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**D-329 2:55: Transcription of Letter from John B. Lewis to Elizabeth Lewis, May 14, 1851**

*This transcription contains language contemporaneous of the time and is being presented as part of a historical record. Please note that the transcription has not been reviewed for final editing.*

J B Lewis to Libby Lewis SF to Farmington Ct

San Francisco May 14, 1851

My Dear Wife

Since writing you last we have been visited by another destructive fire which has far exceeded any of the previous ones in extent and value of good destroyed. The whole of the business part of the city has been burnt and all the shipping narrowly escaped. I will send you a paper with a full account, which will enable you to judge better than you could by my description. I was afraid it would injure our business, in fact though we should have nothing to do. But we have been happily disappointed as we have been drove with work and had as much as we could possibly do all the time and at better prices, as everything has advanced since the fire and I dont see as the merchants mind anything of their loss, but have built their stores right up again and gone to work again, with the ballance of Goods they saved. We had just got through supper, Saturday night and George went down town to get shaved. I felt lasy and had gone to bed, when George came and waked me up and we went and harnessed up and kept at work until we tired out our animal and ourselves. Sunday noon, without a mouthful to eat all night. We only worked for our customers saving their Goods. We were offered \$20-50 and a hundred dollars a load, if we would take the load but we were engeged to our old friends and could not leave them. Funiture and everything had gone up a little but still what we should want would not make much difference, and I can pay in trade or Truck. So I would not bring much of any furniture, and what bed clothes and Table linen you might think necessary to last us a year or two I would pack in your Bureau if you wish to send it and that put in a good tight box and shipped round the Horn in a clipper vessel, and stored between decks, I would send only what I thought necessary, and what Furniture you do send have it tightly packed with blankets or clothes, in order to get as much as possible in a small space, If you think best bring one Carpet for our Parlor or sitting room, as this will be a good thing to pack, Every thing will come round in good order if rightly packed and put in a good vessel. Dont for your own sake and convenience bring any more clothes across the Isthmus than what you want to last us until your arrives around you will find what little you do have to being will be trouble enough. If you come up in the Northener you will fine the boat a Friend of ours from albany, and you might enquire of the Captain if any of his officers are from Albany, if so they will be acquainted with George or myself, He has some acquaintance on most all of the steamers. If I should not happen at the wharf when the steamer arrives send a note by someone to Hewitt & Harrison on Sansom Street near Broadway to be delivered to me or George immediately. My house is on Montgomery between Vallejo and Green Sts so that there will be no difficulty in finding my where abouts. Provding you should happen to arrive and I not know it. Although I shall be on hand immediately on the arrival of the steamer. If the steamer comes to

the Wharf I should be there right off, if she anchors off in the Bay. you had better hire someone to bring me a line. Let Wm be inquiring for some good respectable man of his acquaintance that is coming on, to take charge of you and see to you all the way through and what ever expense or trouble he is at I will repay him for. Enclosed in this I will send you a draft for \$500 and if it is not enough ask Mr Cowles to lend you what you want and I will send it to him again with California interest. I would send plenty of shoes and what Clothes you might think necessary. There are I think too many Fleas for Feather Beds, But I would send a good double mattress & whatever you send around, ship as soon as possible in a fast vessel. To-morrow morning I have got to go out to the Mission and I will think if there is any further directions or advise to write you, if so I will write more.

Now Libby Dear I have written this as through expecting you have made up your mind to come and see your Husband, But if you have determined otherwise why it will be labor lost and only helped to fill up the paper. I now it will be a great struggle and will require a strong mind to know which is your duty, to leave all your friends and connections and start on such a long journey alone. If you have, after calm deliberation determined to remain where you are, I will say it is all for the best, and Toil on alone until I can return my own dear Libby with enough to keep us the remainder of our lives, and be where we can love each other as of old. Oh Libby how I do love you, It seems as if our courting days were not over yet, and I believe we shall be courting all our lives. You may always be sure loved one, of always receiving a letter from me by every mail as I know that they are treasures to you as much as yours are to me. By our letters we can convey our thoughts to those we hold most dear and whil reading imagine we have the dear remembered one talking to us. I am sure I should be lonesome and discouraged enough if it was not for the letters I receive from my own absent one to cheer me up and keep me busy in order that I may be the sooner able to meet her again, never to be separated in this life so long. Tell Wm he had better be careful what he says about you, For I shall remember him, that he will not have a Boy to deal with but a Regular Californian. I presume the children are pleased enough at their little sister, and I will like it very well for a spell. I hope Farmington will be improved when I return. I think she needed it bad enough. I shall continue to write you dearest untill I get an answer from my last, then I shall know whether to expect you or not. I do not make any other arrangements or anticipate your coming as I know exactly how you are situated and there will be determined opposition to it. I shall not suffer myself to be very much disappointed if you do not come, because I know that you would have good and sufficient reason or if you had not, I would be perfectly satisfied with what my dear wife thought was for the best. For I love her too well to have her leave when she considered it her duty to remain. Give my love to Aunt Clara and all Jane and the children. I must write to Wm in the morning. I feel as I used to as I was taking leave of you at the old house. Kiss & embrace and say good by. Then kiss again and another embrace & so on a dozen times. Just so to night I want to write more but can't think what it is, So once more Good Night Dearest.

Your affectionate Husband

J B Lewis

Wednesday morning 15<sup>th</sup>

Yesterday I appraised some Furniture and I can purchase much cheaper than I expected. You might bring your Bureau and have it filled with clothes. Enclosed I will send you a draft for \$500 and by next mail will send you one or two hundred more payable to Wm so that if you have started he can draw it. Ask Jane to lend you the amount and Wm will pay her as soon as the draft arrives or if you are there you will get it yourself. I think I would purchase a side saddle to ride across the Isthmus on and it is worth more here than it will cost, I would leave my furniture with Kate if it is not in use and let her use it, if she wants it. I find Feather beds are scarce and high so I would bring one and if we don't want it can sell it. Give my love to all

From your aff. Husband J B Lewis