

[Grosh, Hosea Ballou]

Dear Bro. Austin:-You know too well the deep sorrow of a father's heart on hearing the death of a beloved son, not to sympathize with those who are similarly bereaved. My second son's remains slumber amid the mountain spurs of the Sierra Nevada, and I wish to communicate the news of his decease, with some attendant circumstances, to the numerous and widely spread relatives and friends of the deceased, through your columns. To give my communication interest to the general reader,...I have put it in the form of a brief biographical sketch.

Fraternally yours in that Gospel which has comfort for all who mourn,  
A.B. Grosh

Andersonburg, Perry, co., Pa.  
November 1st, 1857

Hosea Ballou Grosh

Hosea Ballou Grosh was born in Marietta, Pa., August 23d, 1826, and solemnly dedicated to God (with his elder brother, E. Allen, May 10th, 1827)—Rev. S. R. Smith, then of Philadelphia, officiating. In early childhood he manifested ungovernable passions, which punishments seemed only to increase; and a disposition to exaggerate beyond all bounds, which seemed beyond the power of repression. But before he was seven years of age, his own awakening common sense and strong natural religious feelings, nourished and directed by the gentle care of a judicious and excellent mother, began the removal of these defects from his character. Before he was ten years old, he was called "The Philosopher," and "The Professor," by the workmen in the *Magazine and Advocate* office [in Utica, NY], because of his patience and hopeful reasonings in all trials and troubles, and his love of acquiring and imparting information on all subjects that engaged his attention. As he grew toward manhood, he devoted himself specially to the subject of mathematics, and those branches more immediately connected with them. But he never lost his interest in religious and political subjects, especially when great principles and their practical applications were concerned. He was remarkable for his calm prudence, cheerful fortitude, and strict conscientiousness—for his great industry, whether of head or hands, and his steady persistence in whatever he undertook to perform.

In February, 1850, a company was organized in Reading, Pa., for gold mining in California, of which his oldest brother was an active member. About two days before their departure Hosea resolved to accompany his brother—was proposed, and specially admitted, though the company was full and refused to admit more members. They sailed from Philadelphia in March, and were six months in reaching San Francisco, owing to various misfortunes and much illness on their land route from Tampico to San Blas. During that long journey, and through the seven years of varied fortunes and misfortunes which followed with their toils, privations, and hardships—having thrice crossed and twice re-crossed the Sierra Nevada, once with loss of horses, mules, and baggage, amid severe cold, deep snows, at starvation point—he literally "made the best of everything," ever trusting, (and by his cheerful faith, leading others to trust) in God's constantly overruling wisdom and goodness.

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Last fall he and his brother organized a company for working some silver veins in Utah, which they had discovered, but were too poor to test, on previous visits. [Transcriber's note: they had found what later became famous as the Comstock lode.] Last May they passed the Nevada, and located on Gold Canon, and engaged in digging for gold, to procure means for working the veins of silver. On August 19th, while digging auriferous clay for washing, Hosea accidentally struck a pick into the inner side and hollow of his left foot, making a frightful gash. Smiling amid the pain, he made light of the wound to assure his alarmed brother, and refusing to be carried in his brother's arms, he rode their Jack to the cabin. At the end of eight days, alarming symptoms began to appear, and were successively met with the various remedies suggested, until on the 2d of September, when he suddenly sunk, and peacefully fell asleep to awake in a world where there is no pain, and no more death—aged 31 years and 10 days.

The following extracts from the letter of the surviving brother, though intended only for private perusal, contain so much of Christian resignation and comfort, that they may prove profitable to many, and interesting to others, as exhibiting the value of our blessed faith in seasons of deep affliction:

Gold Canon, U.T., Sept. 7th, 1857

"DEAR FATHER:- I take up my pen with a heavy heart, for I have sad news to send you. God has seen proper, in his perfect wisdom and goodness, to call Hosea, the patient, the gentle, the good, to rejoin his mother in another and better world. In the first burst of my sorrow I complained bitterly of the dispensation which deprived me of what I held most dear of all the world, and I thought it most hard that he should be called away, just as we had fair hopes of realizing what we had labored for so hard, and for so many years. But when I reflected how well an upright life had prepared him for the next, and what a debt of gratitude I owed God for blessing me through so many years with so dear a companion, I became calm and bowed my head in resignation. Our happy faith in the perfection of God's wisdom and goodness will be your consolation as this cloud passes over your head; for well I know your heart is full of the great hope which caused Paul to exclaim in triumph, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

"At the time of his death I had gone to see a physician in Eagle Valley, some fourteen or fifteen miles from here. It (his death) was very sudden and expected, but very peaceful. Not a shudder, not a gasp, not a change of feature marked the parting of soul and body. He simply fell asleep. It was such a death as God blesses the good with....

