

*To James Munroe and Company**December 27, 1847*Concord Dec 27th 1847

Gentlemen,

In a letter from R. W. Emerson, which I received this morning, he requests me to send him Charles Lane's Dials. Three bound vols accompany this letter to you- "The fourth", to quote his own words, "is in unbound numbers at J Munroe & Co's¹ shop, received there in a parcel to my address a day or two before I sailed, and which I forgot to carry to Concord- It is certainly there, was opened by me, & left"- And he wishes me to ask you to "enclose all four vols. to Chapman" for him (Emerson).

If all is right, will you please say so to the express-man- or at any rate give me an opportunity to look for the fourth vol, if it is missing.

I may as well inform you that I do not intend to print *my book* anywhere immediately.

Yrs
Respectfully
Henry Thoreau

Correspondent: See p. 206.¹ James Munroe and Company.*Copy-text:* ALS (MB, Ch.B.6.15)*Published:* Cor 1958, 198*Editor's Note*

This letter is addressed "James Munroe & Co. / Washington St / Boston." and endorsed "Henry Thoreau / Dec 27th/47".

*To Ralph Waldo Emerson**December 29, 1847*Concord Dec 29th 1847.

My Dear Friend,

I thank you for your letter- I was very glad to get it- And I am glad again to write to you. However slow

the steamer, no time intervenes between the writing and the reading of thoughts, but they come fresh to the most distant port.— I am here still, & very glad to be here—and shall not trouble you with my complaints because I do not fill my place better. I have had many good hours in the chamber at the head of the stairs—a solid time, it seems to me. Next week I am going to give an account to the Lyceum of my expedition to Maine.¹ Theodore Parker lectures tonight—² We have had Whipple^a on Genius—too mighty a subject for him—with his antithetical^a definitions—new-vamped^c—what it^a *is*, & what it is *not*.³ But altogether what it is *not*. Cuffing it this way, & cuffing it that, as if it were an India rubber ball. Really, it is a subject which should^a expand—&^a accumulate^a itself before the speaker's eyes, as he goes on,—like the snow balls which boys roll in the streets—& when he stops^a, it should be so large that he cannot start it—but must leave it there—^a — Hudson too has been here with a dark shadow in the core of him, and his desperate wit so much indebted to the surface of him—wringing out his words and snapping them off like a dish-cloth—very remarkable but not memorable.⁴ Singular that these two best lectures should have so much “wave” in their timber—their solid parts too be made and kept solid by shrinkage and contraction of the whole—with consequent checks & fissures— Ellen and I have a good understanding— I appreciate her genuineness— Edith tells me after her fashion—“By & by, I shall grow up to be a woman, and then I shall remember how you exercised me.”— Eddie has been to Boston to Christmas—but can remember nothing but the coaches—all Kendall's coaches⁵— —there is no variety of that vehicle that he is not familiar with.— He *did* try once to tell us something else, but after thinking and stuttering a long time—said—“I dont know what the word is”—the *one* word, forsooth that would have disposed of all that Boston phenomenon. If you did not know him better than I—I could tell you more.

He is a good companion for me-& I am glad that we are all natives of Concord- It is *Young Concord*-Look out-World.- Mr Alcott seems to have sat down for the winter. He has got Plato and other books to read.⁶ He^a is as large featured-and hospitable to travelling thoughts & thinkers as ever-but with the same creaking & sneaking Connecticut philosophy as ever, mingled with what is better. If he would only stand up straight and toe the line!-though he were to put off several degrees of largeness-and put on a considerable degree of littleness.- After all, I think we must call him particularly *your* man.- I have pleasant walks and talks with Channing.-⁷ James Clark^a-the swedenborgian that was-is at the Poor House^a-insane with too large views, so that he cannot support himself- I see him working with Fred^a and the rest. Better than be there not insane. It is strange that they will make an ado when a man's body is buried-and not when he thus really & tragically dies-or seems to die. Away with your funeral processions,-into the ball-room with them- I hear the bell toll hourly over there.

