

C March 1852

[Letter from Simeon Locke Doggett to his brother Samuel in California]

Dear Brother,

I have just received your kind letter to me, dated February 10th. '52. Your letter to Mother, dated Jan. 29th, 1852 ~~from~~ directed from Placerville El Dorado Co. California arrived on the 5th ins. The same was stamped on the outside Placerville Cal. Now as you seemed to be very particular to mention the town and county in which you were and as your letter was stamped Placerville &c. and as you gave no instructions on the subject, the answer to you from Mother was directed to Placerville. But now in yours to me, you order that letters to you must still be sent to Sacramento City.

So you perceive there is some reason to be anxious about the destiny of the letter. It was dated March 5th 1852. I wrote a few lines in it myself in reference to that past in which you refer to me.

After speaking of the great joy, hearing from you again occasioned, doubly so because you were in health I observed truly that Your letter came opportunely. That it let in a flood of light into my mind relative to life in California. About the 15 of last January, I read such flattering, alluring accounts of the El Dorado of the West and such the excitement (&c. &c. &c.

I would by no means come to such a place as you represent California to be.

And I have from the commencement had a presentiment, or have always had my doubts of the flattering accounts from, and the certainty of success in California; and it was the credulity of my Father, and the departure of so many from this state, and the Golden advices from California that at last turned my head, and made me entertain the idea of coming to Cal. But I have very prudently declined to join companies leaving this region for the Gold digging; I have rejected all such offers how alluring soever they appeared, and have also sought your advice. Your advice and views on the subject I now have. In your letter to Mother and in your letter to me. I am very grateful to you for the kind regard you have exhibited in my welfare. And so I am for all your kindness to me. I expressed myself once to you by quoting an elegant sentence from Addison on Gratitude. Perhaps you remember the sen.

I am very sorry that I could have been influenced so far by others and by circumstances as to seek misfortune when it always comes fast enough of its own accord. I am very glad that I have been duly advised. Again and again have I repeated the lines "What's the most formidable fate? To have our own desire." I rejoice that by seasonable information I have escaped literally verifying the Spanish proverb. "I was well, took physic and here I lie." So now being well informed and sober reason and content returned, I would have this proposition no longer entertained, but passed over and forgotten as the dew that due to earth.

You complain of my letters being brief and empty. The former of these faults I covet, for I would not as I should not, such as I am, trespass on the useful time of the useful; i.e. I would have them brief because they are empty. In regard to the latter of these faults, I plead guilty, and promise amendment in future. I do not look back with much complacency on some of my epistolary communications; for after mature reflection I find that I have written more folly than sense, shown more infatuation than foresight, more ignorance than wisdom.

I have sometimes allowed a feeling of discontent, or of melancholy,

or of ill humor to pervade my writings which it would have been more polite and politic for me to have restrained; for ~~on reflection~~ I have found that every one has trouble enough without being troubled by others. I have sometimes in writing a letter been actuated ~~by~~ at the time by the then present views and feelings; but a little after thought, a little further experience, and information, have made me regret much that I should have been so indiscreet and ignorant to have written what I did. I have been often influenced, as I am situated by the desires and directions of others, and ~~thus~~ have ~~never~~ written contrary to my own inclinations. I have sometimes allowed some vanity, or vain desire, or some want, or half-considered proposal to compose the principal ~~theme~~ topic of my letter, which letter (especially one of last ones) I soon wished after it was sent ~~it~~ never to reach its destination.

But I have this consolation, that in writing to you I write to one who will kindly forgive and forget my mistakes and errors, my indiscretion and my ignorance my illhumor and impertinences and all my faults, and any, even the least merit in my correspondence will fully appreciate.

In the meantime I will try to learn a lesson of descretion -- to think twice before I speak; to look twice before I leap. to be careful "to deliberate slowly before I hasten to execute." i.e. I will heed more the advice of the Grecian sage (")/ I will try to profit by the errors of the past so as to make some good come out of evil; and not let deeds done be done in vain. But after the greatest care and attention, after all, I will find as others have, and will that, "to err is human, to forgive divine." -- Thus so lately admonished by past projects ~~and notions~~ illy conceived and motives dubious I am double cautious about those I might entertain now or ever. I have had but little experience, and but little opportunity to get a view of things and spirits. I therefore should avail myself of the experience and take the advice of those who I am certain are wise and not sinister in their motives. And in fact I have heretofore only asked the advice of those in whom I can confide, and I only heed the advice of those who would be as willing to aid as they are to wish me well.

