

they could be either faithful representations of the original manuscript or errors made and corrected by the copyist.

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*From James Richardson Jr.*

*September 7, 1837*

Dedham, September 7th, 1837.

Friend Thoreau,

After you had finished your part in the Performances of Commencement,<sup>1</sup> (the tone and sentiment of which by the way I liked much, as being of a sound philosophy,) I hardly saw you again at all. Neither at Mr Quincy's levee, neither at any of our Classmates' evening entertainments<sup>a</sup>, did I find you, though for the purpose of taking a farewell, and leaving you some memento of an old chum, as well as on matters of business, I much wished to see your face once more. Of course you must be present at our October meeting,<sup>2</sup>-notice of the time and place for which will be given in the Newspapers. I hear that you are comfortably located, in your native town, as the guardian of its children, in the immediate vicinity, I suppose, of one of our most distinguished Apostles of the Future-<sup>a</sup>R. W. Emerson,<sup>3</sup> and situated under the ministry of our old friend Rev<sup>a</sup> Barzillai Frost,<sup>4</sup> to whom please make my remembrances. I heard from you, also, that Concord Academy, lately under the care of Mr Phineas Allen<sup>5</sup> of Northfield, is now vacant of a preceptor; should Mr Hoar<sup>6</sup> find it difficult to get a scholar-<sup>a</sup>college-distinguished, perhaps he would take up with one, who, though in many respects a critical thinker, and a careful philosopher of language among other things, has never distinguished himself in his class as a regular attendant on college studies and rules. If so, could you do me the kindness to mention my name to him, as of one intending to make teaching his profession, at least for a part of his

life. If recommendations are necessary, President Quincy has offered me one, and I can easily get others. My old instructor Mr Kimball<sup>7</sup> gave, and gives me credit for having quite a genius for Mathematics, though I studied them so little in College, and I think that Dr Beck<sup>8</sup> will approve me as something of a Latinist.— I did intend going to a distance, but my father's<sup>9</sup> and other friends' wishes, beside my own desire of a proximity to Harvard and her Library, has constrained me. I have had the offer and opportunity of several places, but the distance or smallness of salary were objections,<sup>a</sup> I should like to hear about Concord Academy from you, if it is not engaged. Hoping that your situation affords you every advantage for continuing your mental education and development I am

with esteem & respect  
Yr classmate & friend  
James Richardson jr

P. S. I hope you will tell me something about your situation, state of mind, course of reading, &c; and any advice you have to offer will be gratefully accepted. Should the place, alluded to above, be filled, any place, that you may hear spoken of, with a reasonable salary, would perhaps answer for your humble serv't

—JR—

*Correspondent:* James Richardson Jr. (1817-1863), son of James and Sarah Richards Richardson of Dedham, Massachusetts, was an indifferant student, though he was thought to have literary talent. He taught for a time and graduated from the Harvard Divinity School in 1845. After serving several churches, he left the ministry and became a farmer in Connecticut. In 1856 he married Henrietta Harris (b. 1828?) of Brooklyn. Richardson joined the army as a private in 1862, but he served as an aide, rather than as a combat soldier.

<sup>1</sup> At the 1837 Harvard commencement, T, Charles Rice, and Henry Vose were to be in a conference together, each reading a lecture on the theme of "The Commercial Spirit of Modern Times, considered in its Influence on the Political, Moral, and Literary Character of a Nation." Rice, who was absent, was to speak first about the influ-

ence of the commercial spirit on the political character of a nation; T spoke about its influence "on the Moral Character of a Nation," and Vose closed the conference with a lecture about its influence on literary character (Bradley P. Dean and Ronald Wesley Hoag, "Thoreau's Lectures before *Walden*: An Annotated Calendar," *SAR* 1995, pp. 133-134).

<sup>2</sup> The class had its first post-graduation meeting at Fenno's in Boston on October 2, 1837.

<sup>3</sup> Soon after his graduation in 1837, T took a job teaching at the Center School in Concord, where he had formerly been a student. He resigned at the end of his second week—after he had been ordered by Nehemiah Ball, a member of the school committee, to inflict corporal punishment on the students. T was living with his family in the Parkman House in Concord, near the intersection of Main Street and Sudbury Road; Ralph Waldo Emerson and his second wife Lydia (Lidian) Jackson (1802-1892) had recently moved into the Coolidge House on the Cambridge Turnpike outside of Concord's center. Emerson had just the week before delivered "The American Scholar" to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard.

<sup>4</sup> Barzillai Frost (1804-1858) graduated from Harvard University in 1830 and from the Harvard Divinity School in 1835. He was ordained as the junior minister at Concord's First Parish on February 1, 1837, and succeeded Rev. Ezra Ripley in 1841. On June 1, 1837, he married Elmira Stone (1810-1891), daughter of Daniel and Sarah Buckminster Stone. Frost was an ardent abolitionist but at best a mediocre thinker. Although he never exerted intellectual leadership, he was active in Concord public life as a member of the school committee and as a proprietor of the library.

<sup>5</sup> Phineas Allen (1801-1885), son of Phineas and Ruth Smith Allen, graduated from Harvard in 1825. In 1828 he married Clarissa Fiske (1801-1887), daughter of Jonathan and Sally Flagg Fiske. He taught in Concord from 1827 to 1836 and then moved to Northfield, Massachusetts, and again to West Newton, where he lived from 1860 until his death. T, once a student of Allen's, later had this to say about him: "I was fitted, or rather made unfit for college, at Concord Academy and elsewhere, mainly by myself, with the countenance of Phineas Allen, Preceptor" ("Elizabeth Hoar of Concord and Thoreau," *TSB* 106 [winter 1969]: 2).

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Hoar (1778-1856), an 1802 Harvard graduate and Concord's most prominent citizen, began his law practice in Concord in 1805. In 1812 he married Sarah Sherman (1783-1866), daughter of Roger and Rebekah Prescott Sherman. An active antislavery advocate, Hoar served in the U.S. Congress from 1835 to 1837, helped

found the Free-Soil Party in 1848, and was one of the organizers of the Massachusetts Republican Party in 1855. In Concord he often served on the school committee.

<sup>7</sup> Rev. Daniel Kimball (1778-1862) graduated from Harvard in 1800 and was the Latin tutor there from 1803 to 1805. He was ordained as an evangelist at large on December 17, 1817, but continued to teach school.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Beck (1798-1866) earned his doctorate at Tübingen University in 1823. Political oppression in Germany drove him to the United States in 1824. He taught at the Round Hill School in Northampton, Massachusetts, and then in Philipstown, New York, before joining the Harvard faculty in 1832 as a professor of Latin.

<sup>9</sup> James Richardson Sr. (1771-1858) graduated from Harvard in 1797 and practiced law in Dedham, Massachusetts. In 1813 he married Sarah Elizabeth Richards (1789-1820), daughter of Samuel and Mary White Richards.

*Copy-text:* ALS (NN-BGC, Henry David Thoreau Collection, 1837-1917, Series IV)

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#### *Editor's Note*

This letter is addressed "Henry D. Thoreau / Concord / Mass", postmarked "DEDHAM Ms. SEP 8", and endorsed "James. Richardson".

#### *Author's Alterations*

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 Future-] future,  
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#### *To Henry Vose*

*October 13, 1837*

Concord Oct 13<sup>th</sup> -37

Friend Vose

You don't know how much I envy you your comfortable settlement—almost sine-cure—in the region of Butternuts.<sup>1</sup> How art thou pleased with the lay of the land and the look