

May 24, 1805 Plainfield

My Dear Distant Friend,

It is not the propitious month of Oct. or the golden season of autumn alone which can give me leave to address you but blooming May and verdant spring the reason which gave birth to your friend, nor deign to lend their smiles and to exercise a privilege which seemed the prerogative of October. But alas! it is neither the prerogative of May and Oct. of spring nor autumn, to remove this cruel distance, these intervening hills and vales, these rocks and rivers, fields and groves, which have so long separated our sister souls, nor to bring to my vacant arms that lovely friend which I so long have wished but wished in vain to press to this still palpitating heart. The lovely spring displays a thousand charms and wears a cheerful smile all nature starting into life, the field and grove all flourishing and gay, and zephyrs gently laying through the fragrant air, all seem to lend their aid and jointly to conspire to fill the soul with sweet serenity and peace - how happy they who have these nature sweets with some fond friend whose tender sympathy and love could render pleasing every scene of life and even give winter's gloom a charm which friendship only can bestow, a charm more pleasing than the spring can give where love and friendship are unknown. But without a friend to share our pleasure, how dull is every scene! how deficient are all the charms of spring

For what are natures charms combined
To one whose weary breast
Can neither peace nor comfort find
Nor friend whereon to rest.

Think not my dear That I make these lines my own with respect to myself - no my dear your friend is not that unhappy creature whose weary breast can neither peace nor comfort find thou she may almost say she has no friend where on to rest I mean in the strictest sense - But the friendship deigns not to lend her brightest beams and only shine with glimmering nay, yet situated as I am in the bosom of an affectionate family and in the society of kind and agreeable people (for such are most of our people) and enjoying the common blessing of providence, I think no one would be unhappy who possessed a virtuous and benevolent disposition. To you, perhaps my situation appears an enviable one perhaps when compared with yours in some respects, it may jointly be convinced as such for domestic peace is ours - and this perhaps is one of the greatest of all blessings - yet, do not think that we are strangers to misfortune - We take our share in that common stock. Nothing of great importance has lately occurred with respect to us - we all enjoy health as usual I think I informed you in a former letter of Joseph's health he remains infirm - a remarkable apparent change has taken place in his mind and disposition with respect to religion which is at present an agreeable and we hope a lasting change - I do not recollect whether I told you how we spent the winter. My two brothers took schools in Goshen and my Father and myself took schools in Plainfield and boarded at home. We have since all been at home - I think either Sally or I shall take a school in

Goshen this summer - I think unlikely that we shall all ever live together again after, for a considerable time - for my brothers both continue their studies and will probably one or both of them leave home before many months - the thought of it is disagreeable - but it is a busy world, and each must act his part on the stage of life - how important that we should act it well! - but enough of this narration --With respect to you my dear friend, what shall I say and what shall I hope? shall I hope ever to clasp you to my heart - shall I hope ever to see that animated form which once charmed these eyes and which imagination still brings to view - shall I hope ever to enjoy your society, your conversation, and your friendship. and shall I hope that health and happiness will ever be yours? -how fondly could I wish all these - but alas! should I hope for them, I fear it would be vain, and disappointment would mark my expectation - O my friend how much would your society add to my happiness but almost every letter which I receive from you fills me with some new apprehension and spreads a kind of gloom on my mind - should nothing else prevent your visiting this place again, I fear your declining health will be an insurmountable barrier - O lovely health, departed friend return and take possession of thy long abandoned home - O condescend to dwell where thy return would spread a thousand joys and happiness would have thy throne - Should this precious fugitive return to its forsaken abode, I should then believe it possible that you my dear would return to the arms of your friend.. So pleasing an event I dare not anticipate. Though I eagerly catch at every gleam of hope which your letters afford which indeed are very few - I had almost forgotten to acknowledge the reception of your last letter dated Nov. 17 which came safe to hand several weeks after date - every letter from you is considered a fresh token of your fidelity and friendship, and with pleasure mixed with regret - The information you gave me in your last respecting your valuable and benevolent friend, Mrs. Hayward, was pleasing to me and has produced in my mind sentiments of friendship and esteem toward a stranger whose goodness and friendship to you have well deserved my thanks. Do not fail to write to me every opportunity - indeed I think you will not - Be so kind my dear as to send me your poetic description of the scenes of your youth which if I mistake not you read to me when I had the pleasure of visiting you at Bridgewater - I doubt not but you will indulge me if you think it suitable -if not I shall readily submit to your opinion - but I believe you will be tired with reading this long and unimportant for I have written almost everything and yet almost nothing - Let every error find an asylum in your friendly bosom I propose to send this as far as Boston by my father - but how it will reach you I cannot tell - I hope safely -- Mamma and Sally send their respects to you -though I have written so long yet I must leave you with regret - I that I could leave you with a hope of soon meeting you - do if possible again visit this part of the country and this abode of mine where you would be made a welcome guest, and your presence convey pleasure to this heart which cannot forget you - but though we meet not here may we never forget the solemn meeting which awaits us beyond the grave - and how soon that may take place, God only knows.---Forgive the length of this letter, and the roving subjects of it. Do not forget or neglect to write every opportunity. Your letters will always be received with pleasure and the recollection of the author of them be dear, while I remain your affectionate.

Lydia Richards