only forty-three years of age and his widows and orphans were robbed of their inheritances and his colonists were despoiled, dispossessed and dispersed in destitution by a drunken mob but he did, through service to mankind, achieve his aspiration, *immortal fame*. Men come and swiftly go but the truths they record remain.

Throughout the entire thirteen years of his career as religious leader and teacher he labored under a relentless urge to record in permanent book form for the benefit of his adherents and posterity the principles and precepts which had been revealed to him and which he knew pointed the way to endless and ever accelerating happiness. Every day brought additional evidence that the spoken word, however eloquent, is not enough in the age of the printing press to propagate, protect and perpetuate a system of religious thought and philosophy. Yet every day brought increasing administrative responsibilities, ministerial duties and financial problems to delay and frustrate his efforts to write the book. But after applying every minute he could find, mostly in the quiet hours of the night, for thirteen eventful years he achieved a triumph that few men are privileged to taste when in the spring of 1856 only a few weeks before his assassination he saw the sheets of the expanded edition of *The Book of the Law of the*

time in addition to his church offices. Both church members and non-members sought and accepted his decisions as a civil Magistrate at St. James and no such decision was ever reversed by a higher court. And as a member of the Michigan State Legislature his record was outstanding. Col. DeLand, clerk of the Michigan House of Representatives at the time, wrote of Strang, "As a legislator he was vigilant, careful and just; and some of the best laws of Michigan made in those days were made by his pen and influence."

⁵⁶ Riegel, *op. cit.*, dedication.

Lord coming off the Royal Press at Saint James and knew that through it, regardless of fate, he would go on indefinitely serving mankind in the most beneficial fashion by enlightening them. There was gladness in his heart and gratitude as he repeated what he had previously said in the closing paragraph of an important letter: "Of all that dwell on earth, God has made me the most happy."⁵⁷

MARK A. STRANG

⁵⁷ Strang, *The Prophetic Controversy*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

The Diary

Written by James J. Strang in longhand and partly in his private cipher during the years 1831 to 1836, a period of exactly five years. His age at the beginning was 18 years, 2 months, 8 days and at the ending 23 years, 2 months, 8 days.

Deciphered and transcribed with unflagging attention to accuracy and exactitude and annotated, out of peculiarly full knowledge of his life and works, by his grandson,
Mark A. Strang.

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OF THE ORIGINAL HAND WRITTEN DIARY

YALE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
NEW HAVEN

The Diary¹

[1831²]

[May] 29th. To day I read seven hours in [V]olney's Ruins, reading more than 360 pages. It is an admirable work and well [ex]ecuted.

[Ju]ly 4th. Celebrated the aniversary [of] our National Independence [at] Love's, was present; but after [th]e oration was [de]livered, it was [s]aid to be smart but badly given, toasts were decent some very good. Mr. Corey, Marshall. Dr. Crum, President. Dr. Brown, Speaker.

¹ One hundred twenty-two pages of the original handwritten journal of James J. Strang came to the Western Americana Collection at Yale University Library in two different groups at different times several years apart. This transcription was made by Mark A. Strang, grandson of the author whose full name was James Jesse Strang, from large photostats of the pages. The archaic spelling and punctuation have been transcribed faithfully in order to preserve the authenticity of the document and the atmosphere of the times in which it was written.

Some of the pages have suffered considerable damage from exposure to the weather and misuse. Where words or letters have been obliterated or are missing and it is reasonably obvious what they had been, the transcriber has supplied them and so indicated by enclosing them in brackets. Extraordinary care has been taken in the transcribing and the deciphering so that readers and future researchers may have access to his thoughts exactly as he expressed them. Without the large professional photostats which greatly increased the legibility of the writing the high degree of accuracy of this transcripton could not have been attained.

² The age of James J. Strang on the date of this first entry in his diary was eighteen years, two months and eight days. He was living with his parents, Clement and Abigail Strang in their farm home at Hanover, near Forestville, Chautauqua County, New York.

31st. Last night had the heaviest thunder and rain we have had in some time, perhaps 4 or 5 years, the creks are very high overflowing several acres of land: some damage done.

Our debating school was given up as soon as it went into operation to prevent contention with the [p]rejudiced bigots.

JESSE J. STRANG³

(July 31st.) The revival meeting [lasted] a fortnight or more. Some do[zen] [or] twenty were converted, principally small boys and very young [ladies]. Nearly half have allready ret[urned] to their wallowing again.

Unkle S. H. Dillingham visited [us] lately: we were able to shew him the largest corn in the country though it was planted in June.

August 28th. I have been making records of our debating society. Since it was reestablished it has been prosperous. We have had several sharp debates lately, one last evening.

The state of Europe is at this time truly precarious, Poland in a dreadful contest for independence, Englan[d] all in ferment about reform, Belgium in a struggle with foreign ministers [and] even members of her own congress whether to deliver her self to the (un)holy alliance or not.

October 9th. Our debating school is very prosperous though we have but a few speakers. Five is the extent but we expect more soon.

Mr. Pearce, an excellent speaker, and my only rival, has gone away. He intends to go on a canal next summer and wishes me to go, at eighteen dollars per month.

Not long since Mr. Pearce wrote to me a poetick letter

³ The signature appears at the top of some of the pages, as in this case, as Jesse J. Strang or J. J. Strang or J. James Strang, but on later dates, generally as James J. Strang. In some cases where the signature interrupts the continuity of text it has been omitted in this transcription to facilitate reading.

to which I replied in like manner, but only in criticism. At the same time I wrote a song on a subject similar to his letter, which has since been common singing with the boys. Since that I have written considerable: today I have been writing a letter which was begun friday evening: it is my masterpiece. Last evening I wrote a song of sixteen lines after debating school.

JESSE J. STRANG OCT. 9TH 1831

About a week since I wrote to Grand Father, also to Manly. It is wet weather.

Oct 16th. Last night we had a sharp debate on the question is man more inclined to good than evil? I was never before so wearied with speaking. I have imbibed a habit of speaking very loud, last night was heard distinctly twenty rods in a house. I have a dispute with Mr. Smith the amount of which is, "shall the accuser prove the accused guilty, or shall the accused prove himself innocent?" It arose from the following circumstance: in a debate not long since he accused me of quoting history which I had never read and quoting it falsely. I replied giving him reasons to know I had read it and did quote it right and chalenged him to his proofs. He very modestly replied denying my reasons and giving me liberty to prove the accusations false. Last evening I prepared the way for training⁴ him and in reply to me he said he had a right to accuse me of what he pleased and the accusation stood good till proved to the contrary. I shall train him shortly.

Nov. 22d. By a singular change of circumstance I am to be teaching school in Randolph in a few days. I had formerly given up the idea of teaching school at all but am now very earnestly desired to teach for the people in that

⁴ The word "train" is used by Strang here and elsewhere in the Journal to mean: to subject to verbal discipline; to chastise with words; to administer a tongue lashing.

place and as I intend to make serving the people my business through life⁵ I will do it now, yet, this is not business to my mind. Last saturday I attended the debating school; the question was, "In which is exhibited the greatest curiosity, animate or inanimate life?" The affirmative was ably represented by Messrs Warren, Smith and Slater; on the negative I had the

JESSE J. STRANG NOV. 22d 1831⁶

privilege of speaking alone. The question was hardly contested on both sides; decision for the negative. I had formerly spoken on the same question, and came off where I went on.

I trained Smith a week ago saturday in blank verse, and he bore it patiently.

It began as follows:

"To him who rides on slander's foaming steeds
Who loves to charge a friend with basest deeds
Who speaks for naught but wrothful, vengeful wrong
Who hopes to rise by slander's blasting tongue"

The whole lingo consisted of sixty lines but part of it was so savage I thought it not prudent to recite it in publick.

Nov. 25th. Today I have bought some toys for the school to the amount of \$1.20, also a few books; they are—

Book of Nature—Good,	\$1.87½
Lexicon of Useful Knowledge	1.50
American Constitutions	1.25
Life of Napoleon	\$1.25

⁵ A recording of his dedication to the service of mankind which was the governing rule of his life.

⁶ Here the signature and date appear at the top of the page while beneath them a sentence of the text is continued from the previous page.

And a few school books and others of less consequence.
The books I bought for company next winter.
Tomorrow I shall start for my school.

RANDOLPH,
NOV. 27 1831.

Well I have now set down for one winter; for one winter of hard labour too, I think from the present appearance of weather, for it has snowed steady since I left home, and the snow is here a foot deep and fast falling. I am some tired of wallaring through the muddy snowy roads, but I shall have a resting spell of two days before I begin school.⁷

Nov. 30th. Commenced my school today and had but seven schollars, this is but a small part of the forty promised. The snow continues falling.

JESSE J. STRANG DEC. 31ST 1831

Dec. 31. I have now taught school five weeks and have thirty-five schollars; this is a little more like doing business. I would not care if there were twice that number every day. The school was quite untrained when I came here: not a single schollar knew his place or duty, but I have succeeded in regulating them and learning them what to do, without punishing a single schollar. I have some hope of being able to get along with the school without any considerable difficulty.

I wrote to father two weeks ago, and sent for papers. I have not had any news of any consequence since I have been here. I expect some papers from Dr. Simonds who has given to me nearly two years.

This is the last day of the year: a year somewhat con-

⁷ Walking the forty odd miles through snow and mud with his burden of books and toys for the school children and his necessary personal belongings indicates the seriousness of his resolution to "make serving the people my business through life."

spicuous for the great events which have happened, if civil revolutions and contests can be called great events.

During the year which is about to close there [ha]ve been insurrections in allmost every country in Europe. Belgium has gained her independence by accepting Leopold for king. Some of the German States have changed sovereigns : all the rest have been crushed by military force, a fine way of deciding the rights of man.

We have had deep snow ever since I have been in this town.

1832

Jan 1st 1832. Another year has now commenced and I hope it may be a year of greater profit than that which has passed, not that I have reason to despair in looking back on the past time of my life, but I find my improvements less than what they might have been by better use of the same time. I might also have saved some time without lessening my ease, and an accumulation of gain would add much.

I expect nothing this year more than a gradual change of circumstances.

JESSE J. STRANG JAN 1ST 1832

In looking over the evils of life I confess I am sometimes allmost tired of life. To see men in allmost every station in life seeking to injure each other in every possible manner ; perpetually striving with all possible force in matters in which they have no concern ; one nation making war upon another merely for conquest, or even military glory ; one people propogating its religion by fire and sword ; another revileing the first for its cruelty and yet using the more deadly weapons of calumny and slander in its own cause, persecuting by word and act in common life all who dare to believe a little more or a little less than its own standard ; parents teaching their own children to believe certain principles without evidence of their truth, and even that it is blasphemy to ask or wish for it ; men acting in disguise in

all their intercourse with each other, and this to such an extent that the most intimate friend frequently proves to be in heart a most virulent enemy, professing friendship merely to find an excuse for injuring his fellow: in a word to see the human heart a mere puff of air and at the same time a pit of corruption which neither the waters of Syria or India nor even the blood of "The Son of God" can cleanse, it is indeed enough to make one wish himself excluded from the face of man. But this is no painted story nor is one half of the evil yet told; for man has not only dissembled, deceived, made war without cause, given cause to those who dare not or could not defend their rights, and compelled his fellow to believe without evidence or intuition, but he has called the God whom he says delights in goodness and will punish all evil doers, to be a witness and a helper in his evil deeds; he has made him a partner in his contentions and his strifes, to be the author and the lover of evil; to be changeable minded; to be capable of willing acting and repenting of it; to be affected [by] passions like his own, and indeed he has completely made him in his own image morally and physically and then has declared that God made man in his image. Such is the human heart changeable and polluted in the best of men and in their best times. Among such beings is my lot cast. I, like the rest. I am ashamed of it but it is almost true, not quite.

Is it possible that any one should wish for eminence who believes all this? Yes, it is possible; it is true. I ask no more than what this life may give—if it will but I tremble when I look forward to future prospects. I am resolved to [devote] my life to the service of mankind.⁸

Jan. 3d. This morning I wrote to my brother⁹ by Mr. Smith, sending a poem of forty-eight lines to the Philosi-

⁸ Notwithstanding the desperate situation in which he saw mortal man, corrupt beyond hope almost but not quite, he reaffirmed his resolution to devote his life to the service of mankind.

⁹ David Strang, his only brother, two years older than he.

torian Society and promising a composition if it would be acceptable. The poem was one which I read to the society while there but neglected to leave a copy.

I keep house alone for Mr. Smith¹⁰ this week and it gives me a better chance for study than I could otherwise enjoy. Snow continues falling lightly.

Jan. 7th. Mr. Smith has just returned this evening and brought a letter from my little sister¹¹ a composition of hers, some of my papers, and a few newspapers, for all of which I am very thankful. The papers contain the President's message and the reports of the Secretary of war and Postmaster General. The message has the merit of being short, simple and probably correct in general. It exhibits the country in a most prosperous state as regards money affairs. The opinions concerning the Indians is probably correct except as to their right of protection from the United States etc.

On the whole I think "the Hero" will get a pretty good name at his term's end, though he will never be beloved by the people.

Snow is melting some.

Jan. 15th, [1832] This is the third fair day we have had and it is very pleasant now. This has been a very stormy winter but I have generally felt pleasant amid the contending elements.

Mr. Smith calls on me to pray and talk religious subjects and sometimes I consent just to please the people. It is all a mere mock of sounds with me for I can no longer believe the nice speculative contradictions of our divine theologians

¹⁰ One of the local residents with whom he obtained board and lodging while teaching at Randolph.

¹¹ Myraette A., his only sister, five years younger than James. She was an avid Christian and never ceased trying to persuade her brothers to seek salvation the Baptist way. On November 27, 1845 she married Arid Losee.

of our age. Indeed it is a long time since I have really believed these dogmas but every examination leaves less evidence and I have about given it up. The[re] is in our Religion¹² neither eviden[c]e to recommend it to ourselves or benefit to recommend it to our patronage. It is recommended as a preventative to crime but provides means to escape the punishment due to any crime by teaching that repentance of our missdeeds would prevent our being punish[e]d for them.¹³

Jan. 22 This evening we have formed a debating society in this town of which there are fou[r me]mbers. I drew up the constitution and it was adopted without amendment. They gave me no off[i]ce though I was first in starting and most active forming it. This I may consider a favor though I should have liked it otherwise because I am best acquainted with the business.

I could speak the best in the one at home after Mr. Pearce left it and was about even with him.

My school is now half passed and such success as has attended it has not attended any other of which I have heard. I have not yet punished a schollar nor heard a complaint.

