1-29-1855

Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker, 1855 Jan. 29

John W. H. Baker

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Mokelumne Hill, Jan'ly 29th, 1855

My Dear Wife

The time for me to write another communication for your perusal has again arrived, and although the fund of entertainment from which to draw an interesting letter is somewhat deficient, still I will give you a short epistle, in which the principal thing is to inform you that I am well and enjoying myself as well as circumstances will admit. We have nothing interesting unless we reckon among interesting things these very dull times. We have "from morn till night from night till morn the same increasing round of" -- Dull times.

We have delightful weather and plenty to eat, drink and wear but what are these when everybody is wishing, praying and waiting for Rain, the great producer of California? Without rain our farmers must come short of crops and our miners are unable to gather the golden treasure from the earth. Rain! Everybody predicts rain. Rain! why I think we shall have some rain in a few days--Rain! I think we shall have some when the moon changes--Rain! We shall have plenty by and by--These and like saying have been going from mouth to ear since the last of Nov. '54--and here we are almost Feb'y 1st '55 and no rain of consequence yet, and the clear and cloudless sky indicates no Rain.

Business! I think I hear you interrogate me as to business. In answer to such a question I can inform you that business like money, with us in California has depreciated in value, and while francs are now only worth 20 cts, which were formerly valued at 25 cts, business in a like ratio has sunk from 20 to 50 per cent. Very few men obtain services for the very good reason that very few men are able to pay for services. Many men do no business for want of capital, and many others do the same from having trusted all their capital to men at a rate per cent.

Horse stealing, gold stealing, and life stealing abounds, petty thieving, rascality and crime go hand in hand. But I will leave
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these matters of generalization and come to the particulars of your last letter. You write of sad news, but not so afflicting as I was fearfull of when I perused the first few lines of your letter. I was surprised to learn of the death of my successor, Dr. Lane. He appeared to me, in the very few moments which I had the pleasure to see him, like a man of a rugged constitution and one who would withstand disease. I had wished him much success and felt quite disappointed to hear that he did not retain the entire confidence of the community. I was so well satisfied with my business while there that when I heard of his dissatisfaction I wrote you to ascertain whether he would sell me his place when I returned. I shall expect to hear farther from my letter on that subject soon as you have undoubtedly recieved it ere this time.

I intend to leave California so soon as I can make all necessary arrangements, which I now think will be in May or June next, and if I find Meriden vacant and can make up my mind to the belief that it is the interest of myself and family to remain there I shall do so. I shall not have had all the success I had hoped to have in California, still I think I shall be able to purchase for our enjoyment a comfortable little home which we can call our own.

I do not know what success I may have in selling my share of the property and collecting the debts, but if the times are no better, I cannot expect much. So far as debts here are good for any thing after one leaves, I would not give $5 on the $100, and run the risk of collection. I design to get what I can and leave the remainder as my portion of charitable contributions in California.

I received the invitation which you informed me I was about to recieve from the inhabitants of Meriden, and in answer to it I have written a few lines and enclosed with your letter, which I wish you to hand to some of the men. I do not promise for a certainty to locate there as such a promise would be more than they ask of me. but if my
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interests dictate to me that such is best and the same inducements exist as now seem to exist, I think I should be persuaded to do so.

You write something about a proposition from father for you to move to Windsor in March. My opinion is that under existing circumstances you had better remain where you are. I have written to Father and expressed the same opinion to him.

He wrote me something about locating in Windsor but a want of capital would be a serious objection to locating in such a place and moreover the formation of an entire new circle of practice would be another objection should my old location be vacant. There are some disagreeable things in a location at Meriden but I do not think I shall be able to find that place where there are not almost as many objections as these exists there and I have no doubt I might find places with worse features than we have there.

With these few lines and a large quantity of Respects and some regards to all my friends and relatives—together with love and kisses for the children, I subscribe myself

Mrs. Julia Ann Baker
Meriden, N. H.

Your Affectionate Husband
John W. H. Baker