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Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker, 1855 Feb. 12

John W. H. Baker

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Mokelumne Hill, Feb'y 12th, 1855

My Dear Wife

California still remains dry, with the exception of one of two attempts at raining in which we had a day or two of moderate rain. we are in the same condition as when we wrote last. business dull and every body wishing for rain. The season is pretty well advanced and we cannot have much of a rainy season were it to commence tomorrow. The showers which we have had have given a start to the growth of vegetation and the hills look quite green. the weather is like summer. I have seen a few of the Spring flowers of California in blossom. Mrs. Davis, Chas. Dudley's wife's Mother died on the morning of Feb'y 15th and was buried on the 9th. She had been failing rapidly for a month. Her death was caused by a tumor which she said commenced something more than a year ago. When we first examined it we found it very large and upon puncturing it ascertained that it was evidently of a malignant character and would not justify in its removal. from that time the progress of the disease was more rapid than I ever witnessed in my life. She was aware of the result a long time before her death but seemed reconciled to God's will, being conscious to the end.

Yourself as well as the people of Meriden are on the eve of expectation about this time as my letter will soon be there in which I have given you encouragement of returning and the people the same encouragement of locating with them as their physician again. We ought not to place too much dependence upon the future for circumstances may occur which would render such a location against my interest or at least offer me greater inducements to settle elsewhere. I do not know what Father will think of my proposition made to him for locating in Windsor. I still think so far as a pecuniary view of the matter would indicate the place of location Windsor offers me superior advantages to that of Meriden. but my former associations go far to outweigh that view of the matter. I shall expect

to hear in my next letter whether our old domicil can be bought or not. I think that that would serve our purpose as well as a more expensive residence and moreover I should not wish to return and expend all my money in a dwelling, as I should want some for other purchases which I would esteem quite necessary. I cannot but think you may have the favor of a Physician locating himself in the place ere the time I have set to return, but if not so, as I said before, it will be one among many inducements for me to locate there----

I perceive by your letter that Fredy is getting into Society. I suppose he has grown to be quite a large boy and needs by this time to have learned some of the manners of a young gentleman. I hope to find him a well-behaved young man and one who gives his mind to his study with a wish to learn all he can. I shall want him to be sufficiently advanced to go to the Academy when I get home. As to Maria, you say she is a good girl. I am very glad to hear that of her. I was glad when the New Year came and I hope the time will come when she will be made more glad than she was when you told her you thought "Father would come home this year."

As to my little boy, I think I should not know him for I can form no idea of him only as I look at him in the miniature which I have of him. tell him that his Mama's papa will come home from "forny" by and by-- I can but expect that two years will have made considerable change in the younger portion of the community there. Mr. Wingate's family, Mr. Baldwin's family, Mr. Blanchard's, Elizabeth will all undoubtedly have altered much.

While I think that all these changes have taken place with the condition of others, I then refer to the mirror and find that, unless I am much mistaken, and others speak untrue, I have altered considerably-- You probably remember me as very thin in flesh and any thing but portly when I left Meriden. I am now somewhat inclined to be portly,

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in fact my abdomen is so increased in size that I am obliged to unbutton my pants at the waist when I sit for any length of time. My pants are not quite worn out and I do not wish to purchase another pair just yet. these I bought at Sacramento since the fire, I have worn out a pair which I bought here after the fire. When I bought I was troubled somewhat to get a pair large enough. I think I must try and make these last untill near the time I start for the States. Beside my increase in size the mirror shows some increase in the number of gray hairs in my head. Still those are not so very easily distinguished at a distant view. then another is the hairy face which has become a custom with me so much fixed that I shall probably make my appearance with it dressed as usual on my return. I have not such a heavy growth of beard as many and moreover I keep it closely trimmed so as to avoid all appearance of being uncleanly-- I shave the upper portion of the face as I have no relish for a moustache. While I am still in good health I close this letter by sending my kind regards to all enquiring friends, and my paternal love for my children with the

Affectionate Regards of
Your Husband

John W. H. Baker

Mrs. Julia Ann Baker
Meriden, N. H.