It is reported all about here that I have courted Mary Torrance, (formerly Draper) and that in the presence of

¹² Although he had previously made a thorough study of all religions, the term "our Religion" here refers to the Baptist denomination. His parents were charter members of one of the Baptist churches in the area. He was christened by a Baptist preacher and was baptized at the age of twelve in the Forestville Baptist church.

¹³ Black type is used to distinguish the portion written by Strang in his original manuscript journal in his private cipher. The cipher consists of arbitrary substitution characters for the letters of the alphabet. Capitalization is indicated by a horizontal line drawn above the character. Normal word-spacing, punctuation and paragraphing are employed and Arabic numerals are used.

her husband; with a deal of other stuff about her which I presume is generally false, though she may have given some occasion for she has kissed me a number of times and I should have returned the compliment had it not been for the consequences. I really wanted to do the other thing and believe I might have done it too by careful management if I had tried (though I believe she had a good heart) but I am somewhat inclined to a certain evil which is easier avoided than corre[c]ted. I am fond of female company.

OLD TIMES.

When I was about 15 years old I became attached to a young lady of neith[e]r pr[o]perty or character and by association the attachment becam[e] so strong that I almost thought her part of myse[l]f. She was about 20 years old, though she looked young: had one child but wished no more till she should be married, was of an easy disposition though not contented, fascinating in her manner though not allways agreeable, violent and vehement in the mild and agreeable passions, yet ficcle and changeable.

I was vigorously opposed from the first by my parents and all my best friends but the opposition was misdirected and served only to increase my attachment instead of weaken it. I began [to] keep her company in august and I belie[ve] the principle reason in father's mind for sending me to the Academy at that time was to get me from her; but in this he failed for we corresponded during the winter, and in the spring renewed our connexions. In the course of the summer she became anxious to marry immediately, but I refused giveing encourragement to do so shortly. Under these circumstances she contracte[d] mariage with another gentleman, but this fell through and we again renewed our connexions, and talked seriously about our wedding day.

But in this case as in the former she had an opportunity of marrying, and did marry the day befor[e] I was to visit her. I visited her according to appointment but she was not

very thankful for the visit. She felt ashamed and confounded. Her name was Nancy Crawford.¹⁴

Jan. 23d. This day begins the last half of my winter's work and singularly **nearly half** the school felt wonderfully **down the throat**.

Jan. 28th. Today I have dismissed my school for want of wood. **The district are getting lazy about attending to their business. I shall not stay long at this rate; the house is exposed to taking fire; is old and rotten; belongs to everybody or nobody, having been built by individual members of the church and repaired by the district neither of which have any title to it. Unless they do better I shall not save it from danger. I think my credit is not failing yet.**

Jan. 29th. Today I went to one meeting. I have not attended religious meetings very steady this winter, though I generally hear one discourse every week and some times two or three.

We have some reason to fear that our debating society will share a hard fate.

Mrs. Draper said she should influence Ellmore to abandon it and I fear she has succe[e]ded for I am informed he did not attend the debate last wedn[e]sday. It was not possible for me to attend.

AFFAIR

There are a great many reports about Marry Torrance with several of which my name is connected (now I care no more about it than the winds blowing, though I am not used

¹⁴ It is worthy of note that he recorded the Nancy Crawford episode, nearly four years after it happened, while in the midst of what threatened to be another entanglement with a girl of connubial experience, Mary Torrance (formerly Draper). Many of his journal entries, as in this case, converted controversial events into assets by setting them up as guideposts against repetition.

to being scandalized) flying all over the country. For this reason I write the following account of what has happened.

When I first came here I went to Mr. Draper's to board. Mary was very lively and chipper, and the folks were generally fond of joking. At one time when there had been considerable light talk I joined and assisted in carrying it on. It lasted all the evening and the next day being principally devoted to Seymor on the ground of his having lost his wife, towards evening I wrote a few lines of poetry assuming the fact that she was gone and describing his feelings on the occasion. Mary wanted this and finally agreed to give 6 pence for it. She then whispered to Seymor, and walked behind me and presently kissed me. After this she did so and sat on my lap repeatedly before the family.

After they got to keeping house I visited them by request, expecting to return the same evening but from their repeated solicitations concluded to stay. Shortly after this story broke out: first that I had set up with Mary, but soon after that I wished to but was refused, and sat up, some said all night alone, whereas we all went to bed in good season. These storie[s] I mistrusted and now believe came from Mary, and retaliated by hinting some thing, some thing I knew.

J. J. STRANG FEB. 19TH. 1832

Feb. 19th. Today I have not felt so smart as sometimes on account of a light cold. Let it go off as it came! My constitution is growing stronger continually.

Our debating society has finally succeeded, and has been got thoroughly into operation. We have had three debates, one was a very sharp one, and I had the honor to carry the question almost single handed. We have another next evening. I shall make a very little preparation for it.

I expect to dismiss my school soon and leave the place. The time for which I engaged is not up, but I anticipated such a close from the commencement, for the people want

their boys to work in the sapworks. I made the bargain with Mr. Draper and when he feels rich he feels very rich.

There is no complaint against me and they offer me a good recommend.

Some young chaps have treated me rather indecently and I would have trained them then if they had come in the house but they were wise enough to stay away. They said if I would come out doors they would dress me, but when I went out they kept a proper distance. I wanted to train them in the house but thought it wise not to meddle out of doors.

I wrote home a short time since and informed my parents that there was a prospect of my coming sooner than I had expected.

The winter season is now nearly past and I am sorry I have not made more improvement in preparing for my great designs (of revolutionizeing governments and countrie[s]) than I have but yet I feel as if I had gained some.

I am sometimes allmost discouraged as to the great matters that have so long occupied my mind. And have this winter seariously thought of marrying a young lady of moderate fortune and settleing in private life; but the dreams of empire are so thoroughly imprinted on my mind as not to be easily erased. I have every thing to surmount, but if I can completely surmount my disposition to indolen[ce] I shall consider the race half run; but I have another discouragement from the fact that I never have done one great thing.

J. J. STRANG FEB. 21ST 1832

Feb. 21st. Today I have dismissed my school and now find myself a little more at liberty. I expect to return home shortly. The schollars all felt pretty well and I in respect gave them all handsome little presents.

Feb. 26. I am yet in Randolph though I ought to be at home. I dismissed school last tuesday and since been at uncle Smith's. I expect to go tomorrow.

Two or three of the district are probably glad to have me go, but it is for reasons not concerning the school, for they have expressed complete satisfaction and given a recommend. I know of no displeasure except of one solitary schollar and all were very sorry when the school closed. I have not chastised a schollar this winter and yet have been rigorous in the execution of my orders—**firmness and gentleness.**

I attended the debate last monday; it was very interesting, perhaps more so to me because it was the last which I was to attend.

I have engaged to hold a correspondence with Mr. Crowley on religious subjects. This is a ticklish subject and needs much management in order to [assure] its success.

HANOVER

March 9th. Once more I find myself in my own town and among my own friends, and with feelings of real satisfaction I again commence a renewal of my connexions.

I arrived in town last monday and have called [on] most of my friends allready: the town is revolutionized in some respects very much, a dozen or twenty couple[s] married and as many farms near home changed owners.

March 18. I am already beginning to neglect my diary from over much labor. I have found time to do some writing but have not yet begun the correspondence mentioned above. I expect to commence it today.

Last year I visited at Judge Mixer's hous[e] often, generally spending the time principally with the girls. I have been there once since I returned to town but I shall go there less hereafter. They appear to be a little embarrassed when I have my business probably because I make no special business with them. Sylvia is th[e] most unexceptionable girl I know.

The debating school in this place is all given up, but I

THE GREAT SCHOOLS OF THE WESTERN WORLD
WILL PROBABLY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL
AND WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL
WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL

The following schools are all now
open and I mean to try to make it so. I have
now established in the West.

March 9th Birth day. I am 13 years old
and am yet no more than a common
farmer. It is too bad. I ought to have
been a member of a company or a brig-
ade general before this time. I
am ever to rival COOPER which
I have never seen.

In the last year I have learned all that
I profess to know. That is, that I am ig-
norant and mankind are frail, and I
do not half know that. nevertheless I
shall not upon it for time to come for
my own benefit.

From a photostat of a page in James J. Strang's diary.

The original diary is in the Western Americana Collection, Yale University Library, New Haven. See opposite page for transcript and Note 15 for comment.

mean to try to revive it soon. There is one established in Forestville.

MARCH 21ST. [1832] BIRTHDAY.

I am 19 years old and am yet no more than a common farmer. 'Tis too bad. I ought to have been a member of Assembly or a Brigadier General before this time if I am ever to rival **Cesar or Napoleon** which I have **sworn to**.

In the last year I have learned all that I profess to know. That is, that I am ignorant and mankind are frail, and I do not half know that:—nevertheless I shall act upon it for time to come for my own benefit.¹⁵

April 22d. Time passes on very agreeably but with but little profit. I am at a loss what to do: sometimes I think of going into the service of the fur company; sometimes

¹⁵ The mistranscription of this passage in 1930 has given rise to much unjust criticism of James J. Strang. Two scholarly books have been written on his life and works and in both, the central theme of the character analysis and the over-all character evaluation is based on the erroneous assumption that his acts were motivated by ambition in the dictionary sense: "An eager or immoderate desire to obtain some object, as wealth or power." *The Winston Simplified Dictionary and Reference Library*.

Evidently the erroneous assumption was drawn largely from the incorrectly transcribed passage as it is printed in *The Kingdom of Saint James* (Quaife, *op. cit.*, p. 203): "In the last year I have learned all that I profess to know. That is that I am eager and mankind are frail and I do not half know that: nevertheless I shall act upon it for time to come for my own benefit."

Clearly the assumption of unbridled ambition rests on the word "*eager*" but that word is not in the sentence in the diary as Strang wrote it in his easily legible script. Instead he used the word "ignorant." It is plain that the substitution of the word "*eager*" gives the passage an entirely different meaning. As mistranscribed it is a boast that he wants plenty and that he will get whatever he wants from frail humans. Whereas what he actually wrote in his diary is a statement in all humility that he knows he is *ignorant*; and that he knows that the individual members of the group classified as mankind including himself are frail; and

of studying the law; and sometimes of speculating either in this or some foreign country; **I have even thought of an intrigue for power with foreign Prin[c]es.**

Today our debating school is to be revived but not without opposition, for some of the common school district have appointed themselves our conscience keepers, but we are not to be driven.

I have not yet begun my correspondence with Mr.

that he is resolved to act upon that knowledge for time to come for his own benefit which can only mean that he intends always to strive to acquire those two virtues which he feels he lacks, wisdom and strength. The facts of history do not bear out the assumption of ambition. Even his most bitter contemporary enemies did not ascribe greed as his motive for the acts they criticised. In addition to commendable humility the passage as actually written displays the two most distinguishing characteristics of genius, the recognition of a deficiency of knowledge and the determination to work always to supply that need.

Dr. Quaife quotes the mistranscription in the text of *The Kingdom of Saint James* at page 7 and evaluates it as "the key" to Strang's "future remarkable career." O. W. Riegel quotes it in *Crown of Glory*, on page 16 and says it has the flavor of a "Napoleonic urge" and concludes that "ambition was an obsession" with Strang. It is a pity that Mr. Riegel again selected this mistranscription to quote at page 272 in the dramatic deathbed ending of *Crown of Glory* where he has Strang mumbling, "I am eager and mankind . . ." suggesting that the thought expressed in the mistranscription had dominated his life whereas no such idea ever entered his mind.

It is interesting to note that the assertion by Socrates that he was *ignorant* and the obvious assumption by his judges that he thought they also were ignorant brought about his death sentence.

During the quarter of a century and more since publication of the erroneous transcription the false assumption attributable to it has colored the findings of many special feature stories and magazine articles and has cast a shadow over the reputation of one who so early dedicated his life to the service of mankind. The probable honesty of the error does not diminish the injustice of it nor justify those who know, in doing nothing to correct the error. All that is needed for the triumph of error is for enlightened men to do nothing. The photostat facing page 17 verifies this transcription.

Crowley on account of the uncertainty of my remaining in this place.

This day makes just one year since I cut my foot. 'Tis yet weak and caluced, but I can out run any of my fellows.

May 27th. **I have spent the day in trying to contrive some plan of obtaining in marriage the heir to the English Crown.**¹⁶

It is a difficult business for me, but I shall try if there is the least chance. My mind has allways been filled with dreams of **royalty and power.**

June. This is a flying time with me. **Indeed I know not what to do. Sometimes I have almost a mind to become a priest but that i[s] to[o] small business for me.**

Cursed is every man and every beast he has subjected.

July 1st. I have neglected my writing to[o] long. Aunt Salley James and Clarrissa C— — have made us a very good visit. They were well pleased with the place. I returned with them as far as Buffalo; it was the first time I ever visited a city. I and my friends were well pleased with the place; it is in a flourishing condition. The people were taking all possible means to prevent the introduction of the Spasmodic Cholera, which has for fifteen years spread destruction on the eastern continent and has just broke out on this.

¹⁶ Picture a virile, brilliant young man, highly educated and exceptionally well-read for that or any time or place, limited by environment to the drab life of a poor farmer, surrounded by ignorance and superstition and hedged in by religious bigots and puny minds in all the local positions of power. It was inevitable that he should explore, in imagination, even the most fantastic avenues of escape. It was his irrevocable resolution to devote his life to the service of mankind that brought him back time after time from flights of fancy that envisaged personal aggrandizement and power. Yet he did become an author, a lawyer, a legislator and King in Zion, not by marriage or intrigue but by service and leadership and intellectual superiority and his creative imagination.

Jerome, son of my friend Dr. Simons, is dead having been afflicted with a long and distressing illness; he was a very amiable lad.

The Queen Mab and the Age of Reason have been my companions of late. Shelly is at least equal to Paine. It was not till very lately that I was able to obtain such books.
So I kept before my reading.

I have finally concluded to study the Law next winter unless I can get better business before that time.

July 4th. The patriot's Sabbath, the anniversary of our national Independence. Thanks to the frailties of old king George, but more to the firmness and unyielding patriotism of our own beloved leaders that whilst Greece torn with internal convulsions has permitted foreign autocrats to appoint her a king without asking her consent, whilst France is still domineered over by a bourbon tyrant and whilst the liberty of Frenchmen is a thing rather wished for than believed to exist, whilst England trembles and totters to her very foundations with the racking of internal convulsions, whilst Belgium holds her national existence only by the hated will of the tyrants, whilst the death knell of Poland is closing its sound upon our ears, and a dark dismal and bloody cloud hangs over the once beloved republics of South America, whilst a doleful and horrid darkness overshadows almost all the earth, and the ignorant multitude pay obeisance and adoration to the cruel tyrants that oppress and rob them, we are permitted to enjoy national and civil liberty, to be our own governors and legislators and to speak and to think according to our own consciences.

