



1878-08-05

## Letter from John Muir to [John] Strentzel, 1878 Aug 5.

John Muir

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Austin Nevada,  
Aug. 5<sup>th</sup> 1878.

Dear Doctor your kind note of the 22<sup>th</sup> was  
received the other day & your discussion of joints  
& the progress in general of civilized things takes  
me at some little disadvantage. From the <sup>667</sup>Switch<sup>11</sup>  
we rode to the old fort Churchill on the Carson  
& at the "Upper" <sup>lower</sup> end of Mason valley was delighted  
to find the ancient outlet of Walker Lake down through  
a very picturesque canon to its confluence with the  
Carson. It appears therefore that not only the Humboldt  
& Carson but the Walker River also poured its waters  
into the Great Sink towards the end of the glacial  
period. From Fort Churchill we pushed Eastward  
between Carson Lake & The Sink, Pros! how hot it  
was riding in the solemn silent glare, shadesless -  
waterless, here is what the early emigrants called  
the 40 mile desert well marked with bones & broken  
wagons. Strange how the very sunshine may become  
dreary, how strange a spell this region casts over  
poor mortals accustomed to shade & coolness &  
green fertility, yet there is no real cause that  
I could see for reasonable beings losing their  
wits & becoming frenzied. There are the lovely tender  
Abernethys blooming in the fertile sand & sun & a species  
of Sun flower & a curious leguminous bush crowded  
with purple blossoms, & a green Salterwort & four  
or five species of Artemisia really beautiful, & three  
or four handsome grasses. Liquids revealed in the

You see I showed my appreciation of good things. That's a fine suggestion  
about the grapes. Try me Doctor or our latter came Tokays. Cordially yes

John Winn

00804

We saw all Sum. I saw in. Next address. for two weeks from this date. Eureka

gratified heart & a brave little Tamias that carries his tail forward over his back. & here & there a hare. Immense areas however are smooth & hard & plantless reflecting light like water. How eloquently they tell of the period just gone by when this region was as remarkable for its lavish abundance of lake water as now for its aridity, the same grand geological story is inscribed on the mtn flanks - old beach lines that seem to have been drawn with a ruler. Registering the successive levels at which the grand lake stood corresponding most significantly with the fluctuations of the glaciers as marked by the terraced <sup>lateral</sup> moraines & successively higher terminal moraines.

After crossing the sink we ascended the Mtn range that bounds it on the E 8000 to 10000 ft high. How treeless & barren it seemed. Yet how full of small charming gardens with hints primroses blue roses penstemonous spreas etc, watered by trickling streams to small brooks audibly. You flourish a view of the sink from the mtntop. The colors were mifffully lovely as if here nature were doing her very best painting.

But a letter tells little. We next ascended the Augusta Range - crossed the Desotoya & Shoshonee ranges then crossed Reese River Val & ascended the Toiyabe Range 11000 ft high. lovely gardens in all. Discovered here the true *Pinus flexilis* at 10000 ft. It enters the Sierra in one or two places on the S extremity of the Sierra. E flank

Saw only one rattlesnake. No hostile Indians had a visit at my tent yesterday afternoon Capt Bobson of the Park Ute plenipotentiaries who lately visited