West Point, N.Y. Dec. 4 '58

My dear Brother,

I am wondering why you have not written me for so long. I hope it did not result from anything I wrote you. Perhaps what I told you caused you surprise & disappointment. Since that letter was written I have interchanged letters with Perley. He did not agree with my decision at all & said such a thing could & should never be. That after our past he never could or would consent to take my place in the manner I proposed. Then came an affectionate letter from Lizzie which bore the marks of great sorrow & contrition for the past, telling me why she did not dare tell me the suspected truths if I may so speak. I wrote a letter in reply, asking that the past might be buried in oblivion as far as related to our differences & disagreements. I am glad of a reconciliation. I would not expose Lizzie to the cold mercies of this world for a trivial fault which she committed in weakness. It touches my pride in a tender point, to feel that I am bound to share Lizzie's affection with to engage in the pleasant recreation of teaching school. I have not forgotten the time when I wandered up & down that big hill I braved the cold North Wind. Those times still are connected in my mind with unpleasant reminiscences. Would you not like to have me for your Pupil & give me a few solid thrashings in compensation for past favors. & now that your physical capacity has overbalanced mine? I would be most happy to enter your school some time this winter & train among the grown-up scholars the little rapes that a few years ago belonged to Children. How many bright eyes would sparkle in recognition of their old schoolmate & teacher. I shall claim as my privilege a specific account of some of my former pupils. There. I do wish I could go home & spend this coming winter 'practical negatives', but I cannot curb my wishes short. "A good time is coming boys" — though for me the good time will be a brief one I see Warren night before last. He came to see me & talked with me about matters & things for half an hour. He is well & in his usual good spirits. If you get this before you go home & should happen to go to Portland keep dark. May God bless & protect you my brother

Yours affectionately O.O. Howard

another, let that other be who he may - yet I hope I am not governed by pride entirely. I will trust to the influence of my presence & disinterested attachment to call back what once was mine but which has been by various circumstances alienated. I have been happier since Lizzie's letter than before. I have done better in my studies though we have had for two weeks past the hardest branch of study that this institution can furnish, viz. Machines. It consists mainly in applying all our previous Mathematical & philosophical knowledge to the action of forces upon Machines. We have to prove positively why such & such forms of Machinery are preferable to others - Why such forms are given to the teeth of wheels - or what forms shall be given to develop the least amount of friction - We are made to discuss water wheels &c - In this branch Calculus is applied freely - but wherever we find Calculus' principles involved the subject is abreviated & simplified. My instructors have for over a week treated me admirably. & I have shown them that, as long as they continue to use me fairly, I have a measure of good sense that they had not previously given me credit for. I have had some pretty hard times this year - In fact when have I not had such! What do they commonly to after all: It is an excellent maxim to turn all things to good account. Every trial that I have experienced thus far has in the end redounded to my advantage and so I keep up good courage. Mother expresses the conviction that all my difficulties are in a manner Providential, their tendency being to preserve a proper degree of humility in my heart and hopes that all this is gradually preparing me for some work that shall be for the glory of my Lord & Master. A mother's hopes run high & strong to keep pace with her affections. But I confess that little humility has been the result of my difficulties at West Point. Humility will result from a thorough conviction of the possessing a sinful & grossly wicked heart. A mere cold admission of the fact is far from being sufficient to produce any feelings of abasement & contrition. Though I concede this as a general principle that God in his infinite wisdom turns the actions of his creatures to meet his own wise ends. Still I can but feel that the part I am to play must of necessity prove insignificant, unless perchance that part receives efficiency & power from that directing hand which causes the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. I fear you will have left Brunswick before this letter reaches there, Since you are going

101 12/4/1853 ***From:*** O. O. Howard ***To:*** Dear Brother [RB Howard]

RBH-065 West Point N.Y.

Source: Bowdoin

West Point N.Y. Dec. 4 '53

My dear Brother,

I am wondering why you have not written me for so long. I hope it did not result from anything I wrote you. Perhaps what I told you caused you surprise & disappointment. Since that letter was written I have interchanged letters with Perley. He did not agree with my decision at all & said such a thing could & should never be, that after our past he never could or would consent to take my place in the manner I proposed. Then came an affectionate letter from Lizzie which bore the marks of great sorrow & contrition for the past, telling me why she did not dare tell me the suspected truth, if I may so speak. I wrote a letter in reply, asking that the past might buried in oblivion as far as related to our differences & disagreements.

I am glad of a reconciliation. I would not expose Lizzie to the cold mercies of this world for a trivial fault which she committed in weakness. It touches my pride in a tender point, to feel that I am bound to share Lizzie's affection with another, let that other be who he may, yet I hope I am not governed by pride entirely. I will trust to the influence of my presence & disinterested attachment to call back what once was mine but which has been by various circumstances alienated. I have been happier since Lizzie's letter than before.

I have done better in my studies though we have had for two weeks past the hardest branch of study that this institution can furnish, viz. Machines. It consists mainly in applying all our previous mathematical & philosophical knowledge to the action of forces upon machines. We have to prove positively why each & such forms of machinery are preferable to others. Why such forms are given to the teeth of wheels, or what forms shall be given to develop the least amount of friction. We are made to discuss water wheels &c. In this branch calculus is applied freely, but wherever we find calculus' principles involved the subject is abbreviated & simplified. My instructors have for over a week treated me admirably & I have shown them that, as long as they continue to use me fairly, I have a measure of good sense that they had not previously given me credit for.

I have had some pretty hard times this year. In fact when have I not had such! What do they amount to after all? It is an excellent maxim to turn all things to good account. Every trial that I have experienced thus far has in the end rebounded to my advantage and so I keep up good courage. Mother expresses the conviction that all my difficulties are in a manner providential, their tendency being to preserve a proper degree of humility in my heart and hopes that all this is gradually preparing me for some work that shall be for the glory of my Lord & Master. A mother's hopes run high striving to keep pace with her affections.

But I confess that little humility has been the result of my difficulties at West Point. Humility will result from a thorough conviction of the possession of a sinful & grossly wicked heart. A mere cold admission of the fact is far from being sufficient to produce any feelings of abasement & contrition. Though I concede this as a general principle that God in his infinite wisdom turns the actions of his creatures to meet his own wise ends. Still I can but feel that the part I am to play must of necessity prove insignificant, unless perchance that part receives efficiency & power from that directing Hand which causes the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

I fear you will have left Brunswick before this letter reaches there, since you are going to engage in the pleasant recreation of teaching school. I have not forgotten the time when I wandered up & down that big hill & breasted the cold North Wind. Those times still are connected in my mind with unpleasant reminiscences. Would you not like to have me for your pupil & give me a few solid thrashings in compensation for past favors, now that your physical capacity has overbalanced mine? I would be most happy to enter your school some time this winter & trace among the grown-up scholars the likenesses that a few years ago belonged to Children. How many bright eyes would sparkle in recognition of their old schoolmate & teacher. I shall claim as my privilege a specific account of some of my former pupils.

There, I do wish I could go home & spend this coming winter "forecul regaties", but I cannot cut my wishes short. "A good time is coming boys" - though for me the good time will be a brief one. I saw Warren night before last. He came to see me & talked with me about matters & things for half an hour. He is well & in his usual good

Spirits. If you get this before you go home & should happen to go to Portland keep dark. May God bless and protect you my brother.

Yrs affectionately
O.O. Howard

Bowd. Coll. Dec. 18. 53.

Dear Mother

I received your letter inclosing the money $10.00. in due time. As you truly say. You have written me very few letters this Term. but when I have been growing sober. and a little neglected. I have thought of all that demanded your attention, and been most ready to forgive you.

If nothing new occurs. I shall reach Leeds. by the first train Thursday morning. If one of the Boys could come up to the Depot, at that time, and take down myself and trunks, without inconvenience I should like to have them. Otis writes in better spirits than for a long time.

You mystefice me some about Addison McLaugen &c. but I will clear it up when I get home. I will not write more. but will see you in a few days.

I have got a cold and a sore throat; so look out for a little doctoring if I dont get better before Thursday.

Your affectionate Son
Rowland

Mrs Eliza Gilman

102 12/18/1853 ***From:*** Rowland [RB Howard] ***To:*** Mrs. Eliza Gilmore

RBH-066

Bowd. Coll.

Source: Bowdoin

Bowd. Coll. Dec. 18, 53

Dear Mother

I received your letter inclosing the money $10.00 in due time. As you truly say, you have written me very few letters this Term, but when I have been growing sober and a little neglected, I have thought of all that demanded your attention, and been most ready to forgive you.

If nothing new occurs I shall reach Leeds by the first train Thursday morning. If one of the boys could come up to the Depot, at that time, and take down myself and trunks, without inconvenience I should like to have them.

Otis writes in better spirits than for a long time.

You mystified me some about Addison, Mr. Sargent &c., but I will clear it up when I get home. I will not write more, but will see you in a few days.

I have got a cold and a sore throat, so look out for a little doctoring if I don't get better before Thursday.

Your affectionate son
Rowland

Mrs. Eliza Gilmore

West Point N.Y. Mar 11th 1854

My dear Brother,

I have just received & read your last letter, and since you have touched upon subjects that are near my heart, I will answer you at once. I intended to write you as soon as I ~~was~~ should be apprised of your return to College. Some way I could not make out precisely whether you had returned or not. First I will speak of some business before I forget it. I wish you would call on Carroll Everett, present him my compliments & pay him two dollars unless he says it is too late. That is, if you have the amount & to spare. He will tell you what it is for. Of course you will place the same to my account with the other kindnesses of the kind that you have done me. The question, whether I shall remain in the army permanently or not has not been finally settled yet. Capt Bayston says if he could make as clear & elegant a speech as I delivered a week ago last Saturday night, he would leave the army at once & study a profession, and very much more was added to this high compliment. Now this flattering speech has not turned my head or altered the estimation in which I hold my talents. But I verily believe if there is any thing more than another to which I could give my whole heart & energy it would be to oratory. But there is so much drudgery & so much time that must be spent before one

Now broad-cast war will preclude the estimate the resulting increase of sectional hostility! What power is so efficient that it can arrest it & reestablish national quiet — when once the passions of men have been aroused?

The providence of God it may be. Some other great & potent disturbance may meet the torrent & like a returning tide, and check its onsets. We know not — we hope. While we cannot but fear. This ominous state of things in the old world may be the very thing to turn our thoughts & our passions in a new channel. And the very responsibility & watchfulness which the exigencies of this war in the old world will devolve on Congress may allay bitterness & sectional differences & unite ~~them~~ her members for our common protection. But this is enough. I am not prepared to dabble in politics or calculate probable events. So I might talk at random, with an eminent superfluity of gassing nonsense, and I will stop. You may think I have wandered from my question. No. it is by considerations of this nature that a young man should form his conclusions with regard to ~~the made~~ of the career that he would choose. This latter in connection with a fair & impartial estimate of his own talents. Probable success is our main incentive to action. We must carefully take our bearings & distances before we can solve to any degree of approximation the problem of the advantageousness of our position. Many a wise head has made a mistake even after a careful consideration of all the pros & cons of a proposed course of procedure. The views which determine me to a

like me could come into notice, if the happy time ever did come, that I shrink from the risk & the trial. I do not doubt the justice of your remarks. but I do not see very plainly the brighter opening for the American Soldier. Our army is extremely unpopular with the mass of the American citizens. and her power under the present organization of our Government will never be for a long time in the ascendant. Demagogues & true Statesmen both unite in keeping the army as small and inefficient or rather as powerless as may be. It is only intended as a nucleus - a gathering point in case of extreme danger. The European Excitement will not be likely to generate any such necessity. though the people may feel the contagious spirit of excitement & the papers be filled with laudatory or deprecating articles which like murders. & shams treat explosions will be devoured with eagerness. And yet we know not what is our destiny as a people. There may be enclosing events big with interest transpiring in our midst which may turn the attention of the world upon us. There may be enclosing a shattering of this so promising a fabric of Government and a consequent opening for all the Energy & daring which such revolutions give birth to. You are a young politician & cannot have failed to observe the gradual changes in the sentiments of our people upon the great & momentous question of Slavery. particularly in the North. Abolitionism under various names & covert phases gradually widens & deepens, till there is scarcely a public man. that Northern men are willing to acknowledge as a fair exponent of their principles who is not tinged with these opinions. Our present Administration & northern representatives afford by no means a proper illustration of our prevailing sentiments & principles. And I regard the prompt & nearly disastrous from their public acts ~~which~~ and the unanimous voice of hostility & swearing which they excite, as convincing evidence that a breach will sooner or later be made between the different sections of our Country. It is true the consequences of civil strife will be awful - incalculable, and wise men will long adhere to a Government that has showered so many blessings upon them. but Christ says that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

I believe. this Nebraska bill which has caused so much excitement & contention in Congress & drawn the attention of the people, will be far from composing in its tendency. At the first glance one might think it a triumph of the Slave interest. But now is it? Nebraska by the acknowledgement of Southern men stands but a poor chance of becoming finally a slave State. It will even be crowded with freemen who are ready & prompt to migrate. and another Northern State will be added to this Union. the very means & manner in which the bill gained its passage will give birth to a feeling of opposition to the interests of Slavery, which will pervade subsequent elections & foster more & more the spirit of dissention & jealousy which has so unwisely been awakened. When the elements of strife have

particular profession are more narrow and more immediately practical than any I have offered. I am poor and dislike to drag myself on encumbered by debt, or toiling to make every end meet, dabbling in little things, while my prospects of ultimate success grow dimmer & dimmer. A Second Lt. in a Staff Corps gets all told about 80 dollars per month - and in time of peace his time will not be filled up with onerous duties. If I can get located near a library I can pursue the study of law to advantage & not neglect my duties in the least. The only difficulty lies here. My heart will not go hand in hand with my profession. What will a man in the army do with ~~of~~ a wife? This question has often occurred to me & it is one I cannot answer. The one who decides to become my wife must be willing to share my risks & be subject to all the inconveniences & trials to which her choice has condemned her. If she shrink from the risk well & good; if she love me as my wife ought she will be willing to share with me my fortune be it what it may. I shall not spin over the matter and invest my prospects with an unreal halo. I did think I would take Lizzie to myself and do by her as well as lay in my power at my earliest opportunity. but from a recent letter, I find her a little disinclined to an early

consummation of those ties which are to bind us together for good & for bad. She wishes to see me & talk with me first. What will be our eventual contract will not be known till I return home. I may never marry Lizzie. I fear she has not the physical strength for a wild bird like me. I should dread a parting if active service should call me into the field - yes. more far more than the cannon's roar or the clash of steel. I can conceive of no poorer husband than he would make whose guiding star is Ambition. But as you see said "he guided by circumstances - When you contrasted women & circumstances, you did not seem to think that woman is a circumstance of ordinary moment. I shall give her a place in my combination. I wish you would send me your views on the Missouri Compromise. I like to read your thoughts on National Questions. I wished to write much with regard to Dellie & Charlie but I have not time or place to put my thoughts in this letter. Write me soon. My views you will not find very extended or pointed. I lack reading more than reflection. It is a good thing to think out you must first get the material to think about before your ideas will avail much. Good night

Your Affectionate brother

O. O. Howard

Your Brother will be Prof. Math. in the Law School. My prediction - "very circumspect" is but I trust you will be more guarded than it.

103 3/11/1854 ***From:*** O.O. Howard ***To:*** Dear Brother [RB Howard]

RBH-067 West Point N.Y.

Source: Bowdoin

West Point N.Y. Mar. 11, 1854

My dear brother,

I have just received & read your last letter, and since you have touched upon subjects that are near my heart, I will answer you at once. I intended to write you as soon as I should be appraised of your return to College. Some way I could not make out precisely whether you had returned or not.

First I will speak of some business before I forget it. I wish you would call on Carroll Everett, present him my compliments & pay him two dollars unless he says it is too late, that is, if you have the amount & to spare. He will tell you what it is for. Of course you will place the same to my account with the other Kindnesses of the kind that you have done me.

The question whether I shall remain in the Army permanently or not has not been finally settled yet. Capt. Boynton says if he could make as clear & elegant a speech as I delivered a week ago last Saturday night, he would leave the Army at once & study a profession, and very much more was added to this high compliment. Now this flattering success has not turned my head or altered the estimation in which I hold my talents. But I verily believe if there is anything more than another to which I could give my whole heart & energy it would be to anatomy. But there is so much drudgery & so much time that must be spent before one like me could come into notice, if the happy time ever did come, that I shrink from the risk & the trial. I do not doubt the justness of your remarks, but I do not see very plainly the bright opening for the American Soldier. Our Army is extremely unpopular with the mass of the American citizens, and her power under the present organization of our Government will never be for a long time in the ascendant. Demagogues & true statesmen both unite in keeping the Army as small and inefficient or rather as powerless as may be. It is only Intended as a nucleus - a gathering point in case of extreme danger.

The European excitement will not be likely to generate any such necessity, though the people may feel the contagious spirit of excitement & the papers be filled with laudatory or deprecating articles which like murders & steamboat explosions will be devoured with eagerness. And yet we know not what is our destiny as a people. There may be ere long events big with interest transpiring in our midst which may turn the attention of the world upon us. There may be ere long a shattering of this so promising a fabric of Government and a consequent opening for all the energy & daring which such revelations give birth to.

You are a young politician & cannot have failed to observe the gradual changes in the sentiments of our people upon the great & momentous question of Slavery, particularly in the North. Abolitionism under various names & covert phases gradually widens & deepens, till there is scarcely a public man that northern men are willing to acknowledge as a fair exponent of their principles who was not tinged with these opinions. Our present Administration & Northern representatives afford by no means a proper illustration of our prevailing sentiments & principles. And I regard the prompt & ready dissent from their public acts and the unanimous voice of hostility & warning which they excite, as convincing evidence that a breach will sooner or later be made between the different Sections of our Country. It is true the consequences of civil strife will be awful, incalculable, and wise men will long adhere to a government that has showered so many blessings upon them, but Christ says that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

I believe this Nebraska bill which has caused so much excitement & contention in Congress & drawn the attention of the people, will be far from composing in its tendency. At the first glance one might think it a triumph of the slave interest. But how is it? Nebraska by the acknowledgment of Southern men stands but a poor chance of becoming finally a Slave State. It will soon be crowded with free men who are ready & prompt to migrate, and another Northern State will be added to this Union. The very means & manner in which the bill gained its passage will give birth to a feeling of opposition to the interests of slavery, which will pervade subsequent elections & foster more & more the spirit of dissension & jealousy which has so unwisely been awakened. When the elements of strife have been broadcast who will pretend to estimate the resulting increase of sectional hostility? What power is so efficient that it can arrest it & reestablish national quiet, when once the

passions of men have been aroused?

The providence of God it may be. Some other great & potent disturbance may meet the torrent & like a returning tide, and check its onsets. We know not, we hope, while we cannot but fear. This ominous state of things in the old world, may be the very thing to turn our thoughts & our passions in a new channel, and the very responsibility & watchfulness which the concerns of this war in the Old world will devolve on Congress may allay bitterness & sectional difficulties & unite her members for our common protection, but this is enough.

I am not prepared to dabble in politics or calculate probable events. So I might talk at random with an eminent superfluity of gaseous nonsense, and I will stop.

You may think I have wandered from my question. No, it is by considerations of this nature that a young man should form his conclusions with regard to the career that he would choose, these taken in connection with a fairer & impartial estimate of his own talents. Probable success is our main incentive to action. We must carefully take our bearings & distances, before we can solve to any degree of approximation the problem of the advantageousness of our position. Many a wise head has made a mistake even after a careful consideration of all the pros & cons of a proposed course of procedure. The views which determined me to a particular profession are more narrow and more immediately practical than any I have offered. I am poor and dislike to drag myself on encumbered by debt, or toiling to make every end meet, dabbling in little things, while my prospects of ultimate success grow dimmer & dimmer.

A second Lt. in a staff Corps gets all told about 80 dollars per month, and in time of peace his time will not be filled up with onerous duties. If I can get located near a library I can pursue study of law to advantage & not neglect my duties in the least. The only difficulty lies here. My heart will not go hand-in-hand with my profession. What will a man in the Army do with a wife? This question has often occurred to me & it is one I cannot answer. The one who decides to become my wife must be willing to run my risks & be subject to all the inconveniences & trials to which her choice had condemned her. If she shrink from the risk well & good; if she loves me as my wife ought she will be willing to share with me my fortune be it what it may. I shall not <opine> over the matter & invest my prospects with an unreal Halo. I did think I would take Lizzie to myself and do by her as well as lay in my power at my earliest opportunity, but from a recent letter, I find her a little disinclined to an early consummation of those ties which are to bind us together for good & for bad. She wishes to see me & talk with me first. What will be our natural contract will not be known till I return home.

I may never marry Lizzie. I fear she has not the physical strength for a wild bird like me. I should dread a parting if active service should call me into the field - yes more far more than the canons roar or the clash of steel. I can conceive of no poorer husband than he would make whose guiding star is Ambition. But as you once said "be guided by circumstances". When you contrasted women & circumstances, you did not seem to think that woman is a circumstance of ordinary moment. I shall give her a place in my combination.

I wish you would send me your theme on the Missouri Compromise. I like to read your thoughts on National Questions. I wished to write much with regard to Dellie & Charlie but I have not time or place to put my thoughts in this letter. Write me soon. My views you will not find very extended or pointed. I lack reading more than reflection. It is a good thing to think but you must first get the material to think about before your ideas will avail much. Good night.

Yr affectionate brother
O.O. Howard

You might write on this what Prof. Mahew did on one of my problems - "very carelessly done" but I trust you will be more generous than he.

West Point N.Y. Apr 4th 54

My dear Brother.

I have mislaid your last letter and cannot find it. I am sorry for I wanted to be more specific in my reply than is possible when I am obliged to depend on a treacherous memory. I have found the letter. I might fill my sheet with remarks on the Nebraska question. But this question is in my opinion of vastly less consequence to us, who are in favor of all practicable restrictions on the institution that has stamped our national character & pretensions with the blot of unconsecrating - than many others, that excite less enthusiasm & receive less attention. I will merely say and the opinion may startle you, that, upon reflection & careful balancing of the reasons pro & con, I am rather in favor of the passage of that bill independent of its amendments than against it. Our present constitution undoubtedly sanctions the institution of Slavery, and establishes the independence of State Governments. Whatever then either does or tends to shake those powers that are delegated to the States by the general government bears on its face a violation of the Spirit of the Constitution. These sort of conspiracies that were unquestionably the only pacific measures at the time of their adoption do indirectly curb the free legislation & limit the powers that were ~~[illegible]~~ conceded on the Separate States. To us they may seem

tendency of a memory more than proportioned to the the other mental faculties is rather antagonistic to originality of thought, and makes you incorporate the sentiments of others to an undesirable extent, but it will not always rule the roost. It may throw together a mass of incongruous materials, but be assured that the judgment will mature in time and you will be astonished to see the order that will grow out of the real or apparent chaos. You are mistaken about the passage of the bill for increasing the rank and pay of the army. It has passed the Senate - but such bills have a hard rub in the House. We are watching it with no little interest. I think it will pass. That is so much of it as secures the increase of pay. I do not care whether they increase the army at present or not. It is my opinion that the necessity of so doing will soon be apparent. I had a letter from Mother to day. All well. She got three letters the same night from her three boys. It does not seem possible that we can ever be to each other as our uncles on ~~the~~ our fathers side - so selfishly indifferent to each others interests, as that each shall hardly know the whereabouts of the other. I pray God we may ever be affectionate & brotherly - that we may ever be able to repose in each other the utmost confidence and not blush to own that the warmth of paternal affection ~~shall~~ does always stimulate our feelings & modify our actions. Your affectionate brother

O. O. Howard

of a desirable nature as respects slavery, and it may be as respects the end we wish to attain. But they will not admit of universal application - & being established as a principle would soon lead to palpable violations of the letter of our Constitution. Any prospective legislation which must extend beyond the admission of a State into the Union has the tendency I speak of. You can clearly see the operation of the principle if you substitute for slavery any other institution - as the institutions of religion or if those are not fair - any institution promotatory of education - causing such & such restrictions to be adopted in the primary State Constitution, as will forever close the door against those institutions; for such is the avowed object with regard to slavery. It behooves us to consider well the principles we advocate and the precedents we establish, as well as the end to be attained. I would be happy to see the useless strife, that has arisen & will continue to be rife in our National Legislative Halls so long as there is a chance to agitate the question of slavery - close forever. We work & work and drive no nearer the goal - Emancipation is not yet near its consummation unless by some Providence of God the tables are turned. There is much I would like to say - I would like to give reasons for my views and show that they are not based on limited knowledge - I have decided ~~against~~ against my prejudices & my sympathies, but it has been from a prior conviction that the grounds I desired & attempted to take were untenable. I fear you met with some such difficulty while attempting to write on that question. In College, however, something besides dry logic is deemed essential to a writer. A lively imagination under good control will ever carry off the palm in academic halls. Your complaints or rather your self-deprecations are similar to mine when there. I thought I lacked everything essential to a writer - I had neither knowledge or the habit you speak of of close connected discriminating thought. If discouragement does not seize upon you, and cause you to slacken your efforts, I regard this keen sense of your deficiences as the best earnest of your ultimate success. Among equals & critics - among those who would rather like yourself be a little superior, and often omit to extend to you well merited praise & never pass over your faults in silence, you must feel a little bitterness and want of confidence in your natural powers, but these are the spurs that excite your latent energies & awaken new ones - these are the stair ways upon which many an ambitious youth has wound his way to the heights of distinction. I always have felt a want of confidence in my natural abilities & strongly deprecated an ignorance that is deplorable & would seem to one who was acquainted with the opportunities I have had for the acquirement of every variety of knowledge, quite remarkable. But it is difficult to discourage me. I am glad that you have one gift which I have not viz: a retentive memory. I know that the immediate

104 4/4/1854 ***From:*** O.O. Howard ***To:*** Dear Brother [RB Howard]

RBH-068 West Point N.Y.

Source: Bowdoin

West Point N.Y. April 4 54

My dear Brother,

I have mislaid your last letter and cannot find it. I am sorry for I wanted to be more specific in my reply than is possible when I am obliged to depend on a treacherous memory. I have found the letter.

I might fill my sheet with remarks on the Nebraska Question. But this Question is in my opinion of vastly less consequence to us, who are in favor of all practicable restrictions on the institution that has stamped our National character & pretensions with the blot of inconsistency, than many others, that excite less enthusiasm & receive less attention. I will merely say and the opinion may startle you, that, upon reflection & careful balancing of the reasons pro & con, I am rather in favor of the passage of that bill independent of its amendments than against it.

Our present Constitution undoubtedly sanctions the institution of Slavery, and establishes the independence of State Governments. Whatever then either does or tends to shackle those powers that are delegated to the States by the general government bears on its face a violation of the Spirit of the Constitution. These sort of compromises that were undoubtedly the only pacific measures at the time of their adoption do indirectly curb the free legislation & limit the powers that have devolved on the Separate States. To us they may seem of a desirable nature as respects slavery, and it may be as respects the end we wish to attain. But they will not admit of unusual application & being established as a principle would soon lead to palpable violations of the letter of our Constitution. Any prospective legislation which must extend beyond the admission of the State into the Union has the tendency I speak of. You can clearly see the operation of the principle if you substitute for Slavery any other institution - as the institutions of Religion or if these are not fair - any institution promotatory of education, causing such & such restrictions to be adopted in the primary State Constitution, as will forever close the door against these institutions; for such is the avowed object with regard to Slavery. It behooves us to consider well the principles we advocate and the precedents we establish, as well as the end to be obtained. I would be happy to see the useless strife, that has arisen & will continue to be rife in our National legislative Halls so long as there is a chance to agitate the Question of Slavery, cease forever. We work & work and arrive no nearer the goal - Emancipation is not yet near its consummation unless by some Providence of God the tables are turned.

There is much I would like to say. I would like to give reasons for my views and show that they are not based on limited knowledge. I have decided against my prejudices & my sympathies, but it has been from pure conviction that the grounds I desired & attempted to take where untenable. I fear you met with some such difficulty while attempting to write on that question. In college, however, something besides dry logic is deemed essential to a writer. A lively imagination under good control will ever carry off the palm in Academic halls. Your complaints or rather your self-deprecations are similar to mine when there. I thought I lacked everything essential to a writer. I had neither knowledge or the habit you speak of of close connected discriminating thought. If discouragement does not seize upon you, and cause you to slacken your efforts, I regard this keen sense of your deficiencies as the best earnest of your ultimate success. Among equals critics, among those who would rather like yourself be a little superior, and often omit to extend to you well merited praise & never past over your faults in silence, you must feel a little bitterness and want of confidence in your natural powers, but these are the spurs that excite your latent energies & awaken new ones. These are the stair ways upon which many an ambitious youth has wound his way to the heights of distinction.

I always have felt a want of confidence in my natural abilities & strongly deprecated an ignorance that is deplorable & would seem to me who was acquainted with the opportunities I have had for the acquirement of every variety of knowledge, quite remarkable. But it is difficult to discourage me. I am glad that you have one gift which I have not viz: a retentive memory. I know that the immediate tendency of a memory more than proportionate to the other mental faculties is rather antagonistic to originality of thought, and makes you incorporate the sentiments of others to an undesirable extent, but it will not always rule the roost. It may throw together a mass of incongruous materials, but be assured that the judgment will mature in time and you will be

astonished to see the order that will grow out of the real or apparent chaos.

You are mistaken about the passage of the bill for increasing the rank and pay of the Army. It has passed the Senate, but such bills have a hard rub in the House. We are watching it with no little interest. I think it will pass, that is so much of it as secures the increase of pay. I do not care whether they increase the Army at present or not. It is my opinion that the necessity of so doing will soon be apparent.

I had a letter from Mother to day. All well. She got three letters the same night from her three boys. It does not seem possible that we can ever be to each other as our uncles on our father's side, so selfishly indifferent to each other's interests, as that each shall hardly know the whereabouts of the other. I pray God we may ever be affectionate & brotherly, that we may ever be able to repose in each other the utmost confidence and not blush to own that the warmth of fraternal affection does always stimulate our feelings & modify our actions.

Your affectionate brother
O. O. Howard

West Point N.Y. Apr 20th '59

My dear Brother,

I have received two letters from you neither of which I have answered yet. Our class has some time since commenced general review. The lessons are long and require study, even more than they get from me. So you need not be surprised at my dilatory method of corresponding. I shall not be able to write many more letters of decent length hereafter till June, that is I may not. I would like to discuss the Nebraska Bill with you, but it might be unprofitable. I did not see that you answered my objection, that the evident intention of the constitution is to leave the States perfectly free & unshackled by any legislation of the prospective kind by the General Government. Now just fix a portion of territory so that the Slaveholder with his property can not settle in it (this is your object), do you not violate this article. "The citizens of each state shall be entitled to all the privileges & immunities of the citizens of the several states"! Slave property is legal undoubtedly under the present Constitution, if legal it must have the same protection as other property. If the property ~~should~~ ought to be illegal, the Constitution should be amended so as not to recognize it as such. But enough of this. I was engaged in

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Quick

Mr R. B. Howard
Bowdoin College
Maine

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Elm Thorn

arguments, particularly of a political nature, where great latitude of opinion is allowable, are not often disposed to yield or meet on common ground. I took into consideration your arguments like yours & all others upon this question, before coming to a conclusion upon it. I have been obliged recently to memorize the entire Constitution, and Story, Kent, Commentaries on International Law & the Jurisprudence of the United States. I have recently read two the lives of Randolph - and part of that of Wirt. These readings have promoted reflection upon such national questions as the one we have been considering. I would like to discuss them with you too - but it requires time to consider such themes properly - and it takes my attention too much from the long & burdensome course that must be learned before June. Our Instructor in Artillery Maj Thomas has been ordered away. We have completed his course, consisting of no less than five books, one of which is a large volume in French (Thiroux.) Now you see we had no idea of remembering all this trash in addition to the vast amount of other things, with which we are cramming ourselves, for Maj Thomas Like Professor Upham, knows how to ask leading questions & will always help a hesitating lad out of difficulty, but now some unsparing officer will have us & what pray shall I get it all. Why it is too late by all odds - I will try to give the course some little attention. You can hardly fancy what a loss will have been taken from my heart, just two months from this day. We will have to be examined in six different departments. First & foremost Engineering with its various appendages - 2d English studies. Law, Logic Moral Science &c: 3d Mineralogy & Geology - 4th Artillery, 5th Cavalry 3 volumes - 6th Infantry 3 vols. We know much of the latter two, cavalry & infantry & a small part of Artillery from our continuous practical lessons on the field. But when you come to evolutions of the line of 8 battalions - and get 50 pages for a lesson & go over the same but once, you would find it rather stretching your capacity. We have to take that number of battalions and be able to tell all the separate duties of each officer from the [illegible] to the lowest subaltern - and repeat verbatim the [illegible] commands of all. - One could not do it unless he had got so accustomed to military commands as to learn them at a glance. I am glad you went into Portland & glad to hear that Lizzie's eyes are so much better. & that she is so well generally. I heard from Charlie yesterday. He thinks I must be sick because I have not written. It was after half past 9 when I commenced this letter, so you may imagine I have written in haste, for I must needs go to bed early - for I have to commence my lesson in Engineering at 5 in the morning - So good night - Tell me who is my pl[illegible] i.e. who is to follow me here if you know

Yr affectionate brother
C. L. Hawes

105 4/20/1854 ***From:*** O.O. Howard ***To:*** Mr. R.B. Howard

RBH-069 West Point N.Y. Bowd College Maine

Source: Bowdoin

West Point N.Y. Apr. 20th '54

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O. O. Howard

[Envelope]

Mr. R.B. Howard
Bowd College
Maine
[Postmark] WEST POINT N.Y. 22 APR 3