Long may our liberty continue, may bigotry and religion cease to trammel it, may the absolute despotism which superstition has established over the minds of some work its own cure.

The day was appropriately celebrated at Fayette. A procession of about 500 people marched from the village to

a grove and heard an oration from Esq. Mullet. Tables were set under bowers and toasts drank and cannon fired. The young people attended a ball from 3 o'clock till sunrise. The bill was \$2.75 per couple and amounted to about \$100 on the company. This sum was sufficient to procure respectable entertainment for the whole company, purchase a handsome library of one hundred volumes with the necessary appendages and to make every person present a sharer in the benefit of it.

July 27. From my infancy I have been taught that mankind were totally depraved, and my own observation and experience have demonstrated that the heart of man is an impure fountain from which bitter waters are perpetually flowing. I have long been persuaded that the depravity of man originated in his unnatural habits and when I first made that discovery I vainly believed that I had also found a cure; that if the depravity of man originated in his unnatural habits, a return to those which are natural would effect a cure; that though the cure might be slow yet it would be certain and invariable. All this I still believe, but what are our natural habits? I have searched and searched in vain. The question is yet unsurmountable, and so far as I know, or in all probability ever can know, vice, misery, and wretchedness; gold monarchy and murder; kings priests and parasites, are man's perpetual associates. My heart sickens at the thought and my whole soul shrinks with horror at the idea, and I wish that I had not been born.

I am a perfect atheist, but do not profess it lest I bring my father grey hair with sorrow to the grave.¹⁷

¹⁷ In view of the vast extent of his reading on theology, mythology and the history of religion and his intimate and thorough knowledge of the Bible (before he was twelve he would quote long passages, chapter after chapter of the Bible and confuse and confound his elders with learned discourse on theology) and taking into consideration his current analytical study of Volney, Shelley and Paine it is a reasonable assumption that when he characterized himself an atheist he was declaring his rejection

August 5th. Some time since took a resolution which I now solemnly confirm, to be a **Priest, a Lawyer, a Conquerer, and a Legislator** unless I find better business.

Sept. 16. My head is filled with projects. I propose publishing a literary and scientific journal and am only waiting for a printer. This is of minor importance and I wish to undertake it merely to introduce myself to the public.

Moreover I hope very soon to form a Literary Association and besides this I shall make an effort for a "mutual instruction military Academy" for young militia officers. By the way I am a 4th corporal after having failed of an election to a higher office. The cause of my failure was my refusal to buy men's votes with rum and I am more displeased with that than I should be with a dozen such effects.

Oct. 15th. Late in the evening. I have just finished a constitution for a literary society at Forestville. An Academy has lately been established there by Mr. La Hatt.

Allen Smith who married aunt Polly 6 or 7 years ago ha[s] just left the country, I hope forever, he having another wife. I opposed the match with unshaken firmness until opposition was vain, when, true to a maxim of mine that it is better to submit to anything than to protract dissection forever, I finally gave in my submission, but with a heavy heart and a deeprooted conviction that she had sold herself to misery. I have never had occasion to change that opinion. Her days have been spent in care and distress, and her nights in misery and mourning. He deceived her in every thing that concerned her happiness, pretending to

of the popular be-whiskered, man-like material God of the superstitious. His later writings abound in examples of his unwavering conviction of the reality of things unseen, especially Principle, the single primordial cause, his most intimate name for which was the Spirit of Nature, although, depending on the occasion and the nature of the audience, he used various names such as the Creator, the Almighty, the Eternal, God and the Redeemer.

have a handsome property, he proved to be poor, pretending to be amiable, kind and affectionate, he was disagreeable, harsh and regardless. He became a minister of the Baptist denomination, preached in several churches and was very successful; what an argument for infidelity; though he always got in a jumble; and finally when he was found out went away with nearly half his property (excepting household furniture) leaving Polly with two children in poor health and less property than he received by her—more of this at another time, perhaps.

Nov. 11th. The commencement of winter, the emblem of life's latest stage is close at hand. Reviewing the scenes of the past summer, I have reason to know that I have made some advances towards the accomplishment of my designs but such advances will never answer to the end.

A scientifick and literary society has been formed in Forestville adopting the constitution written by myself. **I was elected President. The place was acceptable though unexpected. I have been careful to show m[y] colleague[s] that I could and should do all things myself.** There will be but little opposition.

JAMES J. STRANG JAN. 1ST 1833

Jan. 1st. The new year begins in total darkness: at the commencement the sun was at antipodes, the moon had forgotten to shine on this dark faced globe, and dreary dismal clouds shut out the reflected light of distant frowning planets, while the proud stars at a more than respectful distance make us feel their conscious superiority. This is only the work of Nature: Nature never works for man alone but keeps her own unvarying course regardless of man's prayers and wishes.

It is never to[o] early to begin to do well, nor is it ever late enough to excuse beginning; but yet the first day of the year is an auspicious time for commencing new plans of improvement. Yet our people generally choose this day

to measure their profligacy (or to make it immeasurable). It is astonishing to observe what waste of time, talent, and money people will make for show on our common holy days. Turkey games¹⁸ occurred yesterday in many places but they are degraded to mere drunken revels instead of being nurseries for marksmen. The young people generally attended balls and as the ground is muddy and the rain falling, they have no very pleasant sport in their rides at least. By careful calculation I am convinced that the expense of balls in this County will not be less than six thousand dollars—not a very small sum to pay for sport of such short continuance.

These are light affairs compared with others in our country and in the eastern world; the whole civilized world is verging to scenes of darkness horror and bloodshed.

Disunion with all the horrors of anarchy and civil war are staring us in the face, while our people are sitting by in regardless security confident in the strength of our government and believing that our Constitution is an effectual shield against all evils, and an unfailing security of liberty and justice when corruption lurks in midnight darkness and stalks forth at noon day, when the highest officers under our constitution are engaged in the vilest frauds against government, and the people will elect to office men who declare themselves only fighting for the spoils of the vanquished. Men who know or ought to know that almost every article of our Constitution has been violated by the highest functionaries of government time and again, and with impunity, and that all attempts to bring the offenders to justice have been laughed at by the great body of the[m]. These things have varied as different parties were in power but not for the better. We loose by every chang[e] and are gradually going on from bad to worse. What the

¹⁸ The turkey games were a series of marksmanship contests with shotguns and clay pigeons or with rifles and paper targets. The winner in each event received as a prize a live turkey.

end will [be] no one knows but we have reason to anticipate the worst that any visionary has dreamed of or feared.

The politicks of the states south of the Potomack have allways been inclined to disunion and of those east of the Hudson, to consolidation. Those at the south belonged to the great republican party and in its early ascendancy gained great influence to the total exclusion of those on the other extreme. Of course the government inclined to disunion also, or in other words there was a gradual cur-tailing of the powers properly belonging to the general government. On the total failure of the old federal party, and the breaking up of the republican on account of its diversity of interest and lack of opposition, the old leading chiefs of the federal retired and those who were not uni-versally known fell in with the various parties formed of the republicans and thus gained a handsome and growing interest in the affairs of government.

The southern politicians viewed these things with disquietude and alarm. They knew full well that they were fast looseing in their proportion of representation: every other part of the country increasing in population faster than they, and they knew as well that their statesmen were faster looseing their portion of influence in the national councils. Every means in their power was tried to arrest the course of events but tried in vain. They anticipated failure in those attempts and busied themselves in preparing the popular mind for more desperate means when it should be their interest to make a final attempt. In the mean time they were courted by such parties as were corrupt enough to pay them for their assistance and by the Jackson party success-fully. Under his administration they gained some of their former influence but his sentiments were not congenial with theirs and as soon as he saw himself strong enough without them and they saw that he never would assist them in their ultimate designs both parties gladly denounced the alliance, and the southerners prepared alone for the fatal rupture which must ruin them or the government.

The Tarif[f] is the great burden of their complaint and to it they impute all the evils they are suffering from slavery, luxury and misgovernment—as well as that of producing nothing but what the southwestern planters produce in three times as large quantities with the same labour.

The South Carolinians take the lead in this business and hold that any state has a right to nulify laws made by congress and solemnly declared constitutional by the Supreme Court whenever such state shall deem them unconstitutional.¹⁹ The Legislatures of the southern states in general probably will not concur in this but it is supposed by those that observe closely that they will generally agree that a state may secede from the Union without incurring the displeasure of the general government or the other states.

As yet but little has been done that wears a permanent character. The Legislature of South Carolina have called a convention to consider the Tariff laws which convention declared said laws void in that state, commanded the authorities to prevent their execution and imposed a detestable test oath on officers, judges and jurors.

J. J. STRANG Jan. 1ST 1833

Some have entertained a hope that the violence of their proceedings would work a reaction in public sentiment and perhaps it would in this country where people are a little more considerate but I venture to predict²⁰ (and with sorrow) that this will not be the case, that there will not be a reaction and that they have taken their ground for success or ruin.

¹⁹ Strang here refers to the nullification controversy of 1831-33, in which South Carolina, angered at President Jackson's tariff policies, voted an ordinance nullifying the federal tariff acts passed by his administration.

²⁰ It is notable that Joseph Smith Jr. made a comparable forecast of the Civil War eleven days before this prediction. It is cited in Mormon literature as evidence of Joseph's prophetic power. The two men were unknown to each other at the time.

The President, General Jackson, has issued a proclamation informing them of the consequences which must result from such a course and declaring that the laws *shall* be executed and the union *shall* be preserved. This proclamation is very popular and people generally believe it will put an end to nulification, that the tariff will be modified, the South Carolina convention will be recalled, and will repeal the odious ordinance of nulification. But it will not be so, they will not retreat, unless they know their only alternative is submission or death. Nevertheless The Proclamation will have one good effect; that is, it will call around General Jackson all or nearly all those leaders and statesmen who have the confidence of the people in those states which have allways opposed his pretentions but which are devoted to the union.

The proclamation is an able state paper and as Jackson is the most popular man in the United States it will effect [its purpose] if any thing will. Possibly its firmness may drive the Nulifiers but its arguments will not convince them. They have run mad—the disease is epidemick and unless soon arrested in its course our government is a nulity, our liberty the liberty of the assassin, justice a mockery and perpetually changing power the only rule of right.

We are waiting anxiously to hear how Virginia receives the President's Proclamation. Much, perhaps the very existence of the Union depends on her course. People generally have much confidence in her but for myself I fear the very worst.

JAMES J. STRANG JAN. 2d 1833

January 2d. I am studying the law—began 17th Dec. Esq. Fraser is my tutor. I get a lesson in Blackstone's Commentaries of about twenty pages a day. I know not what my prospects are but this much I know—I will never be a member of the bar when I am afraid of any of equal experience in the state. I should rather be the best hunter in an Indian tribe than a common place member of the New

York bar. However it is useless to say what I will not be though well enough to think what I will do. So I think I will study faithfully day and night for seven years if by so doing I can make a respectable Lawyer, and if I can not I think I will try the mercantile business. Nevertheless if called upon in a good cause I should prefer the profession of arms if I could accomodate my mind to it.

JESSE J. STRANG. JAN. 3d 1833

Jan. 3d. Just heard from Virginia—affairs go the very worst possible. The governor is a nullifier and the Legislature not much better. A committee of twenty-one have agreed to report resolutions affirming the old Virginia doctrines I believe and some new and revolting features. The Nulifiers are requested to desist in their present course, but are backed up in all their objects. The president's proclamation is condemned in severe terms—and congress is caled upon to see that the course therein contained be not followed and the doctrine plainly avows that a State has a right to secede from the union and its citizens are not guilty of treason in taking up arms against the government at the call of the state authorities.

It is reported also that the proclamation was very illy received in Charlston. I very much fear it will pass like the torch in the parched plains of Africa or like the quenchless fire brand in the mountains of India which sheds a gloomy light in the midst of thick surrounding darkness but to discover the spoliation of all that is beautiful in nature; the destruction of all the monuments of art; and the overwhelming ruin of the beings who rashly make it the declaration of their own destruction.

Our honest people are still confident in the success of the president, believing that a few hundred troops which are being sent on to Charleston will effectually protect the revenue officers and that the Nulifiers will not venture to strike the first blow.

JAMES J. STRANG JAN. 9TH 1833

Jan. 9th evening. We have had a debate this evening on the propriety of our government's removing the Indians without their consent.²¹ We have debates almost every week. Our members are few but there are three faithful ones in the number. Mr. Lahatt one of our principle members has a peculiar faculty, such as I never met with in any other person, of appearing sincere and even reasonable in the greatest absurdities. He is skillful in the management of a question and is not particular as to which side he takes in a question. He is a particular friend of mine.

Jan. 10th. News again from the South. The president's Proclamation has rather exasperated than quelled the Nullifiers. They are proceeding in the most determined manner. Several bills for executing the ordinance of nullification are in progress in both houses of the Legislature. The governor, General Hayne,²² has at the request of the Legislature, issued a proclamation in answer to that of the president which is well calculated to arouse the spirits and to inspire the ardour of the people to whom it is devoted. It is a most masterly production and in a good cause it would be to its author a memorial more imperishable than a pillar of marble.

Why are such men to be leaders of such a party? Men who have had the highest places under our government, and the most unexceptionable places in the confidence of the people. It seems as though they were led by some blind and cause-

²¹ In 1831-34 Congress passed a series of acts removing the Cherokee and other Southern Indian tribes from their traditional homelands into newly-created Indian Territory in the West. Jackson's "Indian removal" policy stirred up much argument and protest.

²² The Hayne referred to is Robert Y. Hayne, governor of South Carolina, who in 1830 as a Senator engaged in the famous debates over unionism and states' rights with Daniel Webster.

less fatality within, as though the fixed mind had fore-sworn its utmost purpose, and the whole soul had become the slave to objects which it knew not, and the patriot who but yesterday was pure as ether, today had murdered himself and poisoned his friends that he might ruin his country. I have regarded General Hayne as a father and only regretted that I had not a personal acquaintance, but though I will not say he is ruined, I fear his country is undone. O! curse the fatal star that shone upon his birth too brightly. But I am indulging in imagination. Our country may not be ruined. Even now the business may be settled and if not new governments may be built on the ruins of the old, perhaps securing liberty to the people and perhaps power to the tyrants. Three months may decide the contest and twenty years may not.

The old world has her troubles also and fears are entertained that the Belgian question may embroil all Europe in war. Great Britain and France have allready interfered in favor of Belgium and Russia and Prussia are known to view these things with disquietude and distrust.