Lidian & I have a standing^a quarrel as to what is a suitable state of preparedness for a travelling Professor's^a visits⁹-or for whomsoever else-but further than this we are not at war. We?^a have made up a dinner-we have made up a bed-we have made up a party-& our own minds & mouths three several times for your Professor, and he came not- Three several turkies have died the death-which I myself carved, just as if he had been here^a-and the company too convened and demeaned themselves^a accordingly- Everything was done up in good style, I assure you-with only the part of the Professor omitted.¹⁰ To have seen the preparations-though Lidian says it was nothing extraordinary-I should certainly have said he was a coming-but he did not. He must have found out some shorter way. to Turkey-some overland rout-I think.- By^a the way, he was complimented at the conclusion of his

course in Boston by the Mayor^a moving the appointment of a committee to draw up resolutions expressive of &c &c which was done.¹¹

I have made a few verses lately— Here are some—though perhaps not the best—at any rate they are the shortest on that universal theme—your’s as well as mine, & several other people’s

The good how can we trust?
 Only the wise are just.
 The good we use,
 The wise we cannot choose.
 These there are none above;
 The good they know & love,
 But are not known again
 By those of lesser ken.—
 They do not charm us with their eyes,
 But they transfix with their advice.
 No partial sympathy they feel,
 With private woe or private weal,
 But with the universe joy & sigh,
 Whose knowledge is their sympathy.¹²

I am sorry to send such a medley as this to you.

Good night

Henry Thoreau

I have forwarded Lane’s¹³ Dials to Monroe,¹⁴ with the proper instructions, and he tells the express man that all is right.

Correspondent: See p. 53.

¹ T gave his lecture “An Excursion to Ktaadn,” an account of his 1846 trip to Maine, on January 3, 1848. In his journal entry for the same day, Alcott wrote: “Mrs A. accompanied me to the Lyceum where we heard a lecture from *Thoreau* on a jaunt of his to *Kotarden*, the highest mountain in Maine.— The lecture gave a very lively picture of the so wild scenery and of his adventures in ascending the rivers to reach the summit of Kotarden.—” (MH-H, MS Am 1130.12 [17], p. 7).

² Alcott records in his journal entry for December 29: "Evening I heard a lecture at the Lyceum on Genius of Americans by Parker" (MH-H, MS Am 1130.12 [16], p. 706).

³ Edwin Percy Whipple (1819-1886), son of Matthew and Lydia Gardiner Whipple, grew up in Salem, Massachusetts, and became a banker, but he later turned to lecturing and writing. In 1847 he married Charlotte Billings Hastings (1821-1907), daughter of Cyrus and Eliza Bullard Hastings. Whipple was a regular on the lyceum circuit. He repeated the lecture on genius in Boston the following February and published it in *Lectures on Subjects Connected with Literature and Life* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed and Fields, 1850). In this lecture, Whipple attempts a broad and "true" definition of genius: genius "reasons, but it is not reasoning; it judges, but it is not judgment; it imagines, but it is not imagination; it feels deeply and fiercely, but it is not passion" (pp. 158-159).

⁴ Henry Norman Hudson (1814-1886) graduated from Middlebury College in 1840, taught for a time, and then began to lecture professionally on Shakespeare. He published his very successful performances as *Lectures on Shakespeare* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1848). In 1852 he married Emily Sarah Bright (1826-1891), daughter of Henry and Abigail Fisk Bright. Hudson later became an Episcopal minister but resumed his work as a Shakespearean scholar and popularizer after the Civil War. The date and topic of his lecture at the Concord Lyceum are not known.

⁵ Eddie probably remembered the Concord stage driver Obadiah Kendall (1783-1849), son of Reuben and Betsey Kendall of Cheshire, New Hampshire.

⁶ Alcott spent the summer and fall of 1847 landscaping and tending his garden while the family was sinking ever deeper into poverty. His journal entry for December 22, 1847, contains a list of "Proposed Reading for this Season-1848," in which he named *Schleiermacher's Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato* as one of his books. At the end of his journal entry for December 26, Alcott outlined the chapters of Schleiermacher's book (MH-H, MS Am 1130.12 [16], pp. 699, 702-703).

