

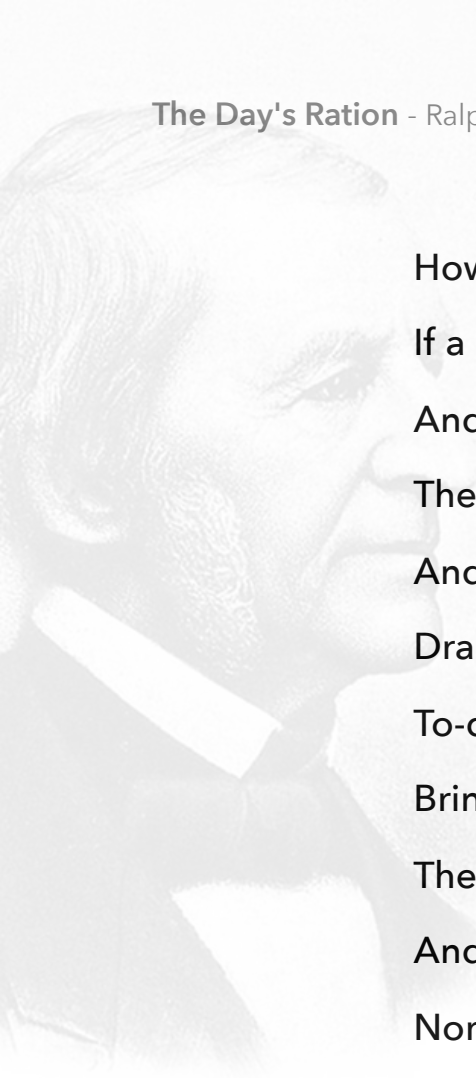
Ralph Waldo Emerson  
(1803-1882)

# The Day's Ration

From: Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Early Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson. New York, Boston, Thomas Y. Crowell & Company: 1899. Introduction by Nathan Haskell Dole.

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When I was born,  
From all the seas of strength Fate filled a chalice,  
Saying, This be thy portion, child; this chalice,  
Less than a lily's, thou shalt daily draw  
From my great arteries; nor less, nor more.  
All substances the cunning chemist Time  
Melts down into that liquor of my life,  
Friends, foes, joys, fortunes, beauty, and disgust,  
And whether I am angry or content,  
Indebted or insulted, loved or hurt,  
All he distils into sidereal wine,  
And brims my little cup; heedless, alas!  
Of all he sheds how little it will hold,



How much runs over on the desert sands.  
If a new muse draw me with splendid ray,  
And I uplift myself into her heaven,  
The needs of the first sight absorb my blood,  
And all the following hours of the day  
Drag a ridiculous age.  
To-day, when friends approach, and every hour  
Brings book or starbright scroll of genius,  
The tiny cup will hold not a bead more,  
And all the costly liquor runs to waste,  
Nor gives the jealous time one diamond drop  
So to be husbanded for poorer days.  
Why need I volumes, if one word suffice?  
Why need I galleries, when a pupil's draught  
After the master's sketch, fills and o'erfills  
My apprehension? Why should I roam,  
Who cannot circumnavigate the sea  
Of thoughts and things at home, but still adjourn  
The nearest matters to another moon?  
Why see new men  
Who have not understood the old?

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