Jan. 27th. Our political affairs are rather growing worse though they have not yet come to an exact crisis. The day on which the Carolina act of Nulification is to take effect is just at hand; only four days hence.

Congress are busily engaged on a new Tarriff bill, reducing the rate of duties to the standard of 1816, which is merely nominal. Perhaps it might have been well to have kept it at [the old] rate but it is to[o] late now. The rate of duty on foreign merchandise was gradually increased from that time down to 1828 when it had become an effectual protection to American Manufacturers. Now an attempt is being made to suddenly reduce it to a mere nominal sum and, of course, to completely ruin those who have invested all their fortunes in manufacturing under its protection. The plan may succeed and may not. Nothing can be gained by it. The manufacturing states would suffer a complete

ruin by its effect. And we of the western part of the Empire State might feed wheat to our hogs and set the girls at making linnen or doing kitchen work for 30 or 40 cents per week.

If reports are true the President has exposed himself to the just contempt of all the world. His proclamation was worthy the place he occupied, and was expected to draw around him a host of statesmen who had long been opposed to him. In that proclamation he told the people that the laws should be executed and the Union should be preserved; that the government authorities were not to be intimidated and that the menaces of the Nulifiers were vain and nugatory.

But now if we have the truth he is intimidated and is very anxious by timely and unjust concession to back out of his own ground, to yield to a snarling faction, to buy the favour of the Nulifiers at the expense of the Union, to leave the New England states the choice of secession or total ruin.

There is no knowing his course a day before hand. Every paper which he publishes is in a new style and his Messages to Congress would not be thought to be the same man's work. Nor does any one pretend to believe he is the author of any of his state papers. This accounts for his published opinions being so far superior to his actions and private conversation.

I am getting along quite well with my study—have all-ready read two books of Blackstone except so far as relates to personal property. The study suits me and I think I shall continue it unless the field of battle lacks one man.
War is murder.

We have a present prospect of a printing press in Forestville and it will, if established, be a great benefit to persons of literary and scientifick genius. The most favourable circumstance of all is that there is to be a literary paper

in the commencement and already commenced in another place.

My friends and myself talk some of a club of odd fellows, and odd fellows we should be, for the purpose of a few wild pranks, and perhaps for publishing a quitting²³ paper — smart business.

Amidst all the ev[i]ls of the disturbances of our national affairs there is one consolation: that is if our government is overthrown some master spirit may form another. May I be the one. I tremble when I write but it is true.

Feb. 3d. Sunday. The superstitious hold it waste but for myself I know of no time to[o] good to do a good deed.

Yesterday I finished the two first books of Blackstone. I study about fifteen hours in a day but one half of this time is given to politicks and miscellaneous works, and I can only get about five days in a week.

I am not in love with any lady but respect many.

JAMES J. STRANG FEBRUARY 1833

The President has communicated a message to both houses of Congress on the Carolina affairs, together with all the papers on the subject which he could obtain. There was some debate in Congress when these papers were submitted. Mr. Calhoun (who has resigned the office of Vice President and accepted that of Senator) made an animated speech against the President. There is no knowing how this business will end. Congress have been for some time engaged on a new tarriff bill, but it is doubtful whether it will pass. The Nullifiers wish not to have any reduction of the tarriff unless it is totally abolished. The Jackson men wish not to reduce it unless by so doing they can gain the nullifiers because they would loose their eastern strength and

²³ It is not clear what Strang had in mind when he used the word "quiting." It is probably a misspelling of the word *quitting*, and that the projected paper was to have been iconoclastic in policy.

the manufacturing strength will not consent even to a partial reduction except to avoid a civil war. There are many members who are willing to very much reduce the tarriff merely to avoid a civil war but who will never consent to it short of an absolute pledge on the part of the leading Carolina statesmen that they will retract their position. This pledge never will be given but by absolute necessity. The political existance of Calhoun, Hayne, McDuffie, Hamilton and several others who have figured in the highest political circles depend upon their success in this undertaking. They have 140,000 gallant spirits to back them up: they are a hot headed race and they will not retract unless compelled by stern northern steel. They may compromise but they will be the gainers in such a case. They will give nothing but by force or for a chance of taking double another time.

JAMES J. STRANG FEB. 1833

Feb. 4th. I rather expect, or conjecture that Virginia will back out of her favours to Nullification a little but will stick to her old doctrines generally. She will not approve the president's Proclamation or the tarriff but will stick for the union if she can regain her former influence. North Carolina I think is rather gaining for Nullification and Georgia will probably stand strong for it if circumstances favour. Some other southern states may cast some influence that way.

Thinking again of all the circumstances at the latest dates I am inclined to think Congress cannot reduce the tarriff at present. Last [news] from Washington was allmost the last of January. The tarriff bill was not near completed, powerful exertions were making to delay until Congress could get some facts to act upon: many who were willing to reduce the duties wished to know something of the effect on particular species of industry. If they proceed immediately large districts might be ruined by the operation of the law, if they delayed but three days it would be too late. The bill could not even be published in Carolina

before the die would be cast. Moreover if the bill were passed it would not do to have it take effect immediately. It would ruin half our merchants to permit foreigners to run in goods of the like kind and glut the market while their present stocks are on hand.

Feb. 8th. On the 9th Dec. the Belgian war effectually commenced. We had the news by the first [of] this month. How it will end is uncertain, but this much is certain, that France will shake Europe like a sail in the wind, her king will rise or fall like a meteor in the air, his chance is precarious, but the course of his people is certain. The eastern powers still stand aloof, but Prussians are making immense preparations to meet their wants.

O! If I was King of England I would try my fortune in the bloody field.

Feb. 29th. The French took Antwerp citadel the last of Dec. and since evacuated it and the Belgians have taken possession: there is again a small prospect of a general pacification in Europe.

With us it is different, hostilities had not at the latest dates commenced. Indeed there is no certainty as to when the crisis will come, the nullifiers are making great preparations and yet delay action. It is probable they are in hopes of getting the assistance of other states by putting on the appearance of moderation. They have twenty thousand volunteers in arms.

The Amaranth, a literary paper just commenced at Westfield, is to be moved to Forestville the 7th of March. This is a favourable circumstance for our literary geniuses. I hope it may give a spur to the Delphian Society.

It will probably be rather to[o] religious a paper but we must do the best we can as to that. I think of writing for the paper.

There are a great many Deists about here and they are fast increaseing.

[THE SPIRIT OF NATURE.]

March 20[1833] How strangely beautiful this night: 'tis the eve of my nineteenth year; and I fancy 'tis a picture of myself. The piercing red flashes of the noiseless and unseasonable lightning in the distant west: the solemn roaring of distant and eternal waters: the beautiful murmurings of a pleasant waterfall in an adjacent brook: the more than usual warmth of the season moderated by a pleasant western breeze: the unconscious darkness which mantles the whole face of heaven and veils the throne of the Spirit of Nature,²⁴ spangled over by the bright radiant stars of a western sky and broken only by the distant flashings of the deep tinged lightning, conspire to make the scene solemnly beautiful, grand and majestic. Did I say I fancied the scene a picture of myself? Others may judge of me. I will not say it again, but my evening's walk was surely the journey of my past life. I was alone: the works of nature and of art surrounded me: those of art were prominent: they attracted my attention: I gazed upon them: I turned my eyes to their glimmering lights: they did not dazzle but bedim[m]ed my eyes: I turned from them in unsatisfied silence. The beauty of the scene around me attracted my attention: the sun had hid her face beneath the western horizon, and the moon was veiled in clouds far o're the eastern waters: I remembered them not: but those wonders of nature which were before me caught my attention: I gazed on the stars in solemn silence: I saw darkly the work of nature all around: 'twas mysterious and unaccountable: all was majestic and grand but I understood it not and turned away and viewed the airy works of man: everything around me was deformed: beauties appeared at a distance: but like the rainbow, they were beyond my reach: but the illusion drew me on: the darkness grew thicker, the sun ap[p]eared not, nor did the

²⁴ The name he used in private for the Deity. When trying to communicate with others he reluctantly used the popular names notwithstanding their connotations of corporeality.

moon unveil her face, even the light of the stars dazzled my eyes to blindness, so long had I gazed on the shades around me: the lightnings played vividly on the far distant horizon. On a sudden it flashed brightly around: the whole scene was enlightened and for a moment the illusive works of man appeared as they were: distorted, uncouth and broken.

I closed my eyes with the pain at the excess of light but the images were still before me: I saw them and considered. Ah the deception was before me: I knew they were the works of art but I believed them the art of him who veils his face in light: and whose finger marks the changeless course of the stars.

I turned my eyes to the stars for light and the works of nature for instruction. The darkness dispelled: the shades retired: the illusive works of man disappeared²⁵ as I passed on, and the Spirit of Nature moved me with a holy inspiration. The sun had not yet appeared nor the moon arisen in the east but there was a glory in the light shades of evening, like Miltons twilight in heaven.

The face of nature was serenely beautiful, not an unseemly mark appeared. The human ken is short and the light of nature shone but dimly, but it was not an illusive light.²⁶ **These facts really occurred but the allegory is my life, as relates to Science and theology.**

²⁵ Here he recognized the unreality of matter and the reality of spirit; the unreliability of evidence presented by the physical senses and the solid dependableness of ideas that reach the mind by inspiration.

²⁶ In *The Kingdom of Saint James* (Quaife, *op. cit.*, p. 216) this phrase is mistranscribed to read, "but it was in an elusive light." This error gives a meaning to the passage unlike that conveyed in the original. The writer states quite clearly and positively that the light was *not* illusive, that is to say it was not deceptive, false, unreal. He did not use the word "elusive", tending to elude.

It is notable that the record of this vision was made eleven years before he undertook to lead Joseph Smith's orphaned flock out of the wilderness.

[TWENTIETH BIRTHDAY]

March 21st 1833. This is my birthday. I arise in hope. Bright prospects are before me, but all depends on the most untiring exertion. Twenty years of my life are allready passed, and what have I done? Ah! what have I done? Nothing! Nothing! Nothing but commenced doing. The last winter has given me a fine start. I know I have done well in my study and I believe my prospects are fine. Whether I ever shall make a first rate Lawyer or not is uncertain but my study for two years to come will be useful in business which I can follow if I do not practice that profession. Indeed in allmost any business a knowledge of the fundamental principles of law and some part of the detail is very useful if not absolutely necessary.²⁷

* * *

JANUARY 1st 1834

This begins the [new] year. I am confined to labour as usual, but [it] will be beneficial in inuring me to habits of industry : so, so far from complaining that I have no leisure, I begin to be glad that I am loaded with business.

My school²⁸ is large and my health rather poor, but I find time to study considerable.

²⁷ At this point a gap appears in the collection of original diary pages at Yale University Library. For a period of nine months and ten days between March 21, 1833, his twentieth birthday, and January 1, 1834 there is no record of any entry except the following fragment at the top of the page containing the Jan. 1, 1834 entry: "or **corpse**. Let the rascal try me: he will find he has the wrong chap." Obviously this is the continuation of a passage from a preceding page which is missing from the collection. It is possible that several pages are missing and that they may yet be found among the heirlooms of his descendants or adherents and be deposited with the others. Judging from the fragment they might prove to be quite revealing and significant.

²⁸ At this time he was teaching school at the settlement of Smith's Mills near Forestville, New York.

Jan. Last week my school was very full averaging seventy-five schollars. I have in all 70 writers, more than forty in Arithmetick and fifteen or twenty in Grammar and Geography each, yet I neglect none.

The affair with Foster whom I dismissed from school did not end without some trouble, (very agreeable trouble as far as I was concerned for I should not object to one fracas): and might not short of blood shead if I had [not] convinced him and four or f[ive] others that I was willing to s[hed] a little. As it was I merely had to be seen with a brace of pistols, which I immediately disposed of, and when they had concluded they were on the wrong tiger track it was my turn to laugh at them for being frightened with an iron candlestick,—but another name for a pistol.

Jan. 30th. I have a real rest, having only about sixty schollars on an average this week. Thus far I have had a very pleasant winter, yet Mr. Smith says I tell a falsehood when I say the last year of my life was the happiest, and when I say I enjoy more happiness than I endure misery he is nearly out upon me. The difference is he is a restless Christian and I am a cool Philosopher.

February 14th. Last evening the young gentlemen in this settlement (Smith's Mills)²⁹ went up to Rug's Settlement to attend a debate on a chalenge. They had their own question, side, presiding officer, time of meeting, place of meeting and even would not inform us the question. Not satisfied with these advantages they even would not allow us our turn in speaking and then gained the decision by crowding one presiding officer out of the chair and appointing another in his place after the discussion was closed and the officers retired, because he advised to decide against them.

²⁹ Smith's Mills is near Forestville and the Hanover farm-home of Strang's parents and around forty miles north of Randolph where he taught school the winter of 1831-32.

February 18th. I have been making arrangements for a splendid exhibition at the close of the school and this evening was appointed for recitation of one piece but the house was crowded with spectators and it was necessary to give way. If schollars do not care enough for instruction or spectators for exhibition to mind their own business I can save my time and money for other purposes.

Feb. 19th. Next week closes my school. I know not what business I shall then engage in. Day before yesterday I mailed a letter to uncle John W. James offering to go to New York as clerk for him. It is very uncertain about his wanting to engage one now.

Feb. 22. Today I have been to Fredonia to purchase presents for my schollars. Night finds me the most down that I have been these three years. Indeed I am about worn out for the present. School teaching does not agree with my health generally, but this winter my labours have been intolerable. No teacher in my acquaintance ever did half so much.

Feb. 29th. Today I am housed up for the first time in four years except when I cut my foot. I shall be about again soon. It is not my lot to be sick long. I had my portion of that in earlier days. I have sent word to my school. They will probably have the exhibition.

Town meeting is at hand and I should like an election to a place which would produce a little pay and leave me at liberty to study. But there are two difficulties, first I am under age, second I am too inflexible too independent for the present dominant party.

JAMES J. STRANG MARCH [1834]

March 3d. Just returned from a visit to my friends in Collins. I visit very little, less than I wish to.

I find myself nominated on what is called the peoples

ticket for Constable. There is little prospect of success yet there is nothing like trying. A nomination from the other party would [be] better because that is stronger: for as to principle and talent there is little choice. The office is worth \$300 a year and would be good exercise while studying.

March [9th.] Town Meeting today and of all meetings for public business which I ever witnessed or heard of none equaled this for folly and corruption. Only 472 votes were polled and from these the board found more than 500 for almost every office in town. One man who run on both tickets had 711 votes and for the office of Justice both candidates together had a still greater number. **I had the most on the peoples ticket and was probably elected by a handsome major[ity]. Twenty-one years have not known me or law and judgment should know the board.**

March 20th. Time passes on but improvements do not allways keep pace, however I am trying what I can do in that line by again reading Law. I now read with Esq. Rathbon at Silvercreek. I would embrace other business if it offered a fair prospect but shall not neglect this for any visionary project.

