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Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker and children, 1854 Jul. 27

John W. H. Baker

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Mokelumne Hill, July 27th, 1854

My Dear Wife & Children

I am happy to be able to write you again while I am blessed with good health and prospering so far as a pecuniary object is concerned as well as usual. I have been better than I could have expected during the excessively hot weather which we have been having for two or three weeks past. the degree of heat has been frequently up to 108 and one or two days as high as 110 and still I do not think the people suffer so much as they do from the extreme heat in the Eastern States. I attribute the fact to the dryness of the atmosphere. there is not the least moisture in it. we have had no rain for some 2 months and our hills are as dry as an ash-heap and look like a grain field at the East after the gathering of the crops and in a severe drouth. Today we have a few clouds in the sky and a little appearance of a shower; we may get one but such a thing at this time of the year is something uncommon. We are likely to have about 2 more months of dry and hot weather. thereafter we enjoy a month or two of the most delightfull kind of weather and then for our rainy season. I recieved your letter of June 14th some 3 days after my last letter left for the States giving me news of your satisfaction in regard to my co-partnership with Dr. H. I can repeat to you that you need make yourself no trouble in regard to my getting along with him. We have no difficulty at all and get along well and shall probably continue to do so as long as I will consent to do as I have done for some 5 months past. That is to do some $\frac{3}{4}$ of all the business during the day and all of it at night, (as he stays at his house during the night, some $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the centre of town, where the people would not go for him, or do not go.) and after doing all this I only recieve $\frac{1}{2}$ the proceeds of our business. Still it would be of no use for me to get into a difficulty with him, and as I am doing well I am satisfied to

let things take their course for the present, making everything as smooth as possible. I think that by and by I shall either sell to him or he shall sell to me his share of the concern. I will give him \$1000 for his share and pay him the money any day--or if he will buy me I will go to a camp about 12 miles from here where I am confident I could do a better business than I am doing here, at least I think I could do better during the coming fall and winter. But I cannot now predict any change in my business with any degree of certainty. We are now doing from \$30 to \$50 per day and I am pretty well satisfied with that or at least my share of that. Our business may soon fall off again, but I am inclined to think we shall have a pretty good season for business from this time untill the rainy season sets in.

I recieved a letter from Father by the last mail and was glad to hear some of the particulars of Oliver's sickness. But I cannot but wish I could have been with him to have administered to his relief, for from what I learn I am inclined to believe that his disease presented that form of disease which is peculiar to Panama and California and which I am convinced none of the N. E. Physicians understand. But I console myself with the thought that he was amongst his friends and had all the care and attendance they could possibly give him. I know that I was ignorant of the proper method of the treatment of the diseases which are incident to California before I came here, although I considered myself not the poorest kind of a Physician for the fevers which were found in that region of country where I practiced so long, and where the success of my practice will testify as to its merit, and for this reason I feel as though Oliver's case was not perfectly understood. Understand me! I do not condemn them, but I feel as though if I could have been there I should have been better satisfied or at least more reconciled with this sad event of ours.

You ask me if I was owing Oliver--in answer I inform you that the amount which I was owing was turned to John Storrs when Oliver left and I gave him (John Storrs) my note for the amount with interest at 3 per cent a month from December last and have since paid that in full as I believe I wrote you something about it some time since or about the time I paid it. therefore I was not owing him and the \$100 which I sent by him to you is yours and I wish you to obtain it and use it as you think proper--I even suppose it has been paid you ere this time. I sent it in a piece of leather sewed up in good shape and marked in your name. It consisted of 5 twenty dollar pieces. (Perhaps Oliver might have used the coin on his way, if not I think you will find the little package) I want you should obtain all the particulars in relation to the amount of property Oliver carried home with him and write me what Sophia's future design is--He has some dues here but whether we would be able to collect anything even if I or any other person had a Power of Attorney from an administrator of the estate, I think it doubtful. I think some one had better administer upon the estate in legal form if no one else than Sophia--it might result in her interest eventually, notwithstanding the amount of his affairs are so well settled there and here so far as I know--with one exception--and that I do not wish you to say anything about, as I shall endeavor to get him to write to Sophia himself concerning the matter. John Storrs says "he let Oliver have \$800 while in San Francisco of money which belonged to himself as Oliver thought he should like it as he might want to use it if he returned, and if he did not conclude to come back he would send it back by Express." John says he took no note to show the indebtedness and has nothing to show but his own word. I do not want you to say anything concerning this matter as yet as I think John will write to Sophia about it. I hope Sophia has written

