



1877-01-22

Letter from John H. Boyes to John Muir, 1877 Jan 22.

John H. Boyes

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I can't possibly have answered your
letter on account of having no
time to do so. Though I don't
think that you can accuse me,
as you did the Tronto & gays
of being struck dumb with
matrimony. I cannot tell you
the reason why I have not
answered your letter before
this, When it is such a treat
~~to~~ me to write to you. Doubtless
you will have put me down as an
hardhearted & careless fellow. And
I'm almost afraid that you will
never forgive me for treating
you so shamefully. But if you
forgive me, I promise, never
again to be guilty of the same
neglect. Your letter was a great
joy to me. And has delighted
me many times since I received
it, I have read it over more than
once, and have gave it to several
others to read, and all pronounce

never, be soiled. I may never
see you amid the silences & solitude
of the California mountains,
Valleys, or forests, nor in the
crowded agencies of this world,
yet I do hope and trust that I
shall know you amongst the
vast multitudes of heaven.
A little higher up the stream
than the old mill stood, stands
another mill, a grist mill.
It has not the same charms to
me as the old combined sawmill
and saw factory had. One reason
I suppose is that the same people
are not there, so though it runs
so loudly, the same music is not felt
from its rattling wheel, as shuddered
neath the old ~~sawmill~~. You requested
me to send you some mosses and flowers
from the old requested hollows but they
have spent their beauty and fragrance
through another summer without my sending
you any; And now they lie hidden ~~amidst~~ ^{under} a
mass of snow, sleeping in solitude, and their
beauty slumbering in secret, ready through
a spring's sunshine to appear again in a sunny

Y⁸
I am sorely vexed that I did not gather some
& send you, But if I hear from you again, And
I am living here next spring time, I will take
a trip to the old hollow. And tell you how
it looks, And gather some flowers and other
relics which I think will be pleasing to you,
Though I am no botanist and cannot ~~analyze~~
analyze them, Yet I am fond of flowers, and
it will be delightful for me to pluck some
and send you. I frequently think about you as
you are wandering through the forest, or climbing
some craggy cliff. And had not I shall never hear
from you again. But I have this hope, Believing
you to be a Christian, that we shall meet on the
other side of Jordan. And there we may walk amidst
an Eden of flowers, Where there shall be no element
to consume their fragrance, no winter snows to
conceal their variegated colors. And when they will
not only bloom all round the year, But all round
eternity. And as we soar and live in higher regions,
and move in a loftier circle, With thoughts more
expanding, Shall we not have higher and broader
senses and tastes to appreciate their beauty. And
as the heavens are higher than the earth and purer,
Will not the flowers and everything else be the same.
I pray God that no matter how many ^{and great} difficulties
we may have to make through. How great the mountains
we may have to climb. How gigantic the enemies
we may have to battle with. That this grace may
be a sufficient power unto us to make us conquer
all. And so be crowned with his glory above.
I cannot express my gratitude toward you for
your congratulations of my composition. I don't
think that it was worthy of such remarks. I have
been to school but very little since you were here
and I have struggled to master a little of the

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St. Vincent Jan 22nd / 77
Dear Mr. Menis
It has been
such a long time ~~now~~ since I
received your good and kind
letter, That I am now almost
ashamed to write an answer
to it. And yet, although I have
not answered it before this,
The reason is not because I never
thought about you. And I hardly
think that it would be wisdom
for me to try and excuse myself
by hiding behind the refuge of
no time. For I think that your
answer would be, That I might
have so redeemed the time as
to have found an opportunity
before this ^{time}. And I might search
the land I believe without finding
a cause which would be sufficient
to convince you that I could
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the mountains of snow and ice
And as you are leaping over some
nummuring rivulets, or brushing through
the dark green foliage of the forests,
while approaching to view the beautiful
waters which pour in torrents &
balk down their rocky beds;
Or as you with amazement, are
looking at some giant tree, or stop-
ping with delight to pick up some
lovely flower. I should just
like to come up behind you
and break the human silence
with an hilloo. Or after winding
your way through the woods,
and strolled amongst the rocks,
and had just lain yourself
down to rest for the night with
the star-gleaming sky above your
head, Would, not I like very shadow
to flit by and to awake the stillness
with my voice, But these I fear
are only wishes & hopes which will

it to be a splendid letter. And
I do assure you that I treasure
it highly. Not only for the
instruction which it contains;
But also because of the respect
which I have toward the one
who penned it, and I shall keep
it in remembrance of him. I showed
your letter to the Mr. Grout & Jay,
and Mr. Sterling so that they could
see for themselves any news which
you sent them. James Grout &
Charlie Jay are partners in a
business in Mesford. They sell
agricultural implements and
are notary conveyancers &
insurance agents. And when
I showed Mr. Grout your letter
he said that if you wanted
your life insured, he would
then write and do it. Mr.
Duncan Sterling has moved up
on the 17th line about 1 1/2 miles.
SD 743