I have not yet heard from uncle John but I do not think he will send for me. I was rather too late in writing to him, and now the pressure in the money market is so great that business is at a dead standstill. Such times have not been experienced in sixteen years and the first question on Change is not who has broke but who remains. This is in consequence of the dispute between the National administration and the United States Bank. General Jackson commenced a war upon the Bank immediately on coming into office and has continued it ever since. The deposits of publick money are removed to local Banks and the United States Bank in consequence has narrowed its business several millions while the local Banks do not increase theirs in proportion lest they should be broke in a sudden pressure.

There is no doubt the United States Bank may be dispensed with and individual and publick business continue, but a proper plan has not yet been adopted and we have no prospect of one.

[TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY]

March 21st [1834] Surely this is no strange day: much like other days: the sun rose at six and goes just fast enough to set at six though if it was more independent than I am and ever have been I might think as it keeps behind clouds and winds and storms that it had a mind to play a prank and shorten or lengthen the day for my pleasure as it did for old Joshua the Robber's. Perhaps there is something ominous in the clouds and storms and bleak winds of this day. Let me summon up my wit, or, if I have none, a little invention and see what I can make of it.

April 16th. Today I start for Randolph with David. Perhaps I shall go down to Cincinnatti on a raft.

JAMES J. STRANG JUNE 1834

June 1st. I have made many changes since the last date but now I am fixed again. I did not go down the river though I engaged to and was only prevented by want of water. Neither has excess of employment caused the neglect of my journal for in no time in five years have I been so busy in doing nothing as in the last of April and first of May. When I have little to do I have no time to do anything. There is not a more abominable saying than "not too many irons in the fire." The more the better provided they are not forgotten. While cooling the first, hammer the second and heat the third. Regularity and attention only are necessary, then none will burn.

I am now studying law with Esq. Rathbone but my progress is rather slow. I give too much attention to farming at which I am also engaged with my father.

We have had a wonderful season. In February roads were dusty and some trees began to put forth leaves. Twelfth of May snow was three inches deep on the hillside. Many were planting corn but the soil suddenly became too light. The leaves of the forests were cut off and now beech timber looks as though it had been burned.

June 23d. A miserable hot day. I am almost melted. I have given the day to news and light reading thus far. I must now try something of another sort for by grace of God and will of man I am appointed to deliver an address on temperance³⁰ the first of July and all tell me it must be completely written. I believe I could speak as well without writing but I shall not try it first.

July 1st. Well my time is coming. I shall soon have to make the temperance address. Probably there have been some misgivings as to the result, but it will soon be decided.

Evening—it is done. After this experiment, with my experience in debating I may safely ever consider myself perfectly at home in public speaking.

July 4th. Today our nation commences its fifty-ninth year, but the acts of our great men shew a determination never to permit it to outlive its sixtieth. The leaders of the people are governed by a strange infatuation. Half of them would gladly sink themselves to hell and drag the whole United States with them if by that means they could come into power.

Jackson and his friends have waged an interminable war against the bank of the United States merely to draw the attention of the people and keep together his party while

³⁰ Thus he began early (age 21) his implacable fight against intemperance which led to his putting out of business the whisky traders who were despoiling the Indians of northern Michigan. His crusade incurred the bitter enmity of the liquor interests in Mackinac that dogged his footsteps to the grave.

they are carrying on their corrupt measures. The opposition are perpetually contending for the bank for which they care not a cent merely because it is the only rallying point on which so many different parties can be kept together.

Jackson would agree to the recharter of the bank and assist to do all the evils he pretends to believe the bank capable of, if [by] so doing he could again be elected.

The opposition would abandon this bank and even establish the odious treasury bank if by that means they could come into power.

Finally patriotism is banished from the land and as for honesty there never was much among mankind. Politicks never ran higher than now. There may have been a deeper feeling enlisted on the election of Jefferson, but there was not so much turbulence, passion or real political exertion as now. The road of corruption was not so well known, though people may have been as much inclined to use it.

A slight circumstance would be sufficient to shake our government to its very centre. People have spent too much time *miscalculating* the value of the union, to what purpose time only can tell. The future is to be dreaded though the great split of almost every party will probably prevent anyone's getting completely the upper hand and thus save the union when the virtue of the people would not.

[LAFAYETTE]

A great man hath fallen! No! he shall never fall.

La Fayette is dead; but death made no conquest. He hath filled the measure of his days with righteousness and glory. He hath lived like an angel and died like a God. His spirit-stirring, patriot-animating, mortal part hath ceased to move among us: to cheer the world, and to strike chill dread and horror to its oppressors. But his memory shall live. The spirit of his greatness shall live. While there is an aspirant for liberty *his* early days shall inspire his soul. While a patriot exists *his* latest hours shall cheer him in his toil. While Liberty is a blessing to man; While greatness is an

honour to nations; While tyranny is hated by the people and oppression is deprecated by the sufferers never shall his name be forgotten. Liberty, Honour, Freedom, Justice, Virtue and Glory.

Until all these shall perish
Until the stone shall crumble into dust
And the oak tree decay with age
Until streams shall cease to flow
And the mountain waters be dried up at their
source
Until there be lost in the flood of age
Each bard and song and subject of story,
The stranger shall not ask "Who was the N[ation's]
Gu[est?"]
Or ["W]here dwelt the Apostle of Libe[rty?"]

August 11th [1834] Today I fairly recommence my Legal studies. As yet I have not studied in an office and of late my attention has been divided and much of it given to farming. I shall speedily prepare for business in Justices' courts and try to earn part of my expense.

Politicks are run[n]ing wild. The opposition to the administration are trying to unite under the name of Whig. The plan may succeed but if it does corruption is the order of the day. Honour and virtue can never unite men of such discordant principles in such a cause. I have just received papers from uncle James which argue strongly that he will not be sold to Whigism to suite the caprice of traitors to antimasonry.

August 15th. Business plenty, health good and spirits high. Business for my tutor, health for myself and spirits for associates and posterity. Posterity? What have posterity to do with me? Well time shall answer. I have no trouble on that point. It is written. Not in the Alcoran. Not in the Bible. Not in the will of the priesthood. Not in the good

pleasure of him who claims the keys of heaven and earth and hell. No. Not in the secret decrees, the inscrutable de[sig]ns, the preordained determinations of a forever changing merciful and cruel creature of superstitious imagination seated high in heaven on a dazzling and resplendent throne and gazed on by successive millions of human beings. But it is written; written in the constitution of nature and in the native bent and vigor of the mind.³¹

The principle part of my time is bestowed on law reading and office business but I find time with all to review my school studies and am advancing a little in Algebra and commencing Geometry. Without a teacher as I always study.

JAMES J. STRANG [AUGUST] 1834

August 21st. Today my good parents go to visit brother and fetch home sister, and today I am invited to be a chief actor in a wedding and an old maid's wedding too. Who could have thought Freellove Pearce would want me and my Wealthy to stand up with her at her marriage? What is a matter? I feel a little tickleish about [it] too, for after paying my respects to her since last winter it will be taken for more than it is worth. But, Go ahead. I may take her at last.³²

23d. This commenced the sickest day I ever suffered since my remembrance but now (evening) I am again smart for a sick person: that is I am able to walk about. I was

³¹ Here he recognizes the faculty of perception as an innate ability of spiritual man to draw wisdom and power directly from the universal mind, the Spirit of Nature, without resort to any intermediary, book, priest, mortal or mystery.

³² During his teens and early twenties, in his relations with women, he seemed always to be on the brink and frustrated. Perhaps his diary records of the episodes however abstruse with private cypher, nicknames and sly allusions guided him later to his extraordinary success in that field when in his early forties he lived in marital bliss with five at the same time.

taken with spasms, purging and vomiting. Some called it *colera* but I think otherwise.

25th. Attend to business as usual but am weak.

31st. Tomorrow the train bands meet: what noble soldiers they are, and what an officer I am: that beats my grandmother's relations.

Sept. 5th. Just been reading Waverly. Have read to his visit with the old tory in Scotland. It is the first Novel I ever read; and if Scott gained his popularity by writing such a work or a series of such works who could not be immortal? The last must be the best or men would not suffer the penance of reading the book. I believe he intimates in his preface that the work grows sweeter as it grows shorter. If what I have read is only a foundation for a superstructure it is well for it possesses strength without beauty; oth[er-]wise let this book witness what it may. I have better writing.

Sept. 13. Whig meeting at Forestville called by professed Whigs of the revolution. There was much squerming as to the manner in which names we[re] got to the call. One was obtained by gross deception and another put down without the shadow of reason or excuse after the most positive refusal. The meeting [was] enthusiastick but the principle actors exposed themselves to ridicule by their blunders.

Sept. 15th. Just heard that the W[h]igs had nominated Selden for Governor and Seward Lieut. The ticket will weigh down on their shoulders.

16th. Contradictory reports as to the W[h]igs nomination. Some say it is Buel for Gov. and Seward Lieut. A tolerable ticket. Others that it is Seward for Gov. and Selden

Lieut. the opposite of what we heard yesterday but no better.

17th. The W[h]igs have nominated Seward for Governor and Stilwell for Lieut.

Nov. 10th. Well; the question is now answered and the Whigs have learned their fate in the Empire State. The battle of November was fought valiantly but the poor W[h]igs³³ could not stand the steady rolling fire of the Democracy Pool. Webb of \$52,000 memory mourns wofully but there is no help for him now. He is so used to the majority that he cannot bear grief as some of his colabourers can.

What new name this party of all parties will take I know not, but they must needs have some one. They have already disgraced allmost every name sacred to freedom and generous greatness. But they have not yet learned that great names will not save them or that the people have intelligence enough to distinguish principles without regard to names.

Nov. 19th. Mud and rain but no law. **I have had no business yet and begin to think I shall get very little here. I only want a beginning.**

JAMES J. STRANG NOV. [19,] 1834

Evening. Well no down heartedness, no horrors now. The course is commenced. The first step is taken and the road to honour or obloquy is allready tried. The result a few years will determine. The result depends much on circumstance which can never be foreknown and over which no one person can have any controll yet I fondly hope it will not be inglorious for want of exertion. The first step was

³³ The Whig Party was organized in 1834 as a coalition of National Republicans, Federalists, and other scattered anti-Jackson political elements.

easy but of very little importance. I was retained on two suits this afternoon.³⁴

Nov. 26. Today for once I shed tears! Aye tears of distress; of deep heartfelt distress. The halls of the British Parliament with their Libraries and their documents sacred to the freedom and the greatness of our ancestors are burnt to ashes. Those memorable Halls where first in modern ages man dared assume his dignity and assert his rights and demand protection of government: Where Kings have bowed to the majesty of the people: Where princes have begged their crowns at the choice of the people and not of right divine: Where victorious generals have received the united thanks of a great nation: Where Statesmen greater than Greece or Rome could boast and Princes more powerful than the Continent knew calmly submitted their plans to the judgment of a deliberate assembly: Where plots involving the liberties of the people and the existance of the nation have been laid and dete[c]ted: Where laws have been extorted from Kings, and Parliaments dissolved by the sword are no more. Those venerable Halls speak with most manly eloquence the character and the destiny of man. The scenes of those Halls have long and frequently decided the fates of nations and empires and they, the work of successive ages and various architects, were strangely characteristick of the powers that assembled within them. But they are gone and perhaps their use may not long survive. All the works of man are destined to decay. Monuments of greatness and creations of luxury: memorials of antiquity and structures of today: palaces of Princes, Halls of Legislatures, and cells of Prisoners, all the works of art and alike the systems of intellect fall before the tooth of time. Even the soul inspiring poetry must die with the language in

³⁴ After about two years of study he began the actual practice of law to help pay his expenses. He pursued his studies two more years and in October 1836 was formally admitted to the New York bar.

which it is written. And fame, fame alone of all the productions of man's folly *may* survive.³⁵

Dec. 12. Good heavens! I am growing misanthropick! I dread the thought. What can be the secret cause? Is it the reading of fiction and overwrought scenes of life? It must be. I can think of no other reason. I will not yet read the "Dutchmans Fireside." I have enough of that misery in the Indians revenge. Let me not know the beginning or the end of it. Burns is laid aside. His Highland Mary makes me sad: but how do I curse man's weaker passions—no, finer but stronger passions on reading of "the lass that made the bed for him." Why did the wretch tell that fatal tale so fascinatingly? I have a good mind to lay by Shakspear, It is disagreeable to see vice and wickedness unpunished; but to see it triumph over virtue is misery. What bitter tears did I shed over the innocent dying Desdemona? O, shall she never revive. Where is the Promethean fire which shall again warm that heart and reillum those features. Yet I venerate the mighty miserable Moor who hath done it. Who would not pity him in his terrible deliberation? Who would not in that agonizing moment when to[o] late he learned her innocence?

Dec. 13th. I have almost a mind to leave this place, go to Forestvill and learn the Latin. I am doing simply nothing. True I read very regular but what does it amount to? There is something radically wrong in my course of study or I am totally unfit for it. Besides this I am earning nothing. Perhaps I was born for poverty and disappointment but I do not believe it. I have as yet succeeded as well as could possibly be expected. True I have done nothing

³⁵ Here he records his conclusion that fame is mortal man's only worth-while goal. He never ceased to move in that direction, but he tested each step before he took it by his earnest resolution to devote his life to the service of mankind.

in all my life and am a fool yet but that is not so poorly as most have done who like me have had no oppo[r]tunities.

Dec. 19th. This looks like going ahead, though not quite so profitably. Last monday for the first time in my life I undertook to play a game of Checkers, and last evening I assisted in the arrangements for a New-Years Ball, and was appointed manager. Really I do not approve of balls but they are better than any substitute which would be adopted if proposed.

Dec. 24th [1834]³⁶ Just returned from a visit with my friends in Collins. An opposition has been started to our New-Year's ball. Let the opposition go to the Devil. So may I, if they get the best company. They have as good a right to a Ball as we but they had no right after attending our meeting of arrangements, voting for everything that was done and not even breathing a dissent, to do anything for the injury of our party. No gentleman can get up a party and then try to break it down.

