John Kean to Susan Kean, April 19, 1787

John Kean

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Braunfort, April 19th, 1797.

Come my love, let us through the medium of our eyes behold each other, let us meet each other with fond gratulations; in imagination imprint the warm ties of mutual affection; for though distant be our bodies, our minds are ever near. So it is said that by sympathy & imagination joys may be felt and happiness enjoyed equal to fruition. I feel a great pleasure when I think on you & paint upon my fond mind enjoying ease & quiet but yet I conceive that was I with you I should be more happy for my Susan would be more happy also; then would her fears cease and her anxious apprehensions have an end. Thank heaven the time will soon elapse, I have gained the summit I began to descend to the day of my departure. More than half my exile is at an end. The truly religious (whether male or female) whose only happiness depends on the life to come in some certain hope of enjoying uninterrupted felicity longs not more ardently for the consummation of his bliss, than I do to be with you in New York; you is the sacrifice that I make to preserve a remnant of life; but it is for my Susans sake & I will go.
with more care than was the Heptarian fruit

Health which to me has played the part of a coy mistress
or indeed I might have said a cruel one, begins to relent &
shews an inclination towards me, she smiles upon me
not with all the force of her unbounded charms, but
with that countenance that declares, if you persevere
and obstinaciously follow the course you have done, you
may hope every thing & time will bless you with
full enjoyment—

My affair with madam Health puts me
in mind of some others I have seen heard of in this
world, where the Lady has had no inclination in the
beginning, but at length has ended as I hope mine will
in an indissoluble union—Don't be jealous for he
spared the closer this union is cemented the more
happy will you be & it is the only instance in
which a connection with another female can tend
to the happiness of a man's better part—for these
good reasons I flatter myself you will pardon my
first indiscretion, upon my promise of never having
an affair of gallantry with any other lady but this
madam Hyggea—

The Pride of India being a Tree much
spoke of in your part of the world I anticipate
your view of it in its natural state (which
to be sure is the most pleasing) by sending you a small branch of the leaves (flowers) it will give you but a faint idea of the beauty of the tree—your own view is the only thing that will give you satisfaction on this point—but that you may have some idea of it I will give you two or three traits of it—imagine then a tree full as tall as the very largest of your apple trees, with limbs as widely extended—cover it over with blossoms such as I send you, interspersed with the dark green leaves which forms a pleasing contrast—then add an agreeable scent that spreads to a considerable distance, I you will form an idea of the beautiful tree, but alas! of how little continuance is earthly beauty, old age to natural beauty is not more destructive than winter is to this tree, which then becomes as perfectly ugly as it is now beautiful, but it has this advantage over natural beauties that every spring it resume again its wonted splendour while theirs once gone is gone for ever and the tree has another advantage when it grows old it makes excellent fire wood, now I know nothing that old people are valuable for but the good they have done while they were young, therefore let us stamp some value upon ourselves before we grow old.
All the merchants whom I left here except one have shut up shop — this one like all monopolizers has an enormous price for his goods & keeps a very bad apartment of the articles you gave me a memorandum he has not one — we must get them in New York.

From the 16th to this day we have had a spell of cold raw, stately wind & disagreeable weather unfriendly to the delicate constitutions of course bitter enemies to us, but it has been an opportunity for me to judge how much I have really recovered, when I first arrived we had much such another spell — it then returned the pain in my breast upon me as violently as ever, my appetite was injured, I coughed much & my rest was broken, but at this time it neither returned the pain in the breast or injured my rest or appetite nor was my cough increased all the ill consequences that I felt was a considerable heaviness, depression of spirits & latitude — no doubt it retarded my progress & hindered my gaining a quantity of strength which I conceive I do every fine clear day — I can now ride six or eight miles without feeling the least fatigue & on Monday mean to commence an excursion to the plantations which I have not yet done — thinking it more prudent to wait and try my strength gradually, than by over rating it fatigue myself to injure my health —