

Sept. 17 A.D. 1803 Saturday evening Plainfield

Have so long a [redacted] and longer [redacted] obliterated me from the heart of my ease dear, my constant friend? and does her bosom, once the seat of friendship, tenderness, and love, now cease to glow with soft emotions and with friendship, gentle girl? Or does her constant heart still feel the tie of friendship and retain for this her distant friend one sentiment of tenderness and true affection? Yes, lovely the flattery idea I will indulge nor think I am forgotten. I see the soft emotion of her gentle breast, while she receives the lines which now this hand imprints and which will bear the unworthy author to her mind- O could I take the place this [redacted] paper then will have what exquisite pleasure should I then enjoy -But [redacted] fate (till frowns upon my hand nor can I see a [redacted] in prospect. When I think of enjoying oulovely even hope is denied admittance and I give up the pleasing idea (at least at present) O my dear may I not hope once more and even [redacted] to see you? Why [redacted] once the dearest friends forbidden to enjoy the objects of their highest pleasure and most ardent affection - In heaven is their appointed and we may not complain. I anticipate the return of your brother and shall hope you will write particularly and freely by him without fear of the letter being intercepted - but writing is not sufficient it is a verbal intercourse I wish for and a verbal explanation of a point of your last letter which I do not fully comprehend. I am glad however that peace and tranquility are again permitted to return to this forsaken mansion - may they long retain their evidence. I have forgotten whether I have written to you since I received your last letter which was dated Oct. 31 with another [redacted] dated Oct. 28. What return shall I make you my dear for your friendly ingenious and inimitable letters - my thanks in all and a request for the continuance of them. I shall wish to see and convene with your Brother and sister after their return and hear particularly from you more particularly than you can write but it is unlikely that I shall inform me, my dear of your health of your happiness of your situation and [redacted] enjoyments- of your projects, society and friends -May heaven ever grant you these two rich and interminable blessings, peace of mind and a sincere friend these with health will insure a degree of happiness. The need of a friend I have lately experienced-having spent the summer at Williamsburg. There I formed many acquaintances. I found not one [redacted] sincere and intimate friends. But the want was partly supplied in the woman with the woman with whom I boarded who was a virtuous, friendly, and accomplished lady - in her I almost found a mother, sister, and friend. I enjoyed myself tolerably well but found the care of a school as perplexing as even four months. I was [redacted] and return to Plainfield a fortnight ago today.

Next week I plan to visit my friend [redacted] M Little at Ashfield who is quite attached to you from the acquaintance or knowledge of you by some of your letters which she has heard and from the account she has had of you. I have nothing new or interesting to write with regards to myself or my father's family. They are at present in the arms of sleep. But friendship forbade that I should yield to sleep's enchanting power and not improve the opportunity which now presents to convey to my dearest friend the continuance of my friendship. Yes, be assured my lovely girl that friendship and affection which were once engraved on my heart for you, the hand of time, absence or silence has not erased but still a continuance of friendship and esteem possesses the breast of your constant and unchanging L. Richards