JAMES J. STRANG JANUARY 1835

January 1st. I have rejoiced in the sunshine and smiled in the shade of another year. It is gone. I hope not lost. But it is gone in the way of the world, and passed as others have

³⁶ Here for a few pages the handwriting takes a noticeable change. It becomes partially hand printing. The letters though similar to his usual script characters, are separated in many words rather than being connected as in his ordinary running script. Also in the general appearance of these pages there is a boldness and precision and exactness of alignment not found in the earlier entries. He had lived nearly twenty-three years, most of the time "thinking, thinking, thinking," and trying to determine where he was going and how he was going to get there. This change in handwriting seems to indicate that he had reached some definite and final decisions, and that he could rely on his own judgment henceforth to steer his course precisely and with confidence.

passed their days who have died in obscurity. Curse me eternally if that be my fate. I know it is in my power to make it otherwise. But to do that it may be necessary to turn back the new leaf I have been turning over. Now for the first time in my life I have ended the past and commenced the new year in a frolick. But it was a glorious frolick. Quite the more so because like every thing else now a day it met with opposition. That suits me. Let the opposition have the loafers. I am satisfied with Gentlemen and Ladies. I must let this suffice for a long time. Frolicking is not the business for me to become rich or great by : thank fortune : or fate.

January 18th. Returned from a visit at David's³⁷ yesterday. He has passed a day of Joy and Grief such as he never before knew. **Wednesday he became the father of a daughter. Thursday morning Priscilla was doing well and the child appeared healthy. In half an hour it was dead.** Such are the changes and disappointments of life. In the morning he awoke with gladness and his eye beamed on the face of his first born, with hope, gladness, and confidence. The sun had scarcely risen and that offspring was among those who have been but are not. Grief fell heavily upon Priscilla but I beheld its workings most sensibly in David from my very intimate knowledge of his temperment.

February 25th. Good heavens! And the blind shall see. This morning for the first time in many years I have been able to read a word with my right eye covered,³⁸ and that a

³⁷ His only brother, David Strang, was two years older than James.

³⁸ His eyes were weakened (the right eye more drastically) by the strain of constant reading by inadequate light, candlelight and flickering fireplace flames. As a child he was physically unable to compete with boys of his age in rough outdoor games. To compensate he undertook, by omnivorous reading, to excell intellectually while pursuing what he regarded as the real business of life, getting wisdom and understanding. The healing of his right eye

word of common print (Graham's Practice p 135—14th line from bottom, last word) This should be booked first of this day's deeds.

March 10th.

"We wither from our youth, we gasp away
"Sick, sick; unfound the boon, unslacked the thirst
"Though to the last in verge of our decay,
"Some phantom lives such as we sought at first
"But all to[o] late, so are we doubly curst.
"Love, fame, ambition, avarice;—'tis the same
"Each idle,—and all ill,—and none the worst
"For all are meteors with a different name
"And death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame."

So my hopes are all blasted; yet I cannot despair. Two months since, I had the strongest prospect of making a clear profit of eight hundred dollars in a little more than a year without neglecting my studies. Now if I can save eighty dollars by abandoning my studies it is all I can hope for, and more than I expect. I had just purchased the land on which there was a mill worth four hundred dollars the title to which would soon fail and I should have had the mill. I had also agreed for a piece of land subject to a contract, on which I was sure of making two hundred and fifty dollars. David bought the mill and I was unwilling to dispossess him and relinquished my title at cost. Father was a party to the contract on the land and on account of his personal feelings I abandoned my agreement for that. There goes six hundred and fifty dollars and a year's use of it out of my eight hundred.

Then I had the most sanguine hope of being elected con-

came at that stage of his development when a marked clearing of his mental vision was taking place. Throughout his life he gave much thought to the subject of spiritual healing but he did not join any cult of faith healers. He regarded clear, logical, fearless thought as the best therapy in self-healing, yet he did not condemn medicinal remedies.

stable where the office is worth \$300, but by the opposition of one on whose support I had counted much, I lost the nomination. Then it was given me by the opposition but I would not suffer my name to run against any of our own men except one who could not vote our whole ticket. And as he contrived to get his name on part of the opposition tickets I came out 5 votes to[0] low.

But still I have hopes even for that business and if I fail then I have another hope. Perhaps these hopes are but illusions keeping me from that business to which I must eventually retire, but it is not given me to despair. There is one thing which I can do. Then I should have a small sum of money, sufficient to purchase a tract of wild land for a farm and I know I could live on, and improve that and become independant. Yet it is not a pleasant thought. My mind is not yet prepared for it, and though I should be hap[p]y in that situation I do not covet it. I have not seen enough of the world; played enough wild pranks, nor acted my part of its contentions. I have not yet learned to desire that station which I consider most happy, nor to be satisfied with that which I consider most desirable.

The business I was in a week since suited me best: busy from monday morning till tuesday evening without sleeping or scarcely eating in twenty speers, half a dozen frays, and a dozen quarrels, without injuring or being injured by any one, and for politicks, and all for the party which *did not* support me against the one that *did!* During that forty hours all was stratagem: every man I met was laying a plan to surprise some other one, and a lot of willy fellows spent a night in watching my movements all to no purpose. I succeeded in every thing except one where I was betrayed by a printer. Not so with those who worked for me. Pity every one cannot do his own work.

March 18th. Again the anniversary of my birth approaches. But I am unprepared to greet the day. Perhaps it is bad policy to linger here in continual but fruitless hope;

and perhaps it is erroneous to indulge such hopes as mine : but if I now look for too much who shall look for the future ? If my present aspirations are too high, I may as well abandon my future hopes ; mark out a different course, and content myself to live that life which I now believe the least unhappy. But ill fortune is frequently the best fortune ; and probably it may be so now. At least I am determined so to regard it so long as I have an ultimate resort.

JAMES J. STRANG MARCH 1835

It is nothing to be unsuccessful. To be disappointed in what I have expected until it has become part of my regular system is the least that I mind. Indeed I do not mind anything as though I was injured by it ; and it is matter of remark and complaint with my friends that I keep up the same eternal smile and apparent satisfaction whether successful or unsuccessful. Yet that fact is probably for my happiness. I find much satisfaction in looking on the world the smooth side out, though I might prefer acting my part rather roughly.

March 20th. Just had an opportunity to go to the State line Mills, Allegany, as a Lawyer : good mind to go : perhaps might find some speculation : at least get a little money, an article which would be very convenient at this time. But I will not start this evening. Shall be a year older tomorrow !

[TWENTY-SECOND BIRTHDAY]

March 21st [1835] Again has rolled round that dark star which shined o'er my birth, though dim, too brightly.

“Who is *he*, so swiftly flying ?,

“His career no eye can see.

“Who are *they* so early dying ?

“From their birth, they cease to be.”

“Ti[me:]—behold how quick his pace !

[“Mo]ments :—who can count their race ?”

Youth is not rich in its stores of time, and middle age is soon exhausted. After, is a small sinking pool which few enjoy and less profit by. I would never be an old man though I wish to live forever.

Let me see. The past year has produced some advantages. It has nearly paid its expenses, and counts full time in my professional studies. Pity it was not really full time. Too much of my time has ever been given to other things. When I have made up my three years' study I shall have scarcely given up one year to the business. But what more has the year brought forth? Nothing, wo[r]thy of my re[m]embrance,—but it has continued one thing which I will not mention though I will not forget. True in the time I have prepared for going to New-Orleans; but that is not as though I had gone; at least it does not so much expose [me to the] yellow fever, though it may more [be] the rambling fever. And I have ta[lked] of going to Texas, and that is cheaper than going; but now if I could rely on half that is said in the printed descriptions of the country I would go there rather than to any other country.

I have neither friends, vassals, or [mon]ey. I was not born to fortune, name [or] influen[c]e I was never the favourite of accident or chance. No man ever gave me a dollar; and if half the world should die I should not inherit land enough to³⁹

* * *

“Cheers on the nest the mother bird
“The ice-lock'd streams, as if they felt
“Her touch, to liqu[i]d diamond melt;
“Nature unbinds her wintry shroud,
“(As the soft sunshine melts the cloud,)
“With infant gambols sports along,
“Bounds into youth, and soars in song;

³⁹ This sentence is left unfinished at the bottom of the page in the original and the thought is not completed on any other page in the collection. It is obvious that at least one page here is missing.

“—Who would not wish, unrival’d here,
“That Spring might frolick all the year?”

It is beautiful; but it can[n]ot last. If the seasons were all pleasant as this day it would smooth down our natural roughness, conquer our furious and ungoverned passions, and render man that inoffensive being, which some excellent but too sanguine writers have imagined he some day would be.

March 31st [1835] I must leave Silver Creek today. I am very sorry to leave the place, but to remain under prese[n]t circumstances will never do. I have been here nearly eight months; have been constantly ready to attend to business; have been uniformly successful; yet I have not in that time earned fifteen dollars.

JAMES J. STRANG JUNE 1835

June 14th. This is a long blank in the book; but not in life. Since the last date many strange events have been jumbled together; few of which shall be booked, though few forgotten. I have now the Small Pox: down with it six days. 'Tis pretty severe. There are more than three hundred pocks on my face and all burn like fire.

June 17th. Still housed up though rather c[om]fortable. I feel able to work but cannot bear exercise and am covered with sores.

I have passed the last two days pleasantly, attended by Miss Wealthy Smith.⁴⁰ I caught the disease while attending her.

⁴⁰ Little is known of Miss Wealthy Smith beyond Strang's references to her here and earlier in the diary entry of Aug. 21, 1834 and later under the nickname "Weata" in the diary entry of May 29, 1836. It is evident that they were familiar friends, each having attended the other through smallpox; but not amorously inclined toward each other, since she was to stand up with him at the marriage of a Miss Pearce whom he once courted and since

June 24th. The great labour is ended. All Forestville combined against me and swore my ruin for assisting David in recove[r]ing his Mill of Brown. Three suits were commenced against me. One was discontinued and two withdrawn after making twenty dollars [costs which they had to pay. Then I was] complained of for false swearing and the Justice who issued the warrant being a mere cypher in their hands committed [me] but the officer refused to take me in custody and I went alone and put in bail. The Grand Jury sat the 22d. Forrestvill spit its venom in vain. Its highways and lanes and ditches were emptied to go and cry against me. All hell was raked for false witness. Young men whose beards were not grown harangued the multitude. Old sinners whose feet tremble beneath their emaciated bodies and whose eyes stare horror-struck at the gaping grave appeared in open day and pleaded jurors to perjure themselves and ruin me. Clergymen and their pious follower[s] prayed the overwhelming vengeance of the allmighty on the heaven daring Infidel who Providence had thrown in their power. Men who have said in their hearts and spoken with their lips "There is no God" thanked fate and fortune that I should soon fall, a sacrifice to unchangeing friendship upon the shrine of their power. It is done. Eighteen of nineteen⁴¹ jurors say "Not Guilty." I shall never forget the friends who were faithful at that moment. For my intention to my enemies, let the light of a future judgment reveal it.

she later introduced him to Mary Perce, whom he soon married.

The inference from facts now available is that she was a member of the Smith family of Smith's Mills where Strang was teaching when he met her. The "Mr. Smith" with whom Strang boarded while teaching at Randolph, Aaron Smith who later defected at Voree, and his brother Moses Smith who married Mary Perce's sister, were all related, but not of the same lineage as Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon church.

⁴¹ As stated early in this diary entry this was a grand jury, not the standard petit jury of twelve; hence the nineteen jurors.

June 26th. Recovered of the Small Pox. Today I am out at work as usual.

27th. Hard time this. Yesterday the creek raised very high endangering the works about the Mill. I worked in the water half the afternoon, some of the time completely covered and once swept off by the current. Today I have been in two hours but finally left and went to uncle Davison's to see uncle Manly James who has been there nearly [a week in venturing to call on me.] Uncle John W. J. and Lady have gone to the southwest she staying a[t] Pittsburg while he goes to Nashville. They will return this way. Uncle Manly is quite a different person from what I expected.

JAMES J. STRANG JULY [1835]

July 4th The anniversary of freedom, of the birth day of liberty has come. Aye come, but not past. I cannot praise our freedom and our *fair* country — Another subject —

They who know the most
Must morn the deepest o'er the fatal truth
The tree of knowledge is not that of life.
Philosophy and Science and the springs
Of wonder and the wisdom of the world
I have assayed and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself
But they avail not: I have done men good
And I have met with good even among men
But this availed not: Good or evil, life,
Powers, passions, all I see in other beings
Have been to me as rain into⁴² the sands.

⁴² The transcript in *The Kingdom of Saint James* (Quaife, *op. cit.*, p. 229) ignores the fact that in the original this passage was set up in blank verse and it substitutes the word "unto" for the word "into" in the line, "Have been to me as rain into the sands" and thereby changes the meaning of the passage. Rain *unto* the sands, like "manna from heaven," connotes a blessing while rain *into* the sands, like "water off a duck's back," connotes ineffective-

I have no dread
And feel the curse to have no natural fear
Nor fluttering throb that beats with hope or wishes
Or lurking of something on the earth.

Sept. 13th Every Sunday is stormy this luckless season. However there is one good result therefrom. It keeps a fellow out of mischief. I have not been very mischievous on the Sabbath this summer. I have had too much work to attend to. Nearly everything except the money business goes wrong. That does very well. Others are growing better. We'll see how they turn. The road which never turns is longer than Satan's from hell to Earth.

Oct. 20th I cannot die. If the thing was possible I should not now be among the living. Within the last six months everything short of naked swords has been tried in vain. Today accident has undertaken the work but I yet live. I know this is treating the subject too lightly; but I have met with so many difficulties and dangers and perils

ness. It was characteristic of Strang to stand on his own feet and like other zealous protagonists of the dignity of the individual he stood alone, lonely but unafraid. Sixteen years later, a short time after his historic victory over George C. Bates, District Attorney, in the Detroit Federal Court he said in a letter to his brother, "Truly David this is a hard life I live, but do not know if it is possible to change it, so as to bring relief. I believe I have struggled manfully against my enemies, and in almost every encounter I have been successful; successful to my utmost wish, but new enemies are springing up around me every day, until the one sole question is, shall I ever have one friend, true and unchanging?" Acknowledgement is gratefully tendered to Mr. Stanley L. Johnston, Lansing, Michigan for a photostatic copy of this letter in Strang's handwriting.

