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Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker, 1855 Mar. 27

John W. H. Baker

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My Dear Wife

Having nothing of importance to occupy my time this evening I thought I would commence my letter for the next mail. I am still in California although somewhat contrary to your expectations as I infer from your last letter. You say in that, that perhaps I may not get some of your last letters. But I was rejoiced to find you did not stop writing on suspicion. California is now putting on her most favorable appearance. Her trees are in full foliage and her hills and valleys green and the flowers are beginning to show their beauty. If I had time and energy to accomplish a good assortment of specimens of the flowers I would collect, but I am having the sole care of the office and am necessitated to commence my collections of debts due the company soon or else they will never be collected. I intend to begin my collecting tour in earnest the first of next month and I think that I may be about six weeks perhaps not more than four in settling my affairs here after which I shall start for home. I want to collect enough from my debts to pay my expenses, and if I can do so I can arrive in Meriden worth $2000 including the $800 which is on deposit at Windsor. That is a small sum but I think it will furnish us with a home of our own, and that is a thing I should not have been able to do situated as I was in Meriden, at least in so short a time. If business was as good as it was for the first six months after I came here I should think best to remain here some time longer, but with the small amount we have now and a prospect that it will be no better, I think that it is as well for me to leave and locate myself in some place where I can do enough to support ourselves and educate the children, thinking myself prosperous if I can discharge all my debts to my fellow men and bring up my children in an honorable and respectable manner. If I could enjoy the same good health in N. H. that I am enjoying here, or that I have enjoyed since I have been in California, I think I should have no desire to live in any other place.
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but after having seen two such seasons as I have spent in Cal. for winter
and then return to N. E. where we have such severe winter weather I fear
that I shall feel discontented, beside that you know what a scaly, scroful-
ous condition I am in during the cold weather, when my skin is as rough
as need be, while here I am entirely free from anything of the kind and
my skin as smooth and fair as a lady's. I have sometimes thought of
going west when I return, and I may do so now if for nothing more than
to see the country and our friends and relatives. How would you like a
journey to Mich. & Canada and possibly to Illinois? I think I would
like such a journey much if I should arrive in season to take it before
the hottest summer weather. I am sorry to hear that Mother is more un-
well. I am afraid she may not live through the Spring, but I pray she
may be spared that I may once more meet her alive. She has been feebly
a long while and by the appearance one would have supposed she would
hardly live as long as she has done already. As you say in your letter
concerning father's idea of my settling at Windsor, I supposed he would
feel some anxiety for me to locate there and I have no doubt but that it
is a good place and that I could get a good living there. Still I do
not like to locate there unless I can do so in the manner I wrote father.
I would like, that is with a small drugstore. in that case with a cen-
tral place of business I have no doubt we could do first rate. then the
objection to that would be that I should not have money enough to get
along without Credit and that would kill almost any business in the world.
I must bring my business and my location within my means for I know well
what a load a small debt is in N. H. as I had the experience of such for
ten years before I left there. Now I desire to try the other side of
the leaf and learn by experience how it shall seem to live a few years
without feeling the weight of being indebted to any one— That we may
have such a trial is my desire.
Wednesday Morn, March 28th. The California climate is as beautiful and invigorating as any in the world and if needing a comparison I should think of any, it would be that of Italy as it is represented by those who have visited that country. The sky is cloudless today and the air fresh and just cool enough to feel comfortable with our doors open and our ordinary amount of clothing on, while out of doors the sun renders it moderately warm. it appears much like the clear and healthful June days of N. H. If this country could be blessed with such summer showers as the Eastern and Western States enjoy I have no hesitation in believing it would be the Garden of the World, but the dry season renders the greater portion of the lands in the state worthless for the purpose of cultivation.

But I will close my remarks upon the beauty of the country by giving you to know that there is in my opinion a great many features connected with the condition of the State in which I can see such an approach to ruin that all the fine things are outweighed a dozen times by the bad. For an instance of the moral condition of society here, I can say that within a region of 20 or 30 miles around this place there is probably a Man killed as often as every week and still all the majority of the people care or say is to know who it was and to remark, (if an esteemed citizen) "That's too bad, the man who shot him ought to be hung." If considered bad, "That's right, he ought to have been killed before." "Oh! such a country! such a people!" as the Dutchman says--

But I begin I shall soon leave for the land of civilization and I hope to feel content with remaining there as I have served all the time I wish among so rude and uncultivated a population. Sending all my friends and acquaintances my regards, I close this by wishing that yourself and the children may be spared from sickness and trouble and that I may soon meet you all in good health--

Mrs. Julia Ann Baker
Meriden, N. H.

Your Affectionate Husband
John W. H. Baker