

November 23, 1799

My dear and confidential friend,

The thoughts of spending a few moments in addressing you gives one pleasure seldom in my time more agreeably spent than when I am thus employed - except when penning the previous lines with which you have favored me. or personally in converse with the dear author of them - as I can never amply reward you - accept my sincere thanks for your kindness in writing to me. Should I try - it would be in vain to make you sensible of the pleasure with which I received your letter of November 13 - had I received its' weight in gold it would not have so rejoiced my heart again to find that I am not forgotten by one whoever has a place in my heart. Certainly gave pleasure - various thanks and sensations had possessed my breast. Grief often sat heavy on my brow and from my heart proceeded many sighs. I endeavored to cease my sorrow by many considerate _____ but your pleasing letter was more effectual than all my vain efforts - you say my dear that you shall improve the first opportunity to visit me. Consequently I shall expect to see you soon - and believe me, I shall be happy to wait on you - my heart will rejoice to see you - and you will be made welcome by every member in the family - I hope you will stay with me as long as is convenient and permit me to remind you of bringing the letters which you once brought me but I neglected to read.

Our long absence from each other has not _____ my heart from you my dear friend - often do I fancy myself with you - and in my imagination I have many times convened with you in the visions of the night you are present with me - and I immediately imagine myself embracing my dear friend but when I awake it is in a dream. A moment's vision and I find myself disappointed but hope that _____ still lives in my heart and I look forward to find happiness - but my dear, happiness derived from earthly friends is not that substantive happiness which we need. They cannot afford us happiness beyond the grave. My dear friend the time which we have here to spend can be but short and the time is fast approaching when we must be a final farewell to all things below the sky and take our flight into unknown regions there to spend a long eternity. When we consider the length eternity and the vast importance of being prepared for it so the things of time sink out of view yet vain mortals set their hearts on things fleeting and transitory which must fail them at the hour of death. At the hour when support is most needed - but happy beyond expression is that person who at the trying hour of death is supported by an almighty hand and can look forward and see a blissful immortality - lest we make it our study to find that substantial happiness which at the hour of death will not flee from us but support us in the near view of eternity - with my sincere wishes for your eternal welfare, I subscribe myself your unchanging friend

L. Richards