



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1897-01-29

## Letter from Edwin H. Abbot to John Muir, 1897 Jan 29.

Edwin H. Abbot

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PRESIDENT'S OFFICE.

EDWIN H. ABBOT,  
PRESIDENT.

MILWAUKEE, WIS., Jany. 29, 1897.

*Personal*

Prof. John Muir,  
Martinez, California.

Dear Mr. Muir:-

Your kind letter of Jany. 19th is forwarded me here where I am for a few days. I agree with every word you say, and I think that Robert Herrick struck the key-note when he spoke of the fulness of Philip's life. It was singularly complete. It was an ideal life, so to speak, which would afterwards be lived over and over again in various ways in the world and on natural plains, where it would have been his to have realized the spiritual outlines of his previous experience. But he closed his existence in this world with the end of what was, in my judgment, his educational period, and his education, as I look back over the twenty-nine years, seems to me to have been exactly what, had I to do it over again, I would now plan it should be. If a man has money enough for freedom of motion, physical and intellectual, he has all that any amount of wealth can possibly give him, and the only thing which personally any man can get out of wealth which is worth having. Circumstances enabled Philip to enjoy this rare privilege, and he used it to its full. I trust the time may come when we may sit down together and talk of these things. My brother has returned so filled with enthusiastic friendship that I greatly desire to meet you, and I trust you will never lose an opportunity if it comes within your reach, as I certainly shall not if it ever comes within mine. I do not see how an intelligent man, looking back upon the past, can help seeing that our lives are guided and controlled in wonderful ways, beyond the reach of those things which are covered by our own freedom of will and action. Swedenborg says that we can see the Divine Providence in the back, but not in the face, that is, in the past, but not in the present, because this would take away our moral freedom. But when the life has gone out of the present and its events have gone back into the colorless past, I do not see how a man can truly view it without perceiving that there has been in and over his own life a guidance and a guardianship not less manifest than we know we, unconsciously to the child, exercise over our own children. Philip was our most intimate friend, and I am

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glad to know that his mother and I were his nearest and most confidential friends in life. I cannot conceive how greater freedom and openness could exist between two mortals than did exist between that boy and us, and I cannot believe ~~was~~, simply because I do not see him here, that his love is any less great and faithful and complete than I knew it to be; just as I know that my love for him never was deeper or stronger than it is now. We are all in the spiritual world now just as much as we ever shall be, and I believe it to be possible, if we are willing to conform to the laws of love and truth, which govern ~~his~~ his existence now in the spiritual world, to be so faithful and true to him that he shall always be not merely a memory, but a spiritual presence in our lives. If we can really be happy because he has become so much happier, and can lay down for him our own selfish life, that is, the inexpressible hunger for his visible presence, I cannot help believing that the time will come when we shall see clearly that in this way, we really have kept on living together, although we did not see one another face to face in these years of our continual life in this world. Pardon me if I have written with too great freedom, but your letter has moved me much, and I am sure you will understand the feeling which has prompted my reply.

I have letters from Philip in Switzerland and on his travels, when Herrick and he were together wandering over Mexico and California, which your appreciation of his brightness and pleasant style of writing encourages me to think may contain enough to make a little book for private circulation among those who, remembering the Philip who lived here, will be glad to know something more of that sweet and pure and bright existence. I cannot say that I have definite plans as yet, but it does seem to me there are some things in these letters that men like you will be glad to see, and which I should be glad to have you see. If anything of this sort is ever prepared, you may be sure I shall remember you.

Hoping that the events of life may bring you into our neighborhood, and perhaps bring me into your neighborhood, I beg you will give me the pleasure of meeting you East, just as I should certainly give myself the pleasure of finding you if I ever come within any reasonable distance of yourself.

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The General is still with us in Cambridge and is shortly to visit his little grand-children at Charleston, where his son, Captain Fred, is still posted. It would please you to know how greatly he valued your company and how he counts you among the most delightful of friends.

I find that Philip had such pleasure in his Sierra Club friendships and association that I wish very much to preserve them, and if there are any other names of those who knew him, beside Mr. McAllister to whom I send the same pamphlet that you received, I shall be very glad indeed to learn them.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

*Edwin H. Abbot*

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