⁷ Ellery Channing.

⁸ James Clark (1815-1851), son of John Brooks and Lydia Flint Clark, bought T's house at Walden from Hugh Whelan in 1849 and, with the help of his brother, Daniel, moved it to the Carlisle Road. See p. 320, note 19.

⁹ The traveling professor is John Pringle Nichol (1804-1859), Regius Professor of Practical Astronomy at the University of Glasgow, who was lecturing in Boston at this time. Emerson's 1841 reading

of Nichol's *Views of the Architecture of the Heavens* (Edinburgh: W. Tait, 1837) prompted him to write several extended journal passages on the size of the universe and on human perception. Nichol had solicited Emerson's help in arranging lecture venues, but, despite his admiration for Nichol's work, Emerson could offer little more than general suggestions. When the two met in Liverpool in November 1847, Emerson gave him letters of introduction to Parker and Longfellow.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Hoar described one of the dinners for the absent Nichol in her November 29 letter to Emerson: "Lidian summoned me to dine with Dr. Nicholl to-day at 3 oclock but come he did not, though Ellery and Henry awaited him in black coats, like gentlemen of the old school—so we had a gay dinner without him, a weight being removed of course from all minds" ("Elizabeth of Concord: Selected Letters of Elizabeth Sherman Hoar [1814-1878] to the Emersons, Family, and the Emerson Circle [Part Three]," ed. Elizabeth Maxfield-Miller, *SAR* 1986, p. 149). Emerson speculated that Nichol had instead mistakenly gone to Concord, New Hampshire, "than which no vexation could be more complete" (*Letters of RWE* 1939, 3:455). In January Hoar wrote Emerson again about these dinners: "Lidian gives us little dinner parties ever week or two, for Dr. Nicholl, & we go & enjoy them, & the Dr. Don't come" ("Elizabeth of Concord," *SAR* 1986, p. 155).

¹¹ Nichol delivered six lectures on "Mechanism and Physical Constitution of Our Solar System" in Boston between December 6 and December 23. Following the conclusion of his course, "the Mayor suggested the appointment of a Committee to draw up a set of resolutions expressive of the sense in which the audience held the importance of the views promulgated by the lectures, and the esteem in which they held the scientific character of the Professor. The step was carried into effect, and a set of resolutions reported and unanimously adopted" ("Compliment to Prof Nichol," *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, December 24, 1847).

¹² T included this poem in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (*A Week* 1980, p. 281).

¹³ Charles Lane.

¹⁴ James Munroe.

Copy-text: ALS (NN-BGC, Henry David Thoreau Collection, 1837-1917, Series III)

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Editor's Notes

This letter is addressed "R. W. Emerson / care of Alexander Ireland Esq. / Manchester Examiner Office / England. / via New York / & Steamer Hibernia" and endorsed "H. D. Thoreau / Jan 1848".
 new-vamped] *PE*; new- / vamped *in MS*

Author's Alterations

Whipple] *whipple*
 antithetical] *preceded by cancelled* two-columned
 it] *is*
 should] *followed by cancelled* dilate &
 &] *interlined with a caret*
 accumulate] *accumulating*
 stops] *interlined above cancelled* leaves off
 there-] *followed by cancelled* perchance, to thaw in the sun &
 feed the Pierian springs.
 He] *His*
 House] *house*
 Fred] *interlined above cancelled* Breed
 standing] *standard*
 Professor's] *professor's*
 We?] ? *inserted*
 here] *there*
 themselves] *interlined with a caret*
 -By] - *added in margin*
 Mayor] *mayor*

To Ralph Waldo Emerson

January 12, 1848

Concord Jan 12th 1848.

It is hard to believe that England is so near as from your letters it appears—and that this identical piece of paper has lately come all the way from there hither—begrimed with the English dust, which made you hesitate to use it¹— from England which is only historically firm-land to me—to America which I have put my spade into, and about which there is no doubt.

I thought that you needed to be informed of Hugh's progress.² He has moved his house, as I told you, & dug his cellar, and purchased stone of Sol Wetherbee³ for