

W Cambridge Augst 23rd 1855

Dear Brother, I recd, with much pleasure a letter from you 2 days ago, and, although I do not know as I have anything of interest to say, still as I don't know of any person I prefer to you, to hold correspondence with. I thought I would write you a few lines to night, for friendship sake if nothing more can be accomplished by it. I hope you will not accuse me of flattery if I say, that from the first time I saw you – which was when you lived in Lexington – I have had an apparently innate feeling of interest in you, without being able to assign any particular reason for it at the time. I remember very well when first I saw you I had a very strong desire to get acquainted with you and although I had a small opportunity to do so, I tried to improve what I had to the best advantage and gained some better acquaintance before your removal from that place. It has more than once been a query in my mind why that feeling should have existed without any apparent special cause for it. The conclusion I arrived at was, that there were certain phases in your temperament, character, and disposition, that presented themselves to certain qualities of mind which I possessed, - without the aid of reason, in a very favourable aspect; causing a feeling of sympathy and interest, I never felt toward any other mere acquaintance and hardly that, for I had merely seen you without speaking. I soon after learned you had gone to sea & your parents had removed from town & never expected to see you again unless by happening to meet you. Three years passed away with only an occasional recollection and reflection upon the circumstances, when I was brought right in contact with you, which circumstances feeling as I did, I looked upon as somewhat singular, although of course to a casual observer it would not be noticed – But, to me it is a pleasurable reflection, for I believe by such reflections we can learn some of the ways that certain unlooked for results are arrived at, by electricity or magnetism, if – knowing so little as I do of these agents, - I may be permitted to use the terms – of course ever keeping in mind that the Great Ruler of the Universe is at the head; and these effects may perhaps be termed the general, Providences of God. As it is so uncomfortably warm to night, and having the head ache you will excuse if I lay this by till another evening although perhaps I have written as much as you will have patience to read already.

Sunday eve 27th, Being obliged to be away on Friday night, - and carrying Harriett to Brighton on Saturday night I have necessarily deferred finishing this until now. /To resume the subject, I was upon, I' would say that on account of our short sightedness it is difficult for us to mark the line between human and Divine agencies in the affairs of life; - it is certain, I think, that the Supreme Being holds, & governs all things here below, in all their greatness, and minuteness, by the power of His might; but it is by immutable laws, and I believe the greatest cause of our anxiety and complaint respecting the course in which we have been led, and which seems to be marked out for us, is, on account of inability to understand, these laws; - still notwithstanding we never shall in this life, be able to fathom the designs of God, perhaps, if more reflection & study were given to them, more might be understood, - which knowledge having been gained and having done as well as our own reason would teach us, that is by human agency, then if misfortune seemed to be our lot, we might, I think reasonably infer that there was some wise Providential design in the matter that would eventually turn out to our advantage and result in our good, for this, and the life to come. It must be remembered however that there is a medium in this matter we must not attribute to our Maker what we are guilty of, neither must we think that He has no control over us. It was evidently the design of the Creator, that we should be differently constituted to subserve His purposes, and for our own happiness in this world still, in some things the human family, whether male or female white or black, bond or free, are alike, for in a great many respects it is easily seen that all act alike differing only in degree. I do not suppose that there can be a

