



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1872-02-05

**Letter from R[alph] W[aldo] Emerson to John Muir, 1872 Feb 5.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Concord,  
5 February, 1872.

My dear Muir:

Here lie your significant cedar flowers on my table, and in another letter; and I will procrastinate no longer. That singular disease of deferring, which kills all my designs, has left a pair of books brought home to send to you months and months ago, still covering their inches on my cabinet, and the letter and letters which should have accompanied to utter my thanks and lively remembrance, are either unwritten or lost, so I will send this peccavi, as a sign of remorse.

I have been far from unthankful -- I have everywhere testified to my friends, who should also be yours, my happiness in finding you - the right man in the right place - in your mountain tabernacle, and have expected when your guardian angel would pronounce that your probation and sequestration in the solitudes and snows had reached their term, and you were to bring your ripe fruits so rare and precious into waiting society.

I trust you have also had, ere this, your own signals from the upper powers. I know that society in the lump, admired at a distance, shrinks and dissolves, when approached, into impracticable or uninteresting individuals, but always with a reserve of a few unspoiled good men, who really give it its halo in the distance. And there are drawbacks also to solitude, who is a sublime mistress, but an intolerable wife. So I pray you to bring to an early close your absolute contracts with any yet unvisited glaciers or volcanoes, roll up your drawings, herbariums and poems, and come to the Atlantic Coast. Here in Cambridge Dr. Gray is at home, and Agassiz will doubtless be, after a month or two, returned from Terra del Fuego - perhaps through San Francisco - or you can come with him. At all events, on your arrival, which I assume as certain, you must find your way to this village, and my house. And when you are tired of our dwarf surroundings, I will show you better people.

With kindest regards, Yours,

R. W. Emerson.

I send 2 vols. of collected essays by book-post.

*Friday pm 1872*  
*Emerson*  
*Robert Dale*  
*Burke*

I wrote the past in characters  
Of leaf and fire the scroll  
The building in the coral sea  
The planting of the coal.

And thefts from satellites and rings  
And broken stars I drew.  
And out of spent and aged things  
I formed the world anew;

What time the gods kept carnival  
Tricked out in star and flower  
And in cramp elf and Saurian forms  
They swathed them too much power.

Tonic and thought were my surveys  
They laid their courses well  
They boiled the sea, and baked the layers  
Of granite, mast, and shell.

But he, the man-child glorious  
Where tarrys he the while?  
The rainbow shines his harbinger  
The sunset gleams his smile.

My ~~lance~~ light leap upward  
Northright my planets roll

And still the man-child is not born  
The summit of the whole.

Must time and tide forever run?  
Will never my winds go sleep in the west?  
Will never my wheels which wheel the sun  
And satellites have rest?

Too much of donning and doffing  
Too slow the rainbow fades  
I weary of my robe of snow  
My streams and my cascades.

I tire of globes and races  
Too long the game is played  
What without him is summer pomp  
Or winter frozen shade?

I travail in pain for him  
My creations travail and wait  
His couriers come by squadrons  
He comes not ~~to their gates~~.

Twice I have moulded an image  
And thrice outstretched my hand  
Made one of day, and one of night  
And one of the salt sea land.

One in a Judean manger  
And one by Acon streams  
One over against the mouths of Nile  
And one in the Academe.

I wounded Kings and Saviors  
And bards on Kings to oul; —  
But fell the stony influence short  
The cup was never full.

Yet whirl the glowing wheels once more  
And mix the bowl again.  
See the, Hail! the ancient Elements  
Heat, cold, wet, dry, and peace and pain  
Set war and trade and creeds and song  
Blend, ripen race on race,  
The sunburst world a man shall feed  
Of all the zones, and countless days.

Its ray is dimmed, no atom worn  
My oldest face is good as new  
And the fresh rose on yonder thorn  
Gives back the bending heavens in dew.

R. W. Emerson —

## Song of Nature.

Mine are the Night and Morning  
The pits of air, the gulf of space,  
The sportive sun, the gabbous moon  
The unnumerable days.

I hide in the solar glory,  
I am dumb in the speaking song  
I rest on the pitch of the torrent,  
In slumber I am strong.

No numbers have counted my tallies,  
No tubes my house can fill,  
I sit by the shining Haunt of Life,  
And from the Deluge still;

And even by delicate powers  
Gathering along the centuries  
From race to race the rarest flowers  
My wreath shall nothing miss.

And many thousand Summers  
My apples ripened well  
And light from meteoric stars  
With firmer glory fell.

Song of Nature

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I hide in the solar glory,  
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In slumber I am strong.

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No tribes my house can fill,  
I sit by the shining Fount of Life  
And pour the Deluge still;

And ever by delicate powers,  
Gathering along the centuries  
From race to race the rarest flowers  
My wealth shall nothing miss.

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My apples ripened well,  
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I wrote the past in characters  
Of leaf and fire the scroll,  
The building of in the coral sea,  
The planting of the coal.

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Where tarries he the while?  
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## Song of Nature (Continued)

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