from Mesford, and so far as I know they are all well. Mr John Trout of Toronto died I think last fall. The Laycocks live where they did when you left. I have a farm, containing 200 acres in the township of Sydenham, where I was living all last summer. But owing to the dry weather we had during the summer months, my crops and other peoples failed, and times are very dull here. I do not like farming very well, it seems to be too much of a confinement for my taste, but I shall labour at it until I see something which I think that I will like better. You spoke of my coming out to California: I wish I was there now, for I should like to be in a country where flowers bloom all the year round. It would seem

to me like a paradise, in comparison with this place, where the snow for five or six months lies about 3 or 4 feet deep, and the thermometer a great part of the time near, at, and below zero. I should like to see the flowers blooming there this winter, I should like to see and hear the gorgeous waterfalls, and mighty thundering cataracts tumbling and dashing with grandeur over the rocks of the California mountains. I should like to see the great wild sheep leaping over the chasms from cliff to cliff. I should like to see the brown bears, and grizzlies, and other wild animals which live and roam there. But, better than all these, I should like to see you, whilst you stand gazing with ^{astonishment} ~~amazement~~, and delight at

English language; But I think
that I have accomplished ~~but~~
~~very little~~ ^{little} ~~occupation~~ ^{occupation} has taken
up too much of my time and I
seem to be so constituted as to
be capable of doing only one thing
at a time. while giving my whole
attention to whatever I am labouring
at. But your congratulation has
cheered and comforted me considerably.
For I know that your abilities are
great on this subject. And I ask
you to pardon any mistake or
blunder which I may make, and any
thing which you may see wrong in
any sense, I shall take it as a kind
action of yours to tell me of it.

^{<A>}
O how I love the saw mill
that stands beside the stream;
I love to hear its rattling wheel,
that shudders, neath the beam.

O how I love to hear it roar,
it drowns the noisy air;
it roars aloud like thunder
and I seek for shelter there.

The trees stand all around me
when I am in the mill;
O how I love to see those trees,
that stand upon the hill.

The little stream that turns ^{the} ^{wheel}
that works the saw up and down;
That rips the logs assunder,
that shelters us around.

Tw as God that made the saw mill
that stands beside the stream,
I love to go where I die to him,
and in his kingdom reign
John Boyes

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Original located at University of the Pacific Library Holt-Atherton Special Collections

St. Vincent, Jan. 22, 1877.

Dear Mr. Muir,

It has been such a long time since I received your good and kind letter that I am now almost ashamed to write an answer to it. And yet, although I have not answered it before this, the reason is not because I never thought about you. And I hardly think that it would be wisdom for me to try and excuse myself by hiding behind the refuge of no time. For I think that your answer would be that I might have so redeemed the time as to have found an opportunity before this time. And I might search the land, I believe, without finding a cause which would be sufficient to convince you that I could not possibly have answered your letter on account of having no time to do so. Though I don't think that you can accuse me, as you did the Trouts and Jays of being struck dumb with matrimony. I cannot tell you the reason I have not answered your letter before this when it is such a treat for me to write to you. Doubtless you will have put me down as a hardhearted and careless fellow. And I'm almost afraid that you will never forgive me for treating you so shamefully. But if you forgive me, I promise never again to be guilty of the same neglect.

Your letter was a great joy to me and has delighted me many times since I received it. I have read it over more than once and have given it to several others to read and all pronounced it to be a splendid letter. I do assure you that I treasure it highly not only for the instruction which it contains but also because of the respect which I have toward the one who penned it, and I shall keep it in remembrance of him. I showed your letter to the Trouts and Jays and Mrs. Stirling so that they could see for themselves any news which you sent them. James Trout and Charlie Jay are partners in a business in Meaford. They sell agricultural implements and are notary conveyancers and insurance agents. And when I showed Mr. Trout your letter he said that if you wanted your life insured he would then write and do it. Mr. Duncan Stirling has moved up on the 7th line about 1 1/2 miles from Meaford, and so far as I know they are all well. Mr. John Trout of Toronto died, I think last fall. The Laycocks live where they did when you left. I have a farm containing 100 acres in the township of Sydenham, where I was living all last summer. But owing to the dry weather we had during the summer months my crops and the other people's failed, and times are very dull here. I do not like farming very well, it seems to be too much of a confinement for my taste. But I shall labor at it until I see something which I think that I will like better.

