



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1873-03-01

Letter from John Muir to Dav[id Muir], 1873 Mar 1.

John Muir

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thicket of desolation worthy of his benevolence
Can you not convince him that the whole world
is full of work for the kind & willing heart.
Or if you cannot urge him to undertake any inde-
pendent charity. Can you not place him in
correspondence with some Milwaukee or Chicago
society where he would find elbow room for all
his importance. An earnest man like father who
also has a little money is a valuable acquaintance
to many societies of a philanthropic kind & feel
sure that if once fairly afloat from this shoal
of indolence upon which he now chafes, that he
would sail calmly the yes were remaining to him
At all events tell Mother & the girls that whether
this side the sea or that, they need take no uneasiness
concerning bread.

I am glad you are getting more fresh air into your
half shut lungs & stomach, I will be among you some
day to see that amount of underbrush that has appeared.

80652

"since I sailed since I sailed, ever a crop of babies!!"
My picture may well look unnatural as I was com-
pelled to stare about twenty minutes. The day was dark & windy
I was frightened out of more than half of each of my senses by the glare & glare of everything around me with due to Robert & I am unchangeably yours John
Dear Dave I answer your letter at once because I want to urge you to do what you can in breaking up that wild caprice of fathers of going to Bristol & Lord Muller. You & David Galloway are the only reliable common sense heads in our tribe & it is important when the radical welfare of our parents & sisters are at stake that we should do all that is in our power. I expected a morbid & semi-fanatical outbreak of this kind as soon as I heard of his breaking free from the wholesome cares of the farm. Yet I hoped

1873
London
1st March 1873

That he would find ballast
in your town of some sabbath-
school or missionary kind that
would save him from any violent
crisis like the present.

That thick matted sod of Bristol
orphans, which is a sort of neces-
sary evil, induced by other
evils, is all right enough,
for Muller in England but all
wrong for Muir in America.
The lines of Anna & Joanna
accustomed to free wild nature
of our woods, if transplanted
to artificial fields & dingy
towns of England would wilt
& shrivel to mere husks, even
if they were not to make
their life work amid those
pinched, & blinking orphans.
Father in his present feeble-
minded condition is sick &
requires the most considerate
treatment from all who have

access to his thoughts. This
moral disease is by no
means contemptible for
it is only those who are
endowed with poetic &
enthusiastic brains that
are subject to it.

Most people who are born into
the world remain babies all
their lives, their development
being arrested like sundried seeds.
Father is a magnificent
baby who instead of dozing
contentedly like most of his
neighbors suffers growing
pains that are ready to usher
in the dawn of a higher life.

But to come to our work,
can you not induce father to
engage in some tract or mission
or sabbath school enterprise,
that will satisfy his demands
for bodily & spiritual exercise?
Can you not find him some

used in match.

[Original letter in possession of David Gilrye Muir]

To David Gilrye Muir
Yosemite Valley,
March 1st, 1873.

Dear Dave:

I answer your letter at once because I want to urge you to do what you can in breaking up that wild caprice of father's of going to Bristol and Lord Muller. You and David Galloway are the only reliable common-sense heads in our tribe, and it is important, when the radical welfare of our parents and sisters are at stake, that we should do all that is in our power.

I expected a morbid and semi-fanatical outbreak of this kind as soon as I heard of his breaking free from the wholesome cares of the farm. Yet I hoped that he would find ballast in your town of some Sabbath-school or missionary kind that would save him from any violent crisis like the present. That thick-matted sod of Bristol orphans, which is a sort of necessary evil, induced by other evils, is all right enough for Muller in England, but all wrong for Muir in America.

The lives of Anna and Joanna, accustomed to ^{the} free wild Nature of our woods, if transplanted to artificial fields and dingy towns of England, would wilt and shrivel to mere husks, even if they were not to make their life work amid those pinched and blinking orphans.

Father, in his present feeble-minded condition, is sick and requires the most considerate treatment from all who have access to his thoughts, and his moral disease is by no means contemptible, for it is only those who are endowed with poetic and enthusiastic brains that are subject to it.

Most people who are born into the world remain babies all their lives, their development being arrested like sun-dried seeds. Father is a magnificent baby, who, instead of dozing contentedly like most of his neighbors, suffers growing pains that are ready to usher in the dawn of a higher life.

But to come to our work, can you not induce father to engage in some tract or mission or Sabbath-school enterprise that will satisfy his demands for bodily and spiritual exercise? Can you not find him some thicket of destitution worthy of his benevolence? Can you not convince him that the whole world is full of work for the kind and willing heart? Or, if you cannot urge him to undertake any independent charity, can you not place him in correspondence with some Milwaukee or Chicago society where he would find elbow room for all his importance. An earnest man like father, who also has a little money, is a valuable acquisition to many societies of a philanthropic kind, and I feel sure that if once fairly afloat from this shoal of indolence upon which he now chafes, that he would sail calmly the ~~y~~^{yea}~~rs~~ now remaining to him.

At all events, tell mother and the girls, that whether this side ~~of~~ the sea or that, they need take no uneasiness concerning bread...

John Muir

I am glad you are getting more fresh air into your half shut lungs and stomach. I will be among you some day to see that army of underbrush that has appeared "since I sailed, since I sailed," such a crop of babies!!

My eyes in the picture may well look unnatural, as I was compelled to stare about twenty minutes, the day was so dark. Besides, I was frightened out of more than half of each of my senses by the blaze and glare of everything around me. With love to Katie and wee ones, I am unchangeably yours,

John Muir.