Orrville Aug. 16th 1862

Dear Thacher

Your's of June 27th after a long passage came safely to hand & although it brings care in a business way, which I could well have done without. I was right glad to hear from you again. To answer in the order in which it was written I must first speak of my business, or rather employment. I thank you for your kind wishes & hopes touching my success, and yet I must say that I cannot promise to stick to surveying only so long as it pays me better than anything else.

The principle, as expounded by good old Franklin, is unquestionably correct; at all events, I will give him the benefit of my august endorsement; and yet many a man (of the genus "Yankee" particularly), has put himself on the road to success, financially, by leaving the old track, at the right time and place. Many a poor dog, has stood barking at the same old hole long after the game had evacuated. (vide Beecher) & although evincing most excellent pluck, in so doing, the lookers-on will surely abuse him for his want of sagacity. To come down to the practical bearing of all this, let me give an example. Since I have been in Cal. I have been the owner of just one mining claim. Kicked desperately against the pricks for a long time, seemed successful (& was so in a measure, until I left my property in order to engage in a business better adapted to my physical capacity) but having got fairly out of that line of business for a time, and being a little disgusted with it I made up my mind to have no more to do with it, at any rate, for the present. Well, having made up my mind to that course, various, (somewhat) tempting offers. were made me from time to time & rejected. At length I was offered a 24th interest in a claim which has cost about $36.000 on terms which, having the thing right here, I could easily comply with. The offer was made me by a fine fellow with whom I was well acquainted, who having made his pile, wished to go home & fit for the ministry, an old plan of his, which had been interrupted. The value of the investment could not in my judgment be seriously questioned. I had nothing to lose according to the conditions, but everything to gain if it was successful. I hesitated. Should I meddle with it or not? Four brother church members were in it, and had no doubt of its success. Cool judgment (?) conquered and I refused to take it. Later in the winter a member who owned 1/12 offered me one half of it on easy conditions, because it was uncertain when they would get into "pay dirt" and he needed to lighten his assessments. One of our wealthy citizens who owns $5.000 worth of the claim, urged me in this case to take it by all means. Thought it over carefully again, inquired into the thing pretty thoroughly, & with more difficulty than before refused to "pitch in". Some two months later another owner got into a tight place & seeing no way to get out but to sell offered me his ~~claim~~ share 1/24 ~~at~~ on such conditions as to attract my attention again. With less investigation than before I told my friend (for he was a personal friend) very pointedly that I would have nothing to do with it: if I knew I was throwing away a fortune. Now for the result: In two months from the date of my last chance at the thing, they broke through into pay gravel & if I owned an interest today I could sell it for enough to enable me to place at your disposal somewhat more in the way of funds than my total debt in Wisconsin. or if I chose to keep it, could have an income that would make me comfortable enough.

Now it is not every claim that is offered, that I interest myself in at all. but here was one, of which my judgment approved, & had an offer one half as good been made me anytime during my first two years here, I should have jumped at it greedily. because there was nothing to lose if viewed in its worst light: excepting a small amount monthly for assessments.

But I had made up my mind to work out my debts by steady wages before I ever invested again, and I was bound to do it: even if in doing it I *had* to be as blind as a bat, & stubborn as a mule, and this resolution was taken, just because I had missed it in my *first* and *only* mining claim. Had I exercised one tenth part of the prudence & caution in our Kansas speculation which I have here in a score of instances. I doubt if I would be in my present fix. I have given the details of this matter to show you in the 1st place that I have no desire to speculate, which is not controlled by my judgment, & also to illustrate the fact. that a very good principle may be "run into the ground".

And with regard to surveying although I would like to continue it I shall not stubbornly refuse to take a better thing even though it be out of my line. & you must not be surprised to hear of my turning up in a new spot any day. Of this however you may be sure; that the question upon which my plans will hinge, will be, not: what will be the easier, more comfortable way of living, but how can I soonest discharge my pecuniary obligations? With regard to my business I have to report it dull for the past two months, though I have jobs ahead dependent on contingencies amounting to over 600. all of which I can do in two months time easily. If they all come round, I shall close my first year in office handsomely; but they may "fail to connect". ——

Your action touching mother's & Edwin's business relations is all satisfactory, & the suggestion you made, also.

With regard to the Campbell matter what can I say? To buy the mortgage is simply ridiculous for me, so long as I remain at this distance from a man who has it in his power to sacrifice it any time. & who it seems doubts my good faith. I might allow you the 200$ you ask (which is low enough in all reason) & Campbell might cancel just such proportion of the debt with the whole concern as his avarice prompted and leave me still holden for the balance. This of course I would stand if it is the only way, but I have one other alternative it seems and I will try that. I dare not give my note for less than nine months. for the interest. If that will do for Mr. Campbell all right If not, & he has the disposition he can sell the mortgage, & I will make you whole. It is unnecessary to say to you that the motives he imputes to me, are moral impossibilities, in my case. To be honest about it unless very prosperous it will not be convenient for me to pay the note in nine months, but there is scarcely a doubt but that I can do it.

I can hardly tell you how these things try me & wear upon me. I proclaim to you my utter inability to do anything toward paying home debts. but my proclamations don't pay them, nor does it prevent your being dunned on my account. & when pushed to the wall not being able to shoulder the burden yourself, you have to punch me again. I see how it is and don't blame you for it; All I ask is, that you will take my word for what I can & cannot do. & will not for a moment think me indifferent. or neglectful. x