I had a few months ago a conversation with Uncle Deane, in which he gave me some advice and offered to assist me, but I declined any pecuniary assistance from him. I entertain the idea of aid from other with no small degree of hesitation. For I am convinced from observations &c. v. p 99-100 "Angels could no more."

If the view I have taken be not entirely practical in the dependant world, yet as far as I am concerned I would have it as practical as possible. And because you have very kindly offered to assist me, I have expatiated with some animation on this subject, that you might be aware of my prejudices. I have thus spoken because the consideration of father's affairs, of yours, of your letter before me, and your disposition incline me not to be instrumental "in riding a free horse to death"

Moreover, like poor lame Mephibosheth whom King David desired to favor, I bow my head and like him I say "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon usch a dead dog as I am?" I am poor in body, poor in mind. poor in spirit, I know nothing, have nothing, am nothing "the good I would I do not and the evil which I would not that I do." Fortune never

favored in my mind, my face or my pociet. And being I think of a patient uncomplaining disposition I have permitted fortune, persons, and circumstances to impose on me much, too much I think. I have constructed views of things, because I have lived a contracted life. And though I am not afraid of danger, ~~and~~ or to fight for my country, yet I am diffident, and rather inclined to be embarrassed in the society of others. I have had one sole ambition, which has control'd me much, a laudable desire to obtain a tolerable education but circumstances have been adverse, and I have failed to succeed. The principal source of my regrets and discontent is this failure. What I would I am not and what I am I would not. I have thus arrived at this age fashioned not as I would be but as circumstances would have me. Yet what little I have accomplished has & is some consolation to me, it has been my sole and "my exceeding great reward; it has soothed my uneasiness, it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments, it has endeared my solitude; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the bautiful in all that meets and surrounds me. ~~But I have already spe~~

But the great perplexity to me arising from ~~the~~ my difficiency of which I am speaking is that I have a better reputation than I deserve, and a higher one than I can sustain. Such a predicament is detrimental and as unlucky as that of the man who made him wings; his treacherous pinions enabled and allured him to soar towards the sun, but the warm beams of that orb soon loosened and detached his false wings, and then he fell like Lucifer never to rise again.

But I have already spoken of myself in one off my last letters to you with words about myself; but I think the occasion requires that I say something; for I would not have anyone unawares cast pearl before swine.

But I will here leave this subject and refer to another. You ~~mention~~ enquire about specement [?] of the Dust sent to me in the letter of May last. This is strange to me -- I seem to almost remember to have acknowledged the recieption of it in one of ~~your~~ my letters. But I am if you are not, mistaken. I have then it appears been sadly remiss. I here then hasten to ~~fully~~ gladly thankfully mention that I received the specimen. I have it now before me it consists 15 pieces the largest piece the size of my little finger nail, is flat, it looks to me as though you had hammered it. One piece is auriferous quartz; and two others hexagonal prisms are transparent; you call them ~~of~~ crystalized quarts -- I can cut glass with them. Is this sort of quartz abundant, and is it of any value, and do you save it?

And then the little pink flowers -- I greet them as the harbinger of a sunny & a peaceful time like the tenants of the ark the olive branch from the dove. O bring flowers, bright flowers." Send me some more of them. I am more cheerfull when I see ~~them~~ their varie-
~~gated/flowers~~ corals.

You enquired for the place Where Aristides has gone. A letter to him must be directed thus, Robins Nest; Peoria Co. Illinois; Care of Bishop Chase. His mother supports him there at an expense of about \$100.00 + (She estimated herself to be worth about \$55,000, with the prospect of more.) full half of real estate or rather land property of Jacksonville. She makes streets she says and has named one of them Cahterine after her daughter. But i have commented on her

in one of my former letters to you, and about her know nothing from my own experience, so I will here leave her, though if I had more space and time I might write more in regard to her visit to Raynham.

If you write to Uncle Deane Direct your letters to Boston. He has just written a letter to father, stating that Grandpa on the 14th inst was very sick; and has continued so feeble since as to require father to visit Raynham. Father will start ~~to~~ Monday (2 ist). The old Gentleman was 87 years old on the 6th inst.

