

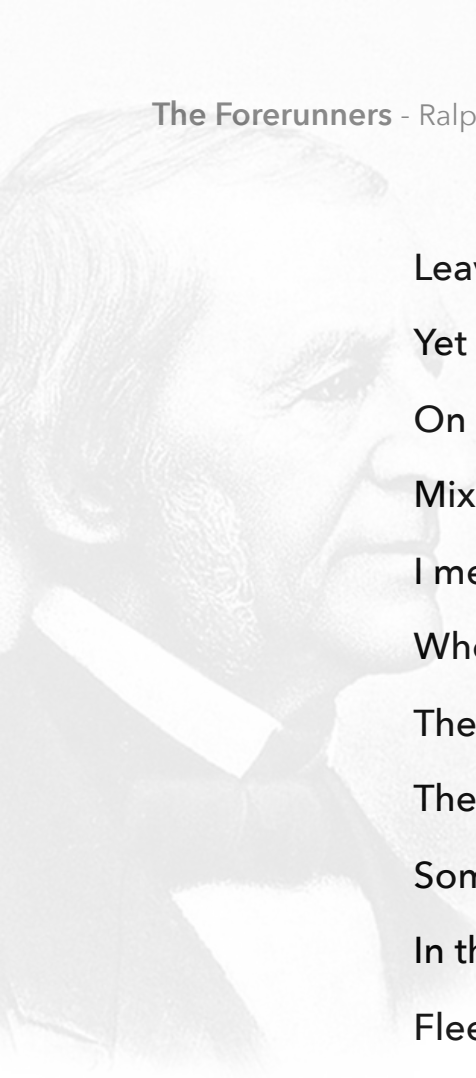
Ralph Waldo Emerson  
(1803-1882)

# The Forerunners

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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Long I followed happy guides,—  
I could never reach their sides.  
Their step is forth, and, ere the day,  
Breaks up their leaguer, and away.  
Keen my sense, my heart was young,  
Right goodwill my sinews strung,  
But no speed of mine avails  
To hunt upon their shining trails.  
On and away, their hasting feet  
Make the morning proud and sweet.  
Flowers they strew, I catch the scent,  
Or tone of silver instrument



Leaves on the wind melodious trace,  
Yet I could never see their face.  
On eastern hills I see their smokes  
Mixed with mist by distant lochs.  
I meet many travellers  
Who the road had surely kept,—  
They saw not my fine revellers,—  
These had crossed them while they slept.  
Some had heard their fair report  
In the country or the court.  
Fleetest couriers alive  
Never yet could once arrive,  
As they went or they returned,  
At the house where these sojourned.  
Sometimes their strong speed they slacken,  
Though they are not overtaken:  
In sleep, their jubilant troop is near,  
I tuneful voices overhear,  
It may be in wood or waste,—  
At unawares 'tis come and passed.  
Their near camp my spirit knows  
By signs gracious as rainbows.  
I thenceforward and long after

Listen for their harplike laughter,  
And carry in my heart for days  
Peace that hallows rudest ways.—

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