person would that has not some sense of right and wrong, which fact shows that in our moral nature, we were made alike, and another proof is that all are depraved & sinful, differing only according to the variation of physical propensities, education, circumstances &c. – As far as any observation goes however, I find none so free from evil inclination as not to fall into sin, which shows that if we follow the dictates of feeling we shall do wrong, which shows that it will not do to depend upon feeling as the standard of right, and consequently let them govern our actions, notwithstanding we are extremely liable to fall into this error. If then our feelings are not to govern our actions what is? I perhaps would say that our conduct should be controlled by reason – but it may be observed wrong desires pervert reason, for how inclined is a person to reason in accordance with his feelings I believe however it may not be necessarily the case, I think a person may by continued perseverance bring his feelings into subordination to reason of course I have reference to such as have acquired some knowledge of the only true and unerring standard of morality & religion; the Bible, – having this knowledge and following the dictates of untrammelled reason, I think we shall not be far from the path in which our Maker has directed us to walk, – and if we keep the path, although it may be crooked, and many obstructions in the way we may feel assured that it will bring us to a land of peace and happiness at the end, These remarks may have equal weight with respect to providing for our temporal natures, in this life or for our immortal, in the life which is to come. I fear I have lengthened this subject beyond your patience, if it may be called a subject – for I believe if I commenced with one I spoiled it before now. The thoughts I have written whether good or poor seemed to grow out of my starting point, which was to see if by reflection upon past circumstances which have terminated contrary to our expectations, we could not trace the hand of God seconded by His laws of nature, intimately connected with ourselves – thereby lessening anxiety and inspiring us with confidence for the future, giving energy to press forward in the affairs of life with objects in view which according to our sober reason will give the greatest, & truest happiness in this life, not forgetting that which is to come. When we remember what very small circumstances at times change a persons whole course of life and so different from what we expect, it would seem that there was some design operating, to impell us on, and we would hardly know where we were until we stop to think, and upon reflection sees where he is with utter astonishment, feels that he has gone through what he would not wish to again But perhaps this is needed to be as guide in future, perhaps owing to the temperament just such a lesson is required to make a happy and useful life I perhaps this may be an illustration of your own case; you have been unfortunate; but you may have realized from it more fully than you otherwise would the convenience, and even necessity, of being less free with money, perhaps inspire you with more of a saving spirit, so as to provide for yourself for after life. I believe there to be nothing wrong, in fact I believe it to be the duty of every person who possesses a very free heart, to try as much as possible to acquire a contrary inclination, and give only where there is absolute want and suffering. You have also seemed to be unfortunate in respect to a companion in life, but it might ~~would~~ have so resulted that there were not the ones to make you happy under the circumstances in which you might be placed. I hope you will not reflect upon your circumstances with sadness; but forgetting the past, except as a lesson, press forward with a hopeful heart. I am glad you are pleased with your prospects for the future I certainly – as far as I am able to judge – cannot see why they are not good. And let me say if you see any thing like a bright “star” in a stormy night I hope you may keep watch of it until the clouds have passed away) and may it follow you to be a light and comfort to you through the [unclear] voyage of life. Respecting the subject you referred to in your letter about any unpleasant feelings existing between our families I hope you will not think of again; for I assure you that none of our family harbor any ill will towards one of your family. As I mentioned to you on account of the opposition

I always recd.. without any apparent cause it would be a natural inference to suppose that our family did not please the fancy on acct of poverty, illbreeding, or something of the kind. But it may not be so; and suppose it is there is no harm done – we are all differently constituted, all havethier fancies to please, your folks all treat me as well as I wich & all our family, if there was any thing at the time that should cause dislike it probly has in a measure if not entirely worn away ere this. I only mentioned it to you as we were speaking, that, that was the probable cause but whether was or was not, it is all right, It is my desire to steer a straight forward course treating all with respect and cordiality, and I have no fault to find with any one. I hope therefore you will not give the remark another thought, much less say any thing to have the subject discused, I was sorry that I expressed an opinion to you, as you seemed to look upon it as a rather matter but I did not mean to convey any such impression for if it was true, it was nothing, and after what you have said I have no doubt that it is theer dsire to have perfect unanimity between the families and I trust there always will be – therefore we, will let this matter drop never to disturb it again without sufficient cause. Sophia sends her love to you and says she was sorry not to have seen you but will write soon. I will now leave you for a while, hoping to hear from you soon again I am always pleased to have you write.

From your ever friendly. brother

Wm T Woods

Address on envelope:

Mr Stephen. P, Blake

New York

Care of Capt Soule U. S. Hotel

Written on envelope back: I Broght This in a stormy night,