I have not received a letter from Aristides since he has gone West, so I know not how he fares, or what thinks of the West, but he will write me probably before this letter reaches you; I received about 3 months ago a letter from a young man named Walker, who emigrated from this town for the West. His letter came from Mineral Point Wisconsin and it was on the subject of the inducements for coming out West. He spoke very encouraging of the climate, the people, and the ~~that~~ opportunities for success in business, and concluded by observing that he was so pleased he would not return to New England. Aristides thinks ~~so~~ he wrote me that you don't want to write him.

In regard to ~~your~~ father's affairs I know not what to write. Uncle Theo. is still as ravenous for spoils as ever but is a little ~~more~~ cautious lest he spoil himself to try to obtain his demand he must sue Grandfather, for the old sire holds the deeds of this farm, but he has willed it to Pa and has advised his heir son to be patient, even has intimated to him that he might in attempting to get the value of his note effect and perhaps loose ~~his~~ a part of his own patrimony in prospect. So you perceived the repose of the note perhaps depends on the length of Grandfather's life. I have heard nothing from Uncle Theo for several months; But about a month ago Uncle Deane wrote, advising father to come to some settlement about it observing that land security or a moiety would satisfy Theo. But it is not known what Uncle Theo intends to do. As soon as I have anything definite or if Grandfather should not recover, I will write you again. The Nathan George Note remains unpaid, and some small debts. The lawsuit with one John Moore is nearly all paid up. And the trouble arising from the Paddies who lived across the road, is almost over. It would take a long time for me to tell all about that Paddy business. It was an expensive, disgusting, disgraceful and distressful affair. You have been informed of some parts of it. One part is that the paddies brought an action falsely against Alfred for an assault and battery; the case was tried before a magistrate named A. Cook of Uxbridge. He levied a fine of \$10 or \$11, but father appealed. At Worcester the case was thrown out of Court because ~~father~~ ~~for~~ the appeal was illegal, for Alfred not father should have made the appeal. About a year after the time the magistrate tried the case, governed by his conceit and magnifying his office, and having an antipathy towards father, he unexpectedly to the family, sent the sheriff, seized Alfred and put him in the Worcester jail, father the next day went to Worcester and by paying \$10 delivered Alfred from his unpleasant situation. He immediately brought an action against the offending magistrate; the case was tried at Worcester last Feb 9th. The jury returned a verdict of \$50 damages for the false imprisonment. The family were much pleased with this little victory. The proceeds

will help pay the Attorney, who has been employed in combatting the Paddies from the commencement. After that Irish family were ejected from this place, they moved into the old H. Stone tavern. But they behaved so bad their, among those who had taken their part, that the select men hired them to leave the town

Accordingly they moved over to Milford; but there became troublesome also, and bid fare to be paupers; so the Milford authorities gave them \$50 to clear out the state, and they cleared. I have not heard of them since.

Our dear mother has not recovered from the effects of her neuralgia; it left her quite lame. The rest of the family enjoy tolerable health. On the 10th of last Jan. Mother visited Julia, and remained with her until the 20 of Feb. ult. This was a great undertaking for her & did not benefit her health any, but she felt it to be her duty to go and see her daughter and in other respects enjoyed her visit much. Julia & her husband are comfortable, and so, as long as they are industrious. When she married Mr. Wheeler he was engaged in the business of keeping a Tavern; he did well in this pursuit until the stringent laws of Mass. on licensing, render his occupation unprofitable. He then removed to Northumberland N.Y. to carry on an extensive farm; but he was unfortunate in this undertaking, and giving it up, retired to his native town, where he is employed in a machine establishment.

There is a great deal more I would like to tell, but I must defer until another time. The children are at home at ~~present~~ usual. I have several remarks to make on each of them, but I must wait for a more favorable opportunity for this is Saturday night and I will not be able to get my letter in office if I do not close. In fact I have written it in haste, and in the back room, a room full of noisy children and confusion. I was thus just agoing to close this letter, when I ~~hear~~ was informed of the following solemn, sad intelligence

Grandpa is dead. O God! the agony of my father. He loved his aged parent, and alas he could not be with him in his dying hour. It is with tears that I pen these lines. I know not the particulars of his dying moments. He died last night (19th inst) Father starts in the morning for Raynham; I go with him. I must here close, sending you this letter from an afflicted family.

Your loving Brother S.L. Doggett

Sam. W. Doggett. Cal.