

Bloomington 7<sup>th</sup> March 1850

Dear Son.

Yours of the 2<sup>d</sup> inst. which was received yesterday, requests an "immediate" answer. I write you, therefore, today; though really I have nothing to write which can, so far as I can see, be of use to you. You seem to be somewhat at a loss what to do; whether to go to California, or to Cincinnati, or to Terre Haute, or to stay at Richmond. To advise is always difficult; for the mind of the adviser is not always in the same state as the mind of the one seeking advice: & the latter of course sees & feels what the former cannot, & vice versa. When I am consulted, as I often am, by young persons as to what they should do to further their worldly interests, I always feel almost utterly at a loss: for such is the uncertainty of human affairs, that the best devised schemes are almost as apt to fail as the worst. "Seek first the kingdom of heaven & the righteousness thereof" or always comes into my mind on such occasions; & it is not only the best, but almost the sole advice that can, with confidence, be given. Still, there is a need for what may be called worldly prudence. I will give you a maxim of it which I have been just reading in Plato, and in his own words: "ἐνθυμού δε καὶ ὅτι δοκεῖς τίσιν ἐνδεστώτως τοῦ προσήκοντος θεραπευτικός εἶναι. μη οὖν λαθάνετο σε ὅτι δια τοῦ ἀρέσκειν τὸς ἀνθρώπους καὶ τὸ πρᾶττεν ἔστιν, ἡ δ' αὐθαδεια ἐξημέια, ζυνοίκος. Εὐτυχεῖ." It is in

the end of his letter to his friend Dion. Lest you may have forgotten your Greek, I'll translate it for you; though much of the beauty & force of the terms must be lost in the translation.

"Have it in mind that to some you seem to be less attentive to people (Therapeutic) than is proper. Let it not escape your notice that by pleasing men comes success; (Τὸ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων) but that self-pleasing is next-neighbor to desertion. Farewell."

I know of no maxim more powerful in all callings, but especially in that of a physician than this. Study it in the original. But to your present circumstances - to go <sup>to</sup> the other side of the Continent to seek gold in California, to me seems madness. Yet even that might in some cases be advisable. In your case it is not to be thought of. So it appears to me. One thing I had in view when I advised you to settle in Richmond, was that you might make a reputation there, which would procure for you a more eligible place in the neighboring city of Cincinnati - in connexion, say, with some medical Institution there. Terre Haute is a thriving place & destined to be, ere long, a considerable city. Your mother thinks you ought, by all means, to go there. But, as I said before, I cannot advise. Your health might not be promoted by it. Yet, Dr Hammil, your mother says, thinks the air of that place would be favorable to your complaint. All I know about it is that exercise on horse back, or in some other agitating way, is likely to promote your recovery... But whatever you conclude to do, try ~~not~~ to do it not in the way that Reid here does every thing, with a wavering mind, doing, & then wishing you had not done it, or that you had made some different choice. The dismal part of the month, (which the French very truly call Ventose - so far it has been here Pluviose as well as ventose & nivose, <sup>into the bargain</sup> - producing a flood that has carried off fences for me & others -) we may hope is past, and that, by the

time you get ready to leave Richmond - should you conclude to do so, the road may be so that you can come this way, by Franklin or Columbus, in less mud, than on the national road you would have to encounter. As to Fan, you can do as you please; considering, however, what would be right in the case. She is so safe an animal, & your mother so timid, & I too, after getting so many bruises & broken bones by unsafe animals, that I would miss her very much in the summer, & would like at least to raise a colt from her, believing that colts are apt to inherit the good qualities of their dams. But that matter can be adjusted to the satisfaction of all concerned, when you are here, as we expect you will be, some time before very long.

I have nothing in the way of news worth writing. Things, as usual. My own health, except neuralgia, which is a constant companion almost, & that of the family, good. Have heard nothing from Margaret yet. From the rest of the family we have nothing but what you already know.

It occurs to me to say, that your arrival at Terre Haute a 2 O. CLK the day after you left here, is - a caution! or ought to be, not to spur Fan so much another time. But a willing & long limbed nag, as she is, can travel fast, & you bring in need of jolting, I have the less to say. Plato, whose works I am reading, in giving an account of a journey he made in Italy & Sicily, says, he could not bear the way they lived in those countries "filling" themselves twice a day! This is the way we do; & I think, just now, it being near dinner time or supper time, that less than twice filling would not exactly suit any but a Greek philosopher. ΕΥΤΟΧΕΙ. AW

† self-pleasing - αυθαδεια is a term not translatable  
into English. It means the opposite of good manners  
- not exactly that either, but that self-confidence &  
conceit & self sufficiency which passes with some for in-  
dependence - a spirit of - uncomplaisance, if I might  
coin a French word - the contrary of what does please people  
all over the world now as well as in Plato's time. —  
- the contrary of ΕΓΓΑΠΤΕΥΤΙΚΟΣ.

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to see  
there,



Dr John A. Hylee  
Richmond  
Ind.

