Cathedral Peak and the Tuolumne Meadows.

John Muir
August 9, 1869.—I went ahead of the flock and crossed over the divide between the Merced and Tuolumne basins. From the top of the divide and also from the Big Tuolumne Meadows the wonderful mountain called Cathedral Peak is in sight. It is a majestic temple of one stone, hewn from the living rock, and adorned with spires and pinnacles in regular cathedral style. I hope some time to climb to it to say my prayers and hear the stone sermons.

The Big Tuolumne Meadows are flowery lawns, lying along the South Fork of the Tuolumne River at a height of about 8500 to 9000 feet above the sea, partially separated by forests and bars of glaciated granite. Here the mountains seem to have been cleared away or set back so that wide open views may be had in every direction. The upper end of the series lies at the base of Mt. Lyell, the lower below the east end of the Hoffman Range, so the length must be about ten or twelve miles. They vary in width from a quarter of a mile to perhaps three quarters, and a good many branch meadows put out along the banks of the tributary streams. This is the most spacious and delightful high pleasure ground I have yet seen. The air is keen and bracing, yet warm during the day, and though lying high in the sky the surrounding mountains are so much higher one feels protected as if in a grand hall. Mts. Dana and Gibbs, massive red mountains perhaps 13,000 feet high or more, bound the view on the east, the Cathedral and Unicorn peaks with many nameless peaks on the south, the Hoffman Range on the

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west, and a number of peaks unnamed, as far as I know, on the north. One of these is much like the Cathedral. The grass of the meadows is mostly fine and silky, with exceedingly slender leaves, making a close sod above which the panicles of minute purple flowers seem to float in airy, misty lightness, while the sod is enriched with at least three species of gentian and as many or more of orthocarpus, potentilla, ivesia, solidago, pentstemon, with their gay colors,—purple, blue, yellow and red—all of which I may know better ere long: . . .

August 14th.—On the way back to our Tuolumne camp enjoyed the scenery if possible more than when it first came to view. Every feature already seems familiar as if I had lived here always. I never weary gazing at the wonderful Cathedral. It has more individual character than any other rock or mountain I ever saw, excepting perhaps the Yosemite South Dome. The forests, too, seem kindly familiar, and the lakes and meadows and glad singing streams. I should like to dwell with them forever. Here with bread and water I should be content. Even if not allowed to roam and climb, tethered to a stake or tree in some meadow or grove, I should be content forever. Bathed in such beauty, watching the expressions ever varying on the faces of the mountains, watching the stars, which here have a glory that the lowlander never dreams of, watching the circling seasons, listening to the songs of the waters and winds and birds, would be endless pleasure. And what glorious cloud-lands I would see, storms and calms, a new heaven and a new earth every day,—aye, and new inhabitants! And how many visitors I would have! I feel sure I would not have one dull moment. And why should this appear extravagant? It is only common sense, a sign of health,—genuine, natural, all-awake health. One would be at an endless Godful play, and what speeches and music and acting and scenery and lights,—sun, moon, stars, auroras! Creation just beginning, the morning stars “still singing together and all the sons of God shouting for joy!”