

From John Chapman

November 2, 1855

Strand

London: 8 King William Street

Novr-2nda 1855.-

H. D. Thoreau Esq^r

Dear Sir

The parcel of books advised by me, on the 26th of October, as having been sent by the "Asia" Steamer, from Liverpool, has been shut out of that vessel on account of her cargo being complete several days previous to her sailing. Under these circumstances I have therefore ordered the parcel to be shipped by the "Canada" of the 10th proximo, and trust that you will not experience any inconvenience from this unavoidable delay-

I am, dear Sir,
Yours very truly
John Chapman
& D Ferguson

-I have written to Messrs Crosby Nichols & Co, Boston, respecting your package-

Correspondent: See p. 372.

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

Published: "T and Cholmondeley" 1893, 745; *Cor* 1958, 396-397

Author's Alteration

2nd] 2 altered from 1

To Thomas Cholmondeley

November 8 and December 1, 1855

Concord Nov. 8th 1855.

Dear Cholmondeley,

I must endeavor to thank you for your magnificent, your princely gift to me. My father, with his hand in his pocket, and an air of mystery and importance about him suggests

that I have another letter from Mr. Cholmondeley, and hands me a ship letter. I open eagerly upon a list of books (made up in one parcel) for Henry D, &c &c"; and my eye glances down a column half as long as my arm, where I already detect some eminences which I had seen or heard of, standing out like the peaks of the Himalaya. No! it is not Cholmondeley's writing.- But what good angel has divined my thoughts; Has any company of the faithful in England passed a resolution to overwhelm me with their munificent regards. "Wilson's Rig Veda Sanhita" vols 1 & 2 8^{vo}. "Translation of Mandukya Upanishads." I begin to step from pinnacle to pinnacle. Ah! but here it is "London, King William Street. truly yours John Chapman". Enclosed is the list." Mr Thomas Cholmondeley" And now I see through it, and here is a hand I know and father was right after all. While he is gone to the market I will read a little further in this list "Nala & Damyanta" Bhagavita Purana," "Institutes of Menu."-

How they loom far away and grand!

That will do for the present; a little at a time of these rich dishes. I will look again by and by. "Per Asia" too they have come, as I read on the envelope! Was there any design in that? The very nucleus of her cargo; Asia carried them in her womb long ago. Was not the ship conscious of the freight she bore. Insure her for nothing ye Jews; she and all her passengers and freight are destined to float serene through whatever seas.² Immobility itself is tossed on Atlantic billows to present the gift to me. Was not there an omen for you? No Africa; no Europe-no Baltic, but it would have sunk. And now we will see if America can sustain it. Build new shelves-display, unfold your columns. What was that dim peak that loomed for an instant far behind, representative of a still loftier and more distant range. "Vishnu Purana", an azure mountain in itself.- gone again, but surely seen for once. And what was that which dimmed the brightness of the day, like the apex of

Cotopaxi's cone, seen against the disk of the sun by the voyager of the South American coast³ "Bhagavat Geeta"! whose great unseen base I can faintly imagine spreading beneath. "History of British India nine vols"!! Chevalier Bunsen nine vol's 8^{vo} cloth"!! Have at them! who cares for numbers in a just cause: England expects every man to do his duty.⁴ Be sure you are right and then go ahead.⁵ I begin to think myself learned for merely possessing such works: If here is not the wealth of the Indies, of what stuff then is it made? They may keep their rupees this and the like of this is what the Great Company traded and fought for, to convey the light of the East into the West:-this their true glory and success.⁶

And now you have gone to the East or Eastward, having assisted its light to shine westward behind you; have gone towards the source of light! to which I pray that you may get nearer and nearer.

Dec. 1st-

After a fortnights delay, owing to the cargo of the Asia being complete when the parcel reached Liverpool, my Indian library was sent by the Canada and at length reached my door complete and in good order, last evening. After over-hauling my treasures on the carpet, wading knee deep in Indian philosophy and poetry-with eager eyes around ready to admire the splendid binding and illumination at least, drawing them forth necessarily from amidst a heap of papers, every scrap of which bore some evidence of having come from that fabulous region the "Strand", not far this side Colchis⁷ toward which you are gone. I placed them in the case which I had prepared, and went late to bed dreaming of what had happened. Indeed it was exactly like the realization of some dreams which I have had; but when I woke in the morning I was not convinced that it was reality until I peeped out and saw their bright backs. They are indeed there and I thank you for them. I am glad to receive them from you, though

notwithstanding what you say, if I should stop to calculate I should find myself very much your debtor. I shall not soon forget your generous entertainment of some thoughts which I cherish and delight in an opportunity to express. If you thought that you met with any kindness in New England I fear that it was partly because you had lately come from New Zealand. At any rate excuse our hard and cold New England manners, lay it partly to the climate: granite and ice, you know, are our chief exports. B. (of the mountain)⁸ was here when your note and the list of books arrived, and enjoyed the perusal with me. E. whose constant enquiry for the last fortnight has been, "Have your books come? is about starting for the west on a lecturing tour. The papers say he is to lecture *in nine cities on the Mississippi*.⁹

I hope that the trumpet and the drum will sound to you as they do in dreams, and that each night you may feel the satisfaction of having fought worthily in a worthy cause.

