



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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c1880 WT to JM p 1

William Trout

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Post First draft of Letter to Muir

Dear Friend John A couple of years have passed away since I have heard from you it is my own fault too as you wrote last ^{for the sake of the reply I want} This letter is to ^{to hear from you and to brighten up} ~~draw out our old~~ ^{revive} the smouldering embers of old confidence and friendship. It is almost accidental that I am now writing. I am away from home superintending the putting some machinery in one of our large and well appointed sawmills and I am overtaken by Sunday and of course have time on my hands and the thought occurred to me that now is the time to fulfill my oft postponed intention so I am writing with nothing particular to write about. My life is not like yours. One great sojourn through nature's large domain each day's experience different from the last. Mine is the old style running almost wholly in one groove. My present experience is a slight fog occasionally I have others of a tolerably agreeable kind such as being judge at our provincial and other fairs since 1876 but at our shop I seem settled in one rut and don't seem likely to get out of it there at least. I feel very rebellious sometimes but I always get over it when I look around for means of improvement. I am so much better off than a good many other good fellows are that it makes ^{me} partially content. We have been doing some fine work lately in our shop the best is a 200 H.P. Corliss condensing engine now running in Toronto. It will compare favorably with anything done in America yes or anywhere else not excepting the Clyde in Auld Scotland. By the way Edward made quite a stay in Scotland with some travel in the Highlands last year when on a visit to the Paris Exposition he was accompanied by his wife the doctor who as well as ourselves have relatives there one of my cousins is Gaelic professor in one of the Old Colleges of Edinburgh. The Gaelic side of Auld Scotia is everything with him.

You made in your last letter the remark that in religious subjects particularly we used to sharply differ and if we were to compare notes again we would differ still more as far as I am concerned we would not for I think I have gone slightly in your direction so that we could not differ more unless the change is with you and you will allow me in friendly candor to surmise the direction of the change

Is it that the grand unvarying and in point of space and time overwhelming epochs and displays of nature have overshadowed the humbler revelations of the Word

There is a God all nature speaks; says one of our great poets but there is no Christ in the rocks or record of him in field or star or forest. May be you have turned the telescope of science upon him coldly in the dim distance calculated his light and bearings and set him down not as the ^{the glorious sun of Righteousness} Bright and Morning Star ~~or the~~ but one though bright yet of greatly less magnitude. Perhaps this talk is too

imaginative for a scientific man. Well, has your more extensive knowledge of nature modified your views of Christianity in the direction of partial unbelief you will pardon this plan and it will be all the better if I am mistaken. If this is the case you have my sympathies for you if not with you

So far from taking things for granted on these matters I examined the basis of our faith at first superficially no doubt but as well as I could and have reexamined and reexamined many times since I have not gone to the depths that you may have gone still at times my faith has been terribly shook. I have

hesitated as to course but I could not choose the harder side, so I am when I am endeavoring to do the works of Christ that

I may truly know of ^{his} doctrine whether it be true or whether he speaks on his own account and I find the humble practice of his teaching confirms my faith in its origin. I am no high

flying towering Christian my flight is close to the earthly and the practical. If I can be good useful to myself and others here through Christ I may be found worthy of a humble place in his eternal Kingdom if there is not such a place I shall be as well off as those who so believe. This is the bottom view of the matter

the worst that can come of it. Thank Heaven it is not the only view. The apostle Paul said if there be no resurrection we are of all men most miserable. This was vastly more true in his time than in ours. Virtue has its own reward.