You spoke of my coming out to California: I wish I was there now, for I should like to be in a country where flowers bloom all the year round. It would seem to me like a paradise in comparison with this place where the snow for five or six months lies about 3 or 4 feet deep, and the thermometer a great part of the time [is] near, at, and below zero. I should like to see the flowers blooming there this winter. I should like to see and hear the gorgeous waterfalls, and mighty thundering cataracts tumbling and dashing with grandeur over the rocks of the California mountains. I should like to see the great wild sheep leaping over the chasms from cliff to cliff. I should like to see the brown bears, and grizzlies, and other wild animals which live and move there. But, better than all these, I should like to see you, whilst you stand gazing with astonishment and delight at the mountains of snow and ice, and as you are leaping over some murmuring rivulet, or brushing through the dark green foliage of the forest, while approaching to view the beautiful waters which pour in torrents and bulk down their rocky beds, or as you with amazement are looking at some giant tree, or stooping with delight to pick up some lovely flower. I should just like to come up behind you and break the human silence with an hello. Or, after wending your way through the woods, and strolling amongst the rocks, you had just lain yourself down to rest for the night with the star-gleaming sky above your head, wouldn't I like my shadow to flit by and to awake the stillness with my voice. But these, I fear, are only wishes and hopes which will never be realized. I may never see you midst the silences and solitudes of the California mountains and valleys, or forests, or in the crowded avenues of this world. Yet I do hope and trust that I shall know you amongst the vast multitudes of heaven.

[Letter of John H. Boyes, Jan. 22, 1877, to John Muir, continued]

A little higher up the stream than the old mill stood, stands another mill -- a grist mill. It has not the same charms to me as the old combined sawmill and rake factory had. One reason, I suppose, is that the same people are not there, so though it roar never so loudly, the same music is not pealed from its rattling wheel, as [it] shuddered 'neath the old mill. You requested me to send you some mosses and flowers from the old sequestered hollow. But they have spent their beauty and fragrance through another summer without my sending you any; and now they lie hidden under a mass of snow, sleeping in solitude, and their beauty slumbering in secret, ready through a spring's sunshine to appear again in a summer's glory. I am sorely vexed that I didn't gather some and send you. But if I hear from you again and I am living here next spring-time, I will take a trip to the old hollow and tell you how it looks, and gather some flowers and other relics which I think will be pleasing to you. Though I am no botanist and cannot analyze them, yet I am fond of flowers, and it will be delightful for me to pluck some and send to you. I frequently think about you as you are wandering through the forests or climbing some craggy cliff. I dread lest I shall never hear from you again. But I have this hope, believing you to be a Christian, that we shall meet on the other side of Jordan, and there we may walk midst an eden of flowers, where there shall be no element to consume their fragrance, no winter's snow to conceal their variegated colours, and where they will not only bloom all 'round the year, but all 'round eternity. And as we soar and live in higher regions, and move in a loftier circle, with thoughts more expanding, shall we not have higher and broader senses and tastes to appreciate their beauty, and as the heavens are higher than the earth and purer, will not the flowers and everything else be the same. I pray God that no matter how many and great the difficulties we may have to wade through, how great the mountains we may have to climb, how gigantic the enemies we may have to battle with that His grace may be a sufficient power unto us to make us conquer all, and so be crowned with his glory above.

I cannot express my gratitude toward you for your congratulations of my composition. I don't think that it was worthy of such remarks. I have been to school but very little since you were here, and I have struggled to master a little of the English language; but I think that I have accomplished very little. My occupation has taken up too much of my time, and I seem to be so constituted as to be capable of doing only one thing at a time, while giving my whole attention to whatever I am laboring at. But your congratulation has cheered and comforted me considerably. For I know that your abilities are great on this subject. And I ask you to pardon any mistake or blunder which I may make, and anything which you may see wrong in any sense, I shall take it as a kind action of you to tell me of it.

I hope that you succeeded well in the writing of your book last winter. I should like to see it very much and know of what it treats. You have had another summer of travel, and no doubt have seen many strange and pleasing things, and perhaps many grim scenes. But I hope it has been a year of success, instruction, and joy, and that this year may be likewise. I hope this will find you well and happy. I am pretty well at present. Farewell my friend and brother. Please answer as soon as possible and oblige,

Yours,

John H. Boyes,
Meaford, Ontario, Canada.

[Verses found in letter of John Boyes, dated Jan. 22, 1877]

O, how I love the sawmill
That stands beside the stream;
I love to hear its rattling wheel,
That shudders 'neath the beam.

O, how I love to hear it roar,
It drowns the noisy air;
It roars aloud like thunder
And I seek for shelter there.

The trees stand all around me
When I am in the mill;
O, how I love to see those trees
That stand upon the hill.

The little stream that turns the wheel
That works the saw up and down,
That rips the logs asunder,
That shelters us around.

'Twas God that made the sawmill
That stands beside the stream,
I love to go when I die to him,
And in his kingdom reign.

JOHN BOYES