I shall depend on hearing from you in the camp. My father and mother and sister send their hearty good wishes. If I am ever rich enough I shall think seriously of going to England and finding you out in your cottage on the south shore.¹⁰ That you may return home safely and in good time to carry out that project, your country's glory being secured, is the earnest wish of one by whom you will ever be well remembered.

Henry Thoreau.

Correspondent: See p. 307.

¹ The shipment originally was scheduled for the *Asia* (see p. 377), but came on the *Canada*.

² Although Jews did not have full legal rights in England until the mid-nineteenth century, a provision was made in 1697 allowing twelve of the brokers on the Royal Exchange to be Jews, and some of these underwrote marine insurance.

³ The voyager may be Alexander von Humboldt, the scientist and explorer who was the first European to attempt to climb Cotopaxi, an Ecuadoran volcano. None of the books by Humboldt that T read

includes the specific image of Cotopaxi's cone seen against the sun, but in *Cosmos* Humboldt writes, "Amongst all the volcanoes that I have seen in the two hemispheres, the conical form of Cotopaxi is the most beautifully regular" (*Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, trans. E. C. Otté [London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849], 1:228).

⁴ Lord Nelson's signal to the British fleet at the battle of Trafalgar.

⁵ A version of Davy Crockett's motto.

⁶ T refers to the East India Company, incorporated in 1600 as the London East India Company to trade with India and the countries of Southeast Asia, as well as to the motto of the Oriental Translation Fund, "Ex oriente lux," which appears on the title pages of works printed for the fund. The Oriental Translation Fund published one of the volumes T received from Cholmondeley, Ísvarakrsna's *Sánkhya Káriká, or Memorial Verses on the Sánkhya Philosophy* (see p. 374, note 9). T knew the Latin proverb, "Ex oriente lux; ex occidente lex" (From the East light; from the West law), and he adapted it in his essay "Walking": "To use an obsolete Latin word, I might say *Ex oriente lux; ex occidente FRUX*. From the East light; from the West fruit" (*Excursions* 2007, p. 199).

⁷ Colchis is the former name of the western part of the country of Georgia, which at the time was a province of Russia. Cholmondeley would recognize the allusion to his impending departure for the area, the theater of the Crimean War. The myth of Jason and the Argonauts portrays a voyage to Colchis, which was the home of Medea and the site of the legendary golden fleece. T's reference to the "strand" (beach) of Colchis may have its origins in Bassanio's description of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*: "her sunny locks / Hang on her temples like a golden fleece; / Which makes her seat of Belmont, Colchos' strand, / And many Jasons come in quest of her" (Shakespeare, vol. 1, 1.1.176-179).

⁸ Harrison Gray Otis Blake, who accompanied T and Cholmondeley on their climb of Mount Wachusett.

⁹ Emerson left Concord on December 25 to lecture on England and on "Beauty" during a tour through Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Michigan that included more than nine cities, not all of which are on the Mississippi.

¹⁰ In a letter of October 3, 1855, Cholmondeley writes of his plan, after his return to England: "I mean to buy a little cottage somewhere on the south coast where I can dwell in *Emersonian leisure* & where I have a plot to persuade you over" (p. 356).

Copy-text: MSC by Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau (NN-BGC, Henry David Thoreau Collection, 1837-1917, Series III)

Published: Cor 1958, 397-399

Editor's Note

This is one of two letters from T to Cholmondeley that Sophia copied; the other is on pp. 470-473. At the top of p. 1 of this letter, Sophia wrote, "Copy of a letter from Thoreau to Cholmondely"; on p. 6, which is otherwise blank, she wrote, "Copy of two letters from Thoreau to Cholmondeley."

From Crosby and Nichols

After November 9, 1855

H. D. Thoreau Esq.

D'r Sir,

The parcel of books referred to in your letter of the 9th. has not yet reached us.

We suppose that our case wh. contained it was left behind at Liverpool and shall expect it by next Steamer.

On its arrival it shall

{*MS torn*}

Correspondent: The publishing firm established by William Crosby (1818-1907) and Henry P. Nichols (1816-1889) was located at 111 Washington Street in Boston; it lasted until Nichols's death.

Copy-text: AL (MH-H, MS Am 278.5 [13F])

Published: Cor 1958, 400

Editor's Note

PE supplies the date "After November 9, 1855" based on the reference to T's letter of that date to Crosby and Nichols.

From Edward W. Gardner

November 10, 1855

Nantucket Nov 10 1855

Dear Sir

On my return to the island yesterday I found your favor of the 2^d inst- I regret your defeat in obtaining the White pine seeds. & thank you for your good intentions & efforts. Last spring I recd about 60 bushels of seeds from