It is understandable that Mr. O. W. Riegel relied upon the accuracy of the 1930 printed transcript of the diary but it is unfortunate and ironical that he selected this mistranscribed line, also, to quote in the touching deathbed scene in his absorbing book *Crown of Glory* (*op. cit.*, p. 272).

among false friends of late that even the elements seem as enemies to me when I am endangered by them. And it is natural to treat them with the same scorn as my living enemies when I escape them. The accident was this. I started from the head of the floom to walk on a board to some flood wood lodged in the pond for the purpose of starting it over the dam intending to return to the floom before it went over. The water was at this time higher than it was ever before known sheeting over the dam four feet. The board on which I stoped (though I had several times walked it before) broke and let me in. I stoped near where I struck five or six feet down the dam. In an effort to move towards the floom I was carried to the end of the span my head reaching over. Here David reached me a board but my exertion to raise myself by that loosed me from the dam and I started over. Seeing I must go, to prevent going head foremost, I seized the end of a spar as with the convulsive grasp of death holding on till I completely turned round striking the rocks below as a bear fall[s] from a tree. I was carried about thirty rods when I caught to a tree which had lodged in the middle of the creek. The water ran furious as a mill tail more than six feet deep and rolling like a lake in a storm. I was carried the most of the way under water yet seldom touched the bottom. I made several efforts to catch hold of objects I came near to. Once I caught to a limb I came under but it broke and I was immediately carried under a mass of flood wood and wedged down at the bottom where I remained about half a minute when by the most desperate exertions I succeeded in bringing myself out. After this I grew weak very fast until I got out. As I approached the log where I stoped I raised above water and saw indistinctly something that I hoped might be terra firma. I was immediately sucked under water when striking the rock and springing with all my might I brought one foot in contact with a log. That swung me round and I caught hold and climbed above water when I rested and got up. The next question was how I should get ashore and I directed David to go round a[nd] fall a tree from the

opposite shore to me which he did in less time than any one would imagine possible and I climbed ashore.

What a multitude of thoughts were crowded together in that short space of time. Brief has been my life, for then I remembered it all. Few are my friends but none were forgotten. Few also my enemies, but it was a melancholy thought that of the most relentless I was perhaps to die unavenged.

Speaking of dying I may say I did not but for a moment expect to die (though I knew the chances were against me) but in that moment how did imagination picture the obsequies of my end; friends sobing around; my poor heartbroken mother sinking by my pale remains; those who in life had injured me deep as hatred could conceive or malice could invent standing in clusters round talking perhaps that the hand of God had done it, and then offering their consoling (ah! vile) assistance. I thought too that this was to be the last end of all my hopes and prospects and aspirations. To die is no dread if we are to live again; but when should the end be? I would not live forever.

Nov. 22d All things appear to be in their natural channel again. Life is the same as of old, except that it has more cares. I am glad I have not a family. Yet man was formed for society. Without it he is hardly human. Every man at middle age should have about him a wife and family.

Dec. 6th Again the year approaches its end. O! time, time how quickly thou fliest away. What has become of the past? I have lived almost twenty-three years. Behind is almost blank, while ahead is only thick darkness. Should I die now, I have lived in vain. O! the curse: to have done nothing for posterity.

1836

Jan. 1st

It seems to me that's a long blank.

[61]

Feb. 8th Just returned from a visit in Collins. Aunt Charlotte is no more. Attended her funeral while there.

May 7th Here is another blank surely—The book will last the longer. Just returned from a visit to North-East in Pennsylvania: 'tis the first time I ever was out of my native State. So wednesday, fourth of May 1836 at twelve o'clock I passed the bourne of my own dear, my own great New York; the great and best, the Lady Superiour of this community of Sister States. Pennsylvania may [be] second but how greatly inferiour. Perhaps she will not allways be second, but New York must allways be first, unless the swamps of the mother of rivers rise to mid air and redeem New Orleans from the eternal pestilence. When the five millions of drowned land at the mouths of the Mississippi shall be cultivated and the enterprising Yankee may live on the banks of that mighty water without trembling at the pestilence that yet not only lurks in darkness but stalks forth at noon day; then may New York find a rival:—till then never.

I have had a fine visit, particularly with the Mutes. They are favour[ites] with me. Sally Hysted is very inteligent; quite smarter than ordinary ladies.

There is nothing permanent but change. And what strange changes there [ar]e. We are all selling out. I had rath[er li]ve here than in any other place [God] ever created but if all my friends go I shall "go to" as the great man said when he went to Babylon to make confusion. Florida is a better place and Texas best. I wish to go there but if I should Mother would cry herself to death. They need help and well deserve it.

In the sparking line I do a dull business. I courted an engagement with Mary P.—had two interviews and it is closed. It was a total, radical and unmitigated failure, without one redeeming circumstance. She could have done but one act more. Only informed me that when we meet

again it must be as total strangers. When we meet again it will be as strangers. By heavens she is mine. I will steal her heart in an hour she thinks not. I know she can and must and will love me. I discovered from the very commencement this mus[t] miscarry, and was willing the failure should be radical. It was due to her that she s[houl]d produce it and I gave her a proper opp[ort]unit[y.]

JAMES J. STRANG MAY [1836]

May 29th Well I have commenced the la[st] page with a thousand things to write [and] no cash to purchase another book. Ho[w] many changes have happened since I [com]menced this little volume. Very fe[w of] them are chronicled here.

Pearce's family started for Root River [Racine, Wisconsin] yesterday. Benjamine has been there a year and sent for them. Good fortune betide them. They have been faithful to me: faithful to the obligations of friendship.

Weata has done me a twofold kindness [of] late. It was on her introduction that I formed the engagement with Mary. Now she has procured its renewal. I did not [seek] or wish for this, preferring an entirely different course. Yet it may answer well. If it does she shall fail for once. One interview will decide. I know I shal[1] finally conquer.

I am again reading law at Sil[ver] Creek. Think I shall not read there long. There is but a little business.

SO OLD BOOK FAREWELL.⁴³

⁴³ Here at age 23, for lack of cash to purchase another blank book, he ends his diary after recording five years of thought and study and struggle. It is regrettable that so few of the brilliant men of history have been thus unselfish enough to make a frank

and honest record of the five most significant character-building years of their lives.

About six months after he said farewell to the "Old Book" he was formally admitted to the New York bar and married Mary Perce, the daughter of a Baptist minister. The next seven years he lived in conventional mediocrity to please Mary and her orthodox mentors. Materially, it was the most prosperous period of his life, as lawyer, lecturer, politician, publisher, postmaster, but it was the least satisfying to him because most of his energy was employed submerging and concealing his free thought and his dreams of empire and his aspirations to immortal fame.

On August 18, 1843 he resumed the position of captain of his soul and headed west to begin the thirteen-year crusading phase of his life. Although this phase ended in his martyrdom it was satisfying and successful to him because it brought happiness to many and he knew that his system of religious thought and philosophy which he expounded in *The Book of the Law of the Lord* (1856, *op. cit.*) the publication of which climaxed this phase of his life, would bring happiness to others as long as men ask, Where did I come from? What am I? Where am I going? and thus would assure that immortal fame he so ardently sought. This enabled him to declare toward the close of his short life, only 43 years: "I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. In the treasure-house of the Almighty there is laid up for me a crown of glory richer than all diadems of earthly kings. Of all that dwell on earth, God has made me the most happy. From men I fear no evil. May God bless you abundantly with the same blessings, and especially with the love of the truth."

Bibliography

While some of the writings here listed are out of print, copies have been preserved and are available for examination variously in the archives of the Wisconsin, Michigan and New York historical societies and in the great libraries of the nation, notably Yale University Library, Detroit Public Library and New York Public Library.

WRITINGS BY JAMES J. STRANG

Ancestry and Childhood of James J. Strang. Written by himself, 1855, as the beginning of his autobiography which he did not live to finish. Original manuscript in the Coe Collection of Strang MMS, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. Transcribed and published by his son, Charles J. Strang, Lansing, Mich., 1892, in a pamphlet entitled *A Few Historical Facts Concerning the Murderous Assault at Pine River Also the Life, Ministry, Ancestry and Childhood of James J. Strang.* Reprinted under the same title but with an additional article entitled, "Murder of James J. Strang." This reprint was presumably made by the publishers of *The Precept* in Kansas City, Mo. about 1920, 9 pp. Very informative and significant.

Ancient and Modern Michilimackinac, Including an Account of the Controversy Between Mackinac and the Mormons. Saint James, Mich., Cooper and Chidester, 1854. Reprint, St. Ignace, Mich., The News and Free Press, 1885. Reprint, Burlington, Wisc., Wingfield Watson, 1894. 48 pp. This is

a scholarly historical sketch of the region embracing the Beaver Islands, a reliable account of the Beaver Island colony up to 1854 and a factual report of the election and seating of James J. Strang as a legislative representative of twenty-six counties in the Michigan State Legislature. Appended are quotations from the Michigan and New York press lauding Strang's character and his ability and record as a Legislator including the following statement by Col. Deland of the *Saginaw Herald* who was Clerk and Reporter in the House of Representatives: "We knew Mr. Strang well, and that he was a far better man than he has at times been represented. As a Legislator he was vigilant, careful and just; and some of the best laws of Michigan made in those days were made by his pen and influence." This statement was not in the original but appeared in the 1894 reprint.

Book of the Law of the Lord. Saint James, Michigan, The Royal Press, 1856. Reprint, Burlington, Wisconsin, Voree Press, 1948, 336 pp. Theron Drew, Rte. 2, Box 43, Burlington, Wisconsin, 1960, announces the availability of a few copies of this reprint. This book is a model of scholarly writing comprising a code for spiritual and material guidance in remarkable harmony with the laws of nature, a religion of love and logic, a philosophy of dynamic happiness. Milo M. Quaife says in *The Kingdom of Saint James*, p. 187, "If Strang's pretensions be valid this should be the most interesting book ever published in America, if not, indeed, in the world."

Catholic Discussion. Voree, Wisconsin, Gospel Herald, 1848, 60 pp. A copy is preserved in the Coe Collection, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

He affirms that the Roman Catholic church has "lost the faith committed to the Saints," of Jesus' generation. He protests the want of divine authority for the Catholic priesthood. He explodes the dogma of the divinity of Jesus and establishes him as a mortal man of the tribe of Judah and the lineage of David through his human father, Joseph. He maintains that the legend, "of a liaison of the God of heaven with a Hebrew

peasant girl," Mary, was deliberately originated and promulgated by Catholic leaders in the pattern of heathen mythology which teems with episodes of gods seducing human women and begetting demigods.

The Deluge. Reprint by Theron and Leonard Drew, Rte. 2, Box 43, Burlington, Wisconsin. An intriguing hypothesis accounting for the occurrence of the flood within the laws of nature and without violence to the Bible story.

The Diamond: Being the Law of Prophetic Succession, and a Defense of the Calling of James J. Strang as Successor to Joseph Smith. Voree, Wisconsin, Gospel Herald, 1848. Fourth reprint, Burlington, Wisconsin, Voree Press, 1950, 19 pp.

Memorial to the President and Congress of the United States, and to all the People of the Nation. Voree, Wisconsin, Gospel Herald, 1850. Reprint, Quaife, *The Kingdom of St. James*, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1930, pp. 249-255. Reprint, John Flanders, *Prophetic Controversy No. 14*, Pueblo, Colorado, 1936, 16 pp. A vigorous denouncement of "mob law" under which the Beaver Island colony was destroyed six years later (July 1856) on a day characterized by the eminent Michigan historian, Byron M. Cutcherson, as "the most disgraceful day in Michigan history."

Herald. Voree, Wisconsin, Jan. 1846-June 1850. Published irregularly, monthly and weekly, 180 numbers, under the names: *Voree Herald*, *Zion's Reveille* and *Gospel Herald*.

Northern Islander. Saint James, Michigan, Dec. 12, 1850-June 20, 1856. Published irregularly, weekly 89 numbers and daily 33 numbers.

Much of the material in the *Herald* and the *Northern Islander* was written by Strang. They are rich in historical

data. Incomplete files have been accumulated by the various historical societies and libraries. The most nearly complete file known to exist at this time (1960) is in the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [Strangite], Burlington, Wisconsin and is available on microfilm.

The Prophetic Controversy. A Letter from James J. Strang to Mrs. Corey. Dated Saint James, Sept. 26, 1854. First published in the *Northern Islander* beginning Sept. 28, 1854. Printed in pamphlet form at Saint James, Michigan, Cooper and Chidester, 1856. Third reprint, Boyne, Michigan, 1886. 38 pp. An able and comprehensive defense by Strang of his position as successor to Joseph Smith. An example of the scholarly writing that made him unique among his contemporaries and established him as one of the world's great thinkers and teachers.

The Revelations of James J. Strang. A collection by Wingfield Watson of Strang's accounts of revelations and visions not printed in *The Diamond*, *The Prophetic Controversy* or the *Book of the Law of the Lord*. First printing, Boyne, Michigan, 1885, introduced and probably published by Watson. The latest reprint including significant testimonies was "Published by Direction of Church Conference" 1939 by *Cheboygan Observer*, Cheboygan, Michigan under the personal supervision of Stanley L. Johnston, 828 Hickory St., Lansing, Michigan. 28 pp.

In describing these intellectual experiences, characterized as revelations and visions, he freely employed the scriptural device of allegory and metaphor. Instead of his usual clear and logical presentation of the results of reasoning, intuition, inspiration and the exercise of perception and creative imagination, he related what "the word of the Lord" to him was and what "the angel of the Lord" did. He recognized the need of attracting and instructing those lacking education and the simple and childlike who delight in stories of supernatural manifestations, those who seek only the voice of authority, not

logic, to direct their thinking and mold their convictions, those who learn best from fairy tales and fables; as well as those with minds sufficiently developed to recognize allegories and metaphors as such and to separate the truths they convey from the fictitious incidents they relate. In his account of his revelation of July 1, 1846 he quotes "the word of the Lord God" saying to him ". . . that he may instruct my people in the principles of the mysteries of my kingdom as they are severally able to learn."

"Some Remarks on the Natural History of Beaver Islands, Michigan." *Annual Report 1854*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. An excellent reprint appears in George S. May's *James Strang's Ancient and Modern Michilimackinac* published by W. Stewart Woodfill, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1959.

The Strang MSS. The Coe Collection, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. Many of Strang's personal papers, letters, documents and manuscripts saved by his descendants and adherents and procured by Dr. Milo M. Quaife and others are preserved in this important archive which is the principal depository of authentic source material on the subject.

Chronicles of Voree. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [Strangite], Burlington, Wisconsin. This is a hand-written record of church proceedings and contains many of Strang's revelations and other writings. It is an important index to his thinking and a rich source of historical data. Available on microfilm.

