

Staten Island
June 20th 1843

My very dear friend,

I have only read a page of your letter, and have come out to the top of the hill at sunset, where I can see the ocean to prepare to read the rest. It is fitter that it should hear it than the walls of my chamber. The very crickets here seem to chirp around me as they did not before. I feel as if it were a great daring thing to go on and read the rest, and then live accordingly- There are more than thirty vessels in sight going to sea- I am almost afraid to look at your letter. I see that it will make my life very steep, but it may lead to fairer prospects than this.

You seem to me to speak out of a very clear and high heaven, where any one may be who stands so high. Your voice seems not a voice, but comes as much from the blue heavens, as from the paper.

My dear friend it was very noble in you to write me so trustful an answer. It will do as well for another world as for this. Such a voice is for no particular time nor person, but it makes him who may hear it stand for all that is lofty and true in humanity. The thought of you will constantly elevate my life, it will be something always above the horizon to behold, as when I look up at the evening star. I think I know your thoughts without seeing you, and as well here as in Concord. You are not at all strange to me.

I could hardly believe after the lapse of one night that I had such a noble letter still at hand to read-that it was not some fine dream. I looked at midnight to be sure that it was real. I feel that I am unworthy to know you, and yet they will not permit it wrongfully.

I, perhaps, am more willing to deceive by appearances than you say you are; it would not be worth the while to tell how willing-but I have the power perhaps too much to forget my meanness as soon as seen, and not be incited by permanent sorrow. My actual life is unspeakably mean, compared with what I know and see that it might be- Yet the ground from which I see and say this is some part of it. It ranges from heaven to earth and is all things in an hour. The experience of every past moment but belies the faith of each present. We never conceive the greatness of our fates. Are not these faint flashes of light, which sometimes obscure the sun, their certain dawn?

My friend, I have read your letter as if I was not reading it. After each pause I could defer the rest forever. The thought of you will be a new motive for every right action. You are another human being whom I know, and might not our topic be as broad as the universe. What have we to do with petty rumbling news? We have our own great affairs. Sometimes in Concord I found my actions dictated as it were by your influence, and though it lead almost to trivial Hindoo observances, yet it was good and elevating.

To hear that you have sad hours is not sad to me. I rather rejoice at the richness of your experience. Only think of some sadness away in Pekin-unseen and unknown there- What a mine it is. Would it not weigh down the Celestial empire, with all its gay Chinese? Our sadness is not sad, but our cheap joys. Let us be sad about all we see and are, for so we demand and pray for better. It is the constant prayer-and whole Christian religion. I could hope that you would get well soon, and have a healthy body for this world, but I know this cannot be-and the Fates, after all, are the accomplishers of our hopes- Yet I do hope that you may find it a worthy struggle, and life seem grand still through the clouds.

What wealth is it to have such friends that we cannot think of them without elevation. And we can think of them any time time, and any where, and it costs nothing but the lofty disposition. I cannot tell you the joy your letter gives me-which will not quite cease till the latest time. Let me accompany your finest thought.

I send my love to my other friend and brother, whose nobleness I slowly recognise.

Henry