"About nine A.M. I started for Eagle Valley, leaving him in charge of Mr. Galphin. He was very cool and calm, and before I left we had considerable conversation. He said that 'Through God's mercy we had passed through as great trials as this, and to that mercy we must trust; without God's mercy

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what would we be.' Dear brother! he spoke as if the trial was as much on me as on him. He was so uncomplaining, and made so little of his sufferings, that it required close watching to see how sick he really was. Little did we either of us dream that the danger was so nigh at hand!....

"It was just dark as I got back. [He traveled the distance on foot, over rough mountains.- A.B.G.] Mr. G. met me a few steps from the house. 'You must prepare yourself for bad news, Allen,' he said. I heard strange voices in the cabin, and thought that either Dr. Daggart or some physician traveling across the plains had come on to the Canon, and had been sent up by the miners below, as Hosea was much regarded by them, and that it might have been pronounced necessary to amputate the foot. I was therefore quite unprepared for the answer to my 'What is it?' '*Hosea is dead!*' O, the terrible force of that blow! the utter desolation of that hour! What I thought and what I said, I will not say—the world was nothing to me and I envied the dead. But Mr. G. pointed out the necessity of courage and resignation, and as he told me of his peaceful death, I began to gather consolation from the blessed faith Christ died to give and prove to us.

"After Allen left, Hosea sank rapidly—about eleven A.M. he complained of nausea and weakness, and then lay very quiet—Mr. G. thinks asleep—for an hour or more longer, when Mr. G. (who was watching him all the time) heard him breathe hard, and went and spoke to him. Hosea heard him, for he partially turned his head and opened his eyes, but did not fix them on him. His eyes closed again, as if going to sleep—his breath shortened easily and without effort. 'It died away,' to use Mr. G.'s words. His features wore a happy expression as in pleasant sleep, and with his last breath he did not even stretch himself. *He fell asleep!* Let us thank our heavenly Father, for even as he envelopes us in a cloud of sorrow, His mercy shines through it!

"It gives me pleasure to state to you that the possibility of one or both of us leaving the world here, has several times been the subject of full and free conversation between us. We had lived so much together, with and for each other, that it was our earnest desire that we might pass out of the world as we had passed through it—hand in hand. His hope in the faith you had taught us, had robbed death of all its terrors to his mind. Earnest and truthful, patient and hopeful, he was to me a guide and support such as few men have ever enjoyed. One mind and one purpose actuated us in all we did." [They ever had one purse between them, and I doubt whether either knew which was debtor to the other.—A.B.G.]

"The miners buried Hosea very respectably, and gave me many marks of their kindness and sympathy. I send you a lock of his hair—he continued wearing it as you do yours." [Here follow statements of Allen's intention to continue their work, accounts of the murders of six men belonging to the Canon, and of the sudden withdrawal of all the Mormons from Carson Valley to Salt Lake City.] "I have much to tell you, for Carson Valley is full of news, but my thoughts are with you when you will receive this letter. You will have no care to hear, and I have none to write, but of dear Hosea. Yet when we

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think of it, he has only gone to join his mother. Of the six, five yet remain to you—one has gone to her. May God deal gently with you and yours, dear father, and temper your grief with the bright hope of our glorious faith. Surely it is a rock on which to build; and as I took my last look at what remained of him, I thanked God with all my heart, that he had, through you, led me to such a building place. And as *I* thank you, father, for the dear faith you have taught me, so will all your children, as they learn that one of their band has broken the fetters of mortality and soared Home. With a thankful heart, I send love to all.

Truly and affectionately, your Son,  
E. A. Grosh

Surely I would be ungrateful to God, and to the pious affection of my most bereaved and excellent first-born, were I not resigned to the will of Him who "doeth all things well." God is a Father, and knoweth a Father's heart. By this dispensation He has made the departed dearer than ever, and made stronger and drawn closer the ties that bind me to the living. Hence though the newly riven tendrils quiver and bleed, yet I can say in my soul, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth to him good."

A.B.G.

*Christian Ambassador*, Auburn NY, 14 Nov 1857  
[a Universalist newspaper]

Transcribed on 8 Feb 2005 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY