

LETTER TO THE EMPEROR OF CHINA FROM THE PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. [JULY 12, 1843]

I, John Tyler, President of the United States of America—which States are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, Alabama, Missouri, Arkansas, and Michigan—send you this letter of peace and friendship, signed by my own hand.

I hope your health is good. China is a great Empire, extending over a great part of the world. The Chinese are numerous. You have millions and millions of subjects. The twenty-six United States are as large as China, though our people are not so numerous. The rising sun looks upon the great mountains and great rivers of China. When he sets, he looks upon rivers and mountains equally large in the United States. Our territories extend from one great ocean to the other and on the west we are divided from your dominions only by the sea. Leaving the mouth of one of our great rivers, and going constantly toward the setting sun, we sail to Japan and to the Yellow Sea.

Now, my words are that the governments of two such great countries should be at peace. It is proper, and according to the will of heaven, that they should respect each other, and act wisely. I therefore send to your court Caleb Cushing, one of the wise and learned men of this country. On his first arrival in China, he will inquire for your health. He has strict orders to go to your great city of Peking, and there to deliver this letter. He will have with him secretaries and interpreters.

The Chinese love to trade with our people, and to sell them tea and silk, for which our people pay silver, and sometimes other articles. But if the Chinese and the Americans will trade, there shall be rules, so that they shall not break your laws or our laws. Our minister, Caleb Cushing, is authorized to make a treaty to regulate trade. Let it be just. Let there be no unfair advantage on either side. Let the people trade not only at Canton, but also at Amoy, Ningpo, Shanghai, Fuhchau, and all such other places as may offer profitable exchanges both to China and the United States, provided they do not break your laws nor our laws. We shall not take the part of evil-doers. We shall not uphold them and break your laws. Therefore, we doubt not that you will be pleased that our messenger of peace, with this letter in his hand, shall come to Peking, and there deliver it; and that your great officers will, by your order, make a treaty with him to regulate affairs of trade—so that nothing may happen to disturb the peace between China and America. Let the treaty be signed by your own imperial hand. It shall be signed by mine, by the authority of our great council, the Senate.

And so may your health be good, and may peace reign.

Written at Washington, this twelfth day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-three. Your good friend.