

151; *Magazine of History* 1915, 122; Carroll A. Wilson, *Thirteen Author Collections of the Nineteenth Century* . . . (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 1:333-334; *Cor* 1958, 203-205

*Editor's Notes*

This letter is endorsed "H D Thoreau / Jan. 1848"  
 has] *PE*; possibly was in *MS*  
 afternoon] *PE*; after- / noon in *MS*

*Author's Alterations*

you] *interlined with a caret*  
 Nature] nature  
 Reviewers-] ~..  
 Mrs.] mrs.  
 Right] right

*From Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*January 28, 1848*

2 Fenny Street; Higher Broughton;  
 Manchester; 28 January 1848

Dear Henry,

One roll of letters has gone today to Concord & to New York, and perhaps I shall still have time to get this into the leathern bag, before it is carted to the wharf. I have to thank you for your letter which was a true refreshment. Let who or what pass, there stands the dear Henry,—if indeed any body had a right to call him so,—erect, serene, & undeceivable<sup>e</sup>. So let it ever be! I should quite subside into idolatry of some of my friends, if I were not every now & then apprised that the world is wiser than any one of its boys, & penetrates us with its sense, to the disparagement of the subtleties of private gentlemen. Last night, as I believe I have already told Lidian, I heard the best man in England make perhaps his best speech. Cobden,<sup>1</sup> who is the cor cordis,<sup>2</sup> the object of honor & belief to risen & rising England. a man of great discretion, who never overstates, nor states prematurely, nor has a particle of unnecessary genius or hope to mislead him, no waste

strength, but calm, sure of his fact, simple & nervous in stating it, as a boy in laying down the rules of the game of football which have been violated—above all educated by his dogma of Free Trade, led on by it to new lights & correlative liberalities, as our abolitionists have been by their principle to so many Reforms. Then this man has made no mistake—he has dedicated himself to his work of convincing this kingdom of the impolicy of Corn laws, lectured in every town where they would hear him, & at last carried his point against immense odds, & yet has never accepted any compromise or stipulation from the Government. He might have been in the ministry. He will never go there, except with absolute empire for his principle, which cannot yet be conceded. He had neglected & abandoned his prosperous calico-printing to his partners. And the triumphant<sup>e</sup> League have subscribed between 60 & 80 000 pounds, as the Cobden Fund; whereby he is made independent.—<sup>3</sup> It was quite beautiful, even sublime, last night, to notice the moral radiations which this Free Trade dogma seemed to throw out, all-unlooked-for, to the great Audience, who instantly & delightedly adopted them. Such contrasts of sentiment to the vulgar hatred & fear of France & jealousy of America, that pervades the newspapers. Cobden himself looked thoughtful & surprised, as if he saw a new Future. Old Col. Peyronnet Thompson, the Father of Free Trade, whose catechism on the Corn Laws set all these Brights & Cobdens first on cracking this nut,<sup>4</sup> was present, & spoke in a very vigorous rasp-like tone. Gibson,<sup>5</sup> a member of the Brit.<sup>a</sup> Government, a great Suffolk Squire, & a convert to these opinions, made a very satisfactory speech and our old Abolition Friend, George Thompson,<sup>6</sup> brought up the rear; though he, whom I now heard for the first time, is merely a piece of rhetoric & not a man of facts & figures & English solidity, like the rest. The Audience play no inactive part, but the most acute & sympathizing; and the

agreeable result was the demonstration<sup>e</sup> of the arithmetical as well as the moral optimism of peace & generosity. Forgive, forgive this most impertinent scribble.

Your friend,

R. W. E.

I surely did not mean to put you off with a Report when I begun. But-

*Correspondent:* See p. 53.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Cobden (1804-1865) was joined by William Molesworth, John Arthur Roebuck, and Joseph Hume in establishing the Anti-Corn Law League in 1838. The league sought to repeal the restrictions put on the importation of foreign corn (wheat). A self-taught man, Cobden made a fortune as a manufacturer of fabrics in Manchester and then entered Parliament, where he became known as one of the most effective public speakers of his generation. Emerson heard his speech to the Free Trade Association meeting in Manchester.

<sup>2</sup> Heart of hearts.

<sup>3</sup> Although the fund was large, almost all of it went to settle the losses Cobden had incurred during his services for the Anti-Corn Law League.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Perronet Thompson (1783-1869) pursued successful careers in the military (he rose to the rank of general), in writing, and in politics. An early follower of Jeremy Bentham, Thompson was part of the circle that founded the *Westminster Review*, which he later owned. His often-reprinted *A Catechism on the Corn Laws* was influential in the ensuing anti-corn law reform. Thompson also wrote and spoke in favor of Catholic emancipation, against the House of Lords, and for currency reforms. He served three terms in Parliament, beginning in 1835. John Bright (1811-1889), a manufacturer, entered public life as an opponent of the church and the monarchy and as a defender of free trade in opposition to landowners. In 1835 he joined Cobden in the free-trade, anti-corn law agitation. Also an impressive speaker, Bright entered the House of Commons in 1843 and championed many reform efforts. He and Cobden were prominent supporters of the Union during the American Civil War.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Milner-Gibson (1806-1884) graduated from Cambridge in 1830 and was elected to Parliament in 1837 as a Tory. He later changed his political views and became an ardent free-trade advo-

cate. Prime Minister John Russell made him vice president of the Board of Trade in his government and then a privy councillor.

<sup>6</sup> George Thompson (1804-1878) was a member of the Anti-Corn Law League and a member of Parliament at the time. Known as an abolitionist, Thompson visited the United States in 1834-1835, lectured often, agitated for the abolition of slavery, and thus found himself the center of a heated controversy. Margaret Fuller described his voice as one "of uncommon compass and beauty" (*Letters of Margaret Fuller*, 1:218).

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

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*Editor's Notes*

This letter is addressed "Henry D. Thoreau / Concord. / Massachusetts. / By steamer / from Liverpool" and postmarked "MANCHESTER JA 28 1848" and "JA 29".

undeceivable] *PE*; undeceiv / able *in MS*

triumphant] *PE*; tri / umphant *in MS*

demonstration] *PE*; dem / onstration *in MS*

*Author's Alteration*

Brit.] *added in margin*

*To Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*February 23, 1848*

Concord Feb 23<sup>d</sup> 1848

Dear Waldo,

For I think I have heard that that is your name<sup>-1</sup> My letter which was put last into the leathern bag arrived first- Whatever I may *call* you, I know you better than I know your name, and what becomes of the fittest name- if in any sense you are here with him who *calls*, and not there simply to be called.

I believe I never thanked you for your lectures-one and all-which I have heard formerly read here in Concord- I