

other material that T wrote over the letter draft. The text of the letter is very faint; only a few of the words are distinct.

to] *PE*; to to *in MS*

*Author's Alterations*

considerable] *interlined above cancelled* no little

on account] *interlined above cancelled* in view

prior] *interlined above* my

health] *preceded by cancelled* slender

to] *preceded by uncancelled* to *and cancelled* consider it

*From Benjamin Bowen Wiley*

*October 31, 1856*

Providence Oct 31, 1856

H D Thoreau

Concord

Dear Sir

In Worcester I saw Theo Brown who was very glad to hear from you. In the evening we went together to see Harry Blake. Both these gentlemen were well. Mr Blake is an enthusiast in matters which the world passes by as of little account. Since I returned here I have taken two morning walks with Chas Newcomb.<sup>1</sup> He suggested that he would like to walk to the White Mountains with me some time and it may yet be done. He walks daily some miles and seems to be in pretty good health. He says he would like to visit Concord, but named no time for that purpose.

I am anxious to know a little more of Confucius. Can you briefly, so that it will not take too much of *your* time, write me his views in regard to Creation, Immortality, man's preexistence if he speaks of it, and generally anything relating to man's Origin, Purpose, & Destiny.

I would also like much to know the names of the leading Hindoo philosophers and their ideas on the preceding topics

Is Swedenborg<sup>2</sup> a valuable man to you, and if so, why?

Do not think me too presuming because I ask you these questions. I am an inquirer (as indeed I always hope to be) and have to avail myself of the wisdom of those who have commenced life before me. Though I cannot hope that my existence will be of any direct benefit to you, yet I cannot fail to exert influence somewhere, and that it may be of an elevating character, I wish to make my own the experience of collective humanity.

I shall leave here next Thursday Nov 6 for Chicago. My address there will be *care of Strong & Wiley*.<sup>3</sup> I shall undoubtedly spend the winter there and how much longer I shall stay I cannot tell.

I suggested brevity in your remarks about the views of those philosophers. This was entirely for your convenience. I shall read appreciatingly and most attentively whatever you find time to write.

Yours truly  
B. B. Wiley

*Correspondent:* See p. 464.

<sup>1</sup> Charles King Newcomb (1820-1894), son of Henry Stearns and Rhoda Mardenbrough Newcomb of Providence, spent some time at the Brook Farm reform community and published one piece in the *Dial*, but he never fulfilled the talent that Emerson and others in the Transcendentalist community saw in him.

<sup>2</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Swedish scientist and philosopher who was popular among the New England writers; he was one of Emerson's "Representative Men." In reply to Wiley's question T wrote that his knowledge of Swedenborg had not come from reading his work (see p. 495).

<sup>3</sup> Wiley and his brother, Christopher, were the banking partners of David Olmstead Strong (1821-1905), son of Ebenezer and Mary Day Strong, of Bolton, Connecticut. In 1846 Strong married Fanny Moore (1826-1856).

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

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