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John ere this, and more than all I wish to know whether Oliver told Sophia anything concerning his business affairs with John Storrs or others. I was wholly ignorant of the business myself, but I had the impression that Oliver had of his own somewhere from \$2000 to \$3000. Write me every thing concerning the matters I have mentioned. Dr. Holbrook's children have been sick with the Measles, the little girl quite sick, but is some better now. Mrs. Holbrook is very homesick and were it not for cost, or I might say if they had a few thousands they would return and from what I hear them say they would be most likely to settle in their old place at Linca, Ind. which place they think the most beautiful in all the western country. Holbrook thinks he should have been much better off if he had never have brought his family out here, but had have remained here untill about next Spring and returned, and I am thinking he would have been better contented with his operations in California. He could have gone home at that time with about \$5000. I think had he not transported his family here. But were he to return now at that time he could not arrive in N. Y. with any more money than I should have. So that I place him only on an equality with myself as to property. Neither of us, at present, having much. I shall probably send another draft for a few dollars in the course of a month or two. Write me particularly in regard to your expenses whether more or less. I want you to have everything which is necessary for your comfort and that of the children. I am glad that Fred is getting along so finely in his studies, and I am sorry Sisis no better while attending school, as to her attending school while it disagrees with her health, I leave you to manage that as you think best, but I wish her to attend as much as possible but not to the injury of her health. I have sent them presents occasionally which I want them to be very careful to keep for my sake. Fred's compensations for his services are amall but as you say "better do so than to be doing worse". Give my love and some

kisses to my dear babe. I suppose I do not cherish such a strong remembrance of him as I do of my other children from the fact that he was so young and had never recieved such constant care and attention as my other children had from me, in fact for the two months previous to my leaving you all I was so continually occupied by my business that I can hardly think that my impressions of matters and things, aside from my preparation to leave, have been very strongly fixed in my memory. I remember him only as the babe lying quietly in bed asleep on the morning of my departure, while yourself and the children were in the dining-room shedding tears of seperation. While with a heaving breast and throbing heart which almost choked my utterance I bade you my farewell, and took my departure for the scene of my labors--I can now but hope we may all be spared by a kind Providence to meet again and to enjoy a life of happiness and usefullness on earth and that we may be continued in life to see our children grow up to a life of great usefulness and that they may be so educated as not only to give satisfaction to their parents, but that they may do the will of Our Father who is in Heaven--

I received a letter from Newell Colby by the last mail. He is anxious to know what I think of his chance in California. I can write nothing at all favorable for him to come to this country--for business in his profession is fully supplied and that too with the first class of Lawyers. only the very first quality succeed in a great business and at that it requires a long time and extensive acquaintance. As I have written previously, if a Lawyer could come here with a thousand or two of money with which to operate and should manage shrewdly he would make money--but for one to come in with no capital to begin with he would need to be among the most eminent speakers or pleaders of the day in order to do anything. In fact California contains a great portion of the first talent of the whole world in her borders. I intend

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answering the letter of Colby this mail. Give my respects to all my relatives and friends--and to those enquiring particularly. I have written quite a number of letters to my friends but am not in the receipt of answers. I wrote to Sister Julia, to Uncle Spaulding, to Brother Silas and I think one or two other individuals and from none have I recieved an answer. I am sorry to hear that Sarah was going to leave. I had hoped to hear that they had given her constant employ at the Academy, but they do as they desire I suppose. I do not think of anything further this time, and therefore in good health I once more close my semi-monthly communication.

Mrs. Julia Ann Baker
Meriden, N. H.

From your Faithful and Loving
Husband
John W. H. Baker