WRITINGS ABOUT JAMES J. STRANG

Backus, Charles K. with Foreword, Notes and Bibliography by Paul Bailey. *The King of Beaver Island*. Los Angeles, Calif., Westernlore Press, 1955. A reprint from *Harpers Monthly Magazine*, March 1882. It is a limited edition of an

elegant little book, a gem of a collector's item. While in outline it is fairly accurate historically, rumor and gossip and unsupported assertions by enemies account largely for the colorful presentation of the spectacular acts and events that make up this stranger-than-fiction true story. Although his career was admittedly that of a religious leader, the point and purpose of his life, that is his yearning to preserve for posterity his deep religious convictions and profound philosophy, is dismissed in a phrase, "'The Law of the Lord' consists of a series of precepts relating to things spiritual and temporal . . ." The story of the life of Jesus playing up the astonishing episodes and rumors of the time and suppressing all religious and philosophical teachings including the sermon on the mount and the golden rule would be as sensational and, indeed, as one-sided. The book makes very entertaining reading and is a must for any collection of Strang literature.

Bates, Geo. C. "The Beaver Island Prophet." *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*. Reprint, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection*, Vol. 32, 1902, pp. 225-235. Bates was the attorney who prosecuted Strang at the famous Detroit trial of 1851. The article is obviously biased and innately unreliable yet it is amazing reading and has been the basis of many a lurid story featuring the high crimes Strang was charged with, notwithstanding the fact that they were all disproved and he was completely vindicated by the Federal Judge and Jury at that trial. It appears that Bates was still smarting under his defeat when he wrote the article 26 years after the trial. There are significant implications in the editor's biographical note placing Bates in Utah "serving several years as attorney for the Mormon church" and in the last paragraph of the Bates article ". . . and the United States district attorney [Bates] still lives and grows fat among the bigamists and polygamists of Utah, the real Simon pure Mormons" when it is understood that not only the whisky traders of the Michigan frontier but also the Brighamite Mormons were Strang's implacable enemies.

Couch, Edward T. *Evidence of Inspiration*. Bay Springs, Mich., 1890.

———. *The Prophetic Office*. Boyne, Mich., 1908.

Eberstadt, Charles. *A Letter that Founded a Kingdom*. Reprint of an article in *Autograph Collectors' Journal*, Oct., 1950. Excerpts from the famous letter of appointment, Joseph Smith to James J. Strang, and a discussion of its authenticity. Based on his finding that the two leaves upon which the letter is written are not of identical paper he presents a novel hypothesis upon which those who want to, may, with some self-justification, disregard the evidence and testimony to the contrary and accept the "Brighamite" assertions that the letter is a forgery. It is a clever piece of writing, but his error in locating Strang's birthplace casts the shadow of doubt over his other findings.

Flanders, John. *Prophetic Controversy No. 14*. Pueblo, Colo., 1936. A reprint of James J. Strang's *Memorial to the Nation*, 1850, and a discussion of his successorship to Joseph Smith. The main purpose of this pamphlet is to combat a decrying narrative of Strang's church activities which is quoted and cited as having appeared in a Utah-Mormon publication, "Quorum Bulletin" Vol. 1, No. 2, 1935, pp. 20, 21. Flanders characterizes the narrative as "a false and misleading statement against 'Strangites'" and proceeds to give his reasons for that conclusion.

Hickey, L. D. and Alvord, D. B. *A Card to the Public.—Defending Hon. James J. Strang*. Monte Vista, Colorado, Journal Press, 1896. This reprint of an earlier tract contains also "Testimony of the Old Pioneers of Burlington, Wisconsin." A copy is preserved in the Coe Collection, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

Holbrook, Stewart. "The Rise and Fall of King Strang." *Woman's Day*, New York, April, 1955, p. 36. Mr. Holbrook

is an excellent writer widely recognized and published. The article is announced as "Another in a series of true stories more exciting than fiction." It deals with the spectacular aspects of the life of James J. Strang and, as far as it goes, is more nearly accurate than most. The author could have appeased his own sense of fair play and greatly increased his audience by indicating that Strang had another side to his character with a few paragraphs about his philosophy and religious convictions since he is characterized in the article as a "religious prophet" among other things. It might have required many hours of serious reading by the author but he could have dug out of Strang's writings enough startling precepts to have maintained the atmosphere of truth-more-exciting-than-fiction thereby meeting his publisher's specification while giving his public some notion of Strang's religion of love and logic and his philosophy of reason and dynamic happiness. For example he might have said that Strang denies that all things are possible to God; reduces the dogma of the trinity to an absurdity; declares that Jesus was mortal not divine; exposes the myth of vicarious salvation with his thesis that conformity to the character of God is the true idea of salvation; announces that the Almighty has founded his government in love and made love the chief sanction of his law; restored to the Decalog the lost commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Legler, Henry E. *A Moses of the Mormons*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Parkman Club Publications, Nos. 15 and 16, 1897. Reprint, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, 1902, Vol. 32, pp. 180-224. This is the first serious attempt at an objective study of the Strangite movement. It is packed with historical facts and references to printed material on many phases of the subject and, therefore, is a prolific source for both serious and sensational writers. He tells the reader, "most of the newspaper articles concerning the Beaver Island kingdom contain gross exaggerations" and he lists enough of Strang's writings to enable the reader to get at the truth, yet

he puts the story together in such a way and places the emphasis so as to give the impression that he believes that he is dealing with a clever charlatan. If he had gained a clearer understanding of Strang's aspirations and the actuating motives that governed his life by a thorough study of his writings, especially his diary, it is inevitable that a more favorable and a truer picture would have emerged.

Leslie, F. D. "An American King of the Mormons," *The Magazine of Western History*, April, 1886, apparently published in Cleveland, Ohio. This serves as an example of the sensational material being published thirty years after Strang's death, since it appears to be a rehash of lurid newspaper stories rather than a factually dependable account.

MacKay, Neil. "Assassins' Bullets Kill King of State Mormons." Milwaukee, Wisc., *The Milwaukee Journal*, July 15, 1956. This special feature article written on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the assassination of James Jesse Strang is listed here as a typical example of the many that have appeared in the metropolitan press. Articles of this kind, in order to produce a story, take advantage of the reader as well as the dead man. The reader, without exhaustive research, cannot separate the facts from the fiction, errors, unsupported assertions and outright misstatements and the victim obviously is helpless. This staff writer presumably knew what aspect of the life of a historic figure his public wanted to read about. The article is significant to the extent that it indicates that Strang's activities are regarded by qualified writers as being newsworthy a hundred years after his death.

May, George S. *James Strang's Ancient and Modern Michilimackinac*, Mackinac Island, Michigan, W. Stewart Woodfill, publisher, 1959, 100 pp. Limited to five hundred numbered copies. This is an excellent reprint of the original with enlightening notes and introduction by Dr. May

and a reprint of Strang's paper, "Some Remarks on the Natural History of Beaver Islands, Michigan" published by the Smithsonian Institution in its *Annual Report* 1854, Washington, D.C. It is, indeed, refreshing to read the inherently honest, unbiased, scholarly Introduction by Dr. May of the Michigan Historical Commission. The book is handsomely printed and bound, factual and reliable and expertly edited. A copy should be in every collection of Strang literature. It is truly a collector's item. In addition to its value as fascinating reading it is a veritable treasure of fact and should be made available to scholars, historians and writers.

Miller, George. *Correspondence of Bishop George Miller*. Letters dated 1855, first published in the *Northern Islander*, St. James, Michigan, 1855. Reprinted in pamphlet form presumably by Wingfield Watson at Burlington, Wisc., 1916, 50 pp. This is an extremely interesting and informative narrative by a presiding bishop covering a crucial period in Mormon history. He started west with the exodus from Nauvoo, Feb. 6, 1846; repudiated the leadership of Brigham Young; visited and rejected the Lyman Wight colony in Texas; liked what he saw at Voree; and finally made his way to Beaver Island where he became and remained a loyal and trusted associate of James J. Strang.

Morgan, Dale L. "A Bibliography of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [Strangite]" *The Western Humanities Review*, 1950, Vol. V, No. 1, pp. 42-114. The Utah Humanities Research Foundation, 101 Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. This elaborate bibliography is a veritable gold mine of source material for the intellectually honest research scholar. One hundred twelve titles, pro and con, are listed and commented on and the various archives are named where printed copies may be examined. The entire work including the comprehensive introduction inspires confidence in the integrity of the compiler. His understanding grasp of the subject is revealed

when he points out as a fundamental difference between Strang's religion and that of the Utah Mormons "the determined monotheism of the Strangite church." It is indeed a good omen that a trained and capable historian has arisen with the courage to look beyond the spectacular events of Strang's life to his religious thought and philosophy, a rich American heritage that has been submerged a hundred years under a flood of sensational literature. He characterizes James Jesse Strang as "the founder and continuing spiritual force of the Strangite church" and sees him as a "disciplined, orderly mind . . . in the realm of religion." The publication of this bibliography makes untenable the position writers have taken that there is a lack of source material to enable them to paint a properly balanced picture of his character.

Nye, Russel B. *A Baker's Dozen*. East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1956, 300 pp. A collection of sketches of "intrinsically interesting persons." Under the heading "Limited Utopias" appears a sketch entitled "James Strang" pp. 162-182. It is well written and makes fascinating reading as do the sketches of the other twelve interesting persons. However, the sketch of Strang overemphasizes the importance of the mistranslated quotation from the diary in establishing his character.

Poling, James. "The King of the Beaver Islands." *True*, a Fawcett Publication, Greenwich, Conn., Aug. 1954, Vol. 34, No. 207, p. 26. The article is announced as "A true book-length feature." It is a well written, fast moving, lurid story of the startling phases of the life of James J. Strang. Since the purpose of the article seems to be to provide exciting reading and thereby produce revenue for the publisher and the writer, no effort is made to expound Strang's religion or philosophy even though he is acknowledged as the leader of a religious sect. However it is admitted that "he seemed more interested in his people's welfare than his own." It appears that toward the end of the story the writer realized that the

known historical facts had prevented him from developing a grotesque picture of a fallen charlatan. In the last few paragraphs he flouts the facts shamelessly and, like a frustrated juvenile delinquent, takes his revenge on the helpless corpse by relegating it to "a cow pasture" as "The final abode of His Majesty, King James the First. . . ." As a matter of fact the body of James Jesse Strang lies beneath a dignified marble stone in Burlington's beautiful cemetery. His grave is visited in reverence and gratitude by countless readers who have drawn wisdom and lasting comfort from his philosophy, and high purpose and dynamic happiness from his religious teachings and spiritual guidance. And nearby, on the old Voree townsite, the Burlington Historical Society has erected an imposing monument to his memory.

Quaife, Milo M. *The Kingdom of Saint James*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1930, 284 pp. The most exhaustive work on the Strangite movement up to 1930; the result of prodigious original research. The book teems with historical facts, most of which are well documented, and therefore is worthy of careful study. Unfortunately, in the light of additional information and more accurate transcription of material in Strang's handwriting and more thorough examination of his actuating motives, some of Dr. Quaife's conclusions and assumptions are untenable, notably his hypothesis of unbridled ambition. In bringing together again, after three quarters of a century, the bulk of the scattered fragments of the literature and records of a significant frontier colony shattered by a lawless mob, Dr. Quaife has done a monumental work for which the public owes him an eternal debt of gratitude. It is regrettable that his few errors in judgment and actual mistakes have influenced later writers to arrive at distorted opinions of Strang's character.

Riegel, O. W. *Crown of Glory. The Life of James J. Strang Moses of the Mormons*. New Haven, Conn., Yale

University Press, 1935, 281 pp. A fascinating, well written narrative of a clever, highly educated young man among unlettered, bewildered and superstitious pioneers on the early western frontier. Emphasis is on the strange and startling events in his life and on his stratagems rather than his teachings. It is regrettable that the book is not better balanced with basic information on his religious convictions and philosophy, his self-imposed restraints, his yearning to do something for posterity, the actuating forces that made him tick. The two dominating errors in the book, namely, that unbridled ambition governed his life and that his career was a failure, clearly reflect the influence of *The Kingdom of Saint James*. The book indicates the author's sympathy for a hero of whom he cannot quite approve and leaves the reader with the impression that he has learned about a brilliant but wayward young man in a hurry who came to a bad end too soon. The over-all character analysis and evaluation should be judged in the light of the author's frank statement on page 274, "In seeking for the deepest truth of Strang's character I may have erred, but it cannot be said that any error arose from a disinclination to do him justice."

Somers, A. N. "An American King," *National Magazine*, May, 1901. The "Princess Eugenia" in this narrative is Eugenia, the daughter of James J. Strang, born after his death, and his fifth wife, Phoebe, who, in turn, was the daughter of Benjamin Wright, one of Strang's apostles. Both Phoebe and Eugenia did much to preserve the memory of Strang as a righteous man and to bolster respect for him notwithstanding the derogatory rumors published as facts about him after death had deprived him of the opportunity to defend himself.

Strang, Charles J. "A Michigan Monarchy." *New York Times*, Sept. 3, 1882. Reprinted in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection*, Second Edition, 1891, Vol. 18, reprinted 1911, pp. 628-638. This is a short sketch of the life of James J. Strang by one of his sons. Far from being biased in favor

of Strang, adverse prejudice is indicated. The author seems to have tied whatever he knew of Strang's monotheistic religion to Mormonism and rejected the whole bundle. Referring to his father's claim to have "miraculously discovered" 18 metallic plates he says, "Strang performed several 'miracles' of this sort, closely resembling those with which Smith successfully bolstered up the original imposture." The sketch portrays Strang as an able and intellectually superior leader in secular affairs but conveys no notion of his lofty precepts and profound philosophy.

- Watson, Wingfield. *Prophetic Controversy No. 2*. Boyne, Michigan, 1887.
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- _____ *Prophetic Controversy No. 3*. Boyne, Michigan, 1889.
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- _____ *Prophetic Controversy No. 4. Mr. Strang Proved to Have Been Always an Honorable Man*. Spring Prairie, Wisconsin, 1897.
-
- _____ *Prophetic Controversy No. 5*. Lyons, Wisconsin, 1903.
-
- _____ *Prophetic Controversy No. 6*. Lyons, Wisconsin, 1905.
-
- _____ *Prophetic Controversy No. 7*. Lyons, Wisconsin, 1906.
-
- _____ *Prophetic Controversy No. 13*. Burlington, Wisconsin, 1918.

These and many other writings by Wingfield Watson supporting Strang's leadership, vouching for his good character and lauding his teachings are listed (with comments, and location of preserved copies) by Dale L. Morgan in his excellent bibliography of Strangite literature.

The debating school
ip, but I mean to try to revive it
one established in
ch 21st Birth day, I am 19 years
and am yet no more than a common
farmer. 'Tis too bad, I ought to have
been a member of Assembly or a Bre
General before this time if
ever to rival COUGH
I have

In the last year I have learned
I profess to know, that is, that I am
worn out and mankind are frail, and
do not half know that: nevertheless
shall act upon it for time to come for
my own benefit.

fail 22^d Some papers on very agreeable
with but little profit I am at a
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