



1879-02-11

Letter from A[nnie] K[ennedy] Bidwell to John Muir, 1879 Feb 11.

Annie Kennedy Bidwell

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we would not interfere with that for anything. Also we would not try to draw you from work. Our hope is that sometimes you would join us in our drives & rambles, as General says, "tell us some thing of the world we live in on Rancho Chico." Now I promise to drop this subject permanently, and trust you to trust us and come at any ~~or~~ - to you - convenient or agreeable time. All times will be convenient to us. General received a pamphlet from Sir Joseph a few days since - his address before - I forget the Society, & he has the pamphlet. Sir Joseph is certainly very kind to remember us, especially as General has not written him since he left. I think a letter will have to go now, as this is his second to General. But he is so busy that it seems impossible to do his whole duty. Dr

letter, for I find the opposite page written on, so must abruptly say adieu, and thanks for "glorious meadows" in scintillations, which gave all so enjoyed. Sincerely Yours
Rancho Chico
A. H. Bidwell. Feb 11th 1879

My dear Mr Muir. As I have owed you a letter since yours from Nevada was received, it is my purpose to avail myself of my privilege, and at the same time relieve my mind of an uncomfortable burdew which has oppressed me ever since your last call on me in San Francisco. In the first place I am seldom sufficiently warm when in that city, & on the day referred to my feet were so cold that they ached, and I concluded that inelegant as it was I would move to the fire & warm them. As I arose to do so you said abruptly "Why yes, I am staying too long I did not know it was so late." I intended replying that I was only going to the fire,

Gray wrote us such a charming letter "at the last day of the old year" as he said. He has a "Botany of California" for us (which he gave recently into Lillie's care for us, it being too heavy for the mail.) Says he learned we were in search of one! I think Mrs Dr Carr told him, & General thinks you? What a fine rain we are having. It has hurried the sluggish almond blossoms. Usually those just bursting into bloom are in their glory in Jan. The wild flowers thus far have refused even to peep out at the world, save one ~~or~~ two we found about the 2nd of Jan, and one tiny nemophila which I met on last Friday under very singular circumstances. On Saturday I was to send to the East a little orphan who has been with me since before Christmas, & whose mother died in our house last August, & a little sister died a few weeks previous. This little orphan "Lucy," loved her mother & sister with a devotion as strange as touching, & of course I took her on Friday - cold & dreary as it was - to say farewell to their graves. She wished to lay the wreaths of flowers on the graves, herself, and after laying them tenderly upon she said "I'm going to smooth the graves," and

+ assuring you that I had not meant
 to be so rude as to rise that you
 might leave. But you were finish-
 ing a sentence & I awaited, & then
 thought best not to say anything
 about it lest you had not misunder-
 stood me & might be anxious to get
 at your work, etc. But the more
 I thought of it after you left, the
 more mortified I felt, & have con-
 cluded not to unnecessarily bear a
 burden which might be so easily
 removed, for I know you will only
 need my assurance that I was
 not so rude as I appeared.

General regretted not meeting
you when he called on you (about
the 31st of Dec.) He had determined
to see you & say that, if you left
your quarters on Taylor Street,
he wanted you to bundle up your
goods and remove your study to

Ranchy Chies. He thought he would be able to convince you
 that it would be the very best place for study until the time
 was called upon to leave Mountain View. When I told
 General you said you might have to leave present quarters &
 find no place here to go, he said "Why have him come
 here." I told him I had invited you to do so, but you
 seemed so surprised that I did not press the matter.
 As you see he thought he would be able to persuade
 you, though neither of us would wish you to come un-
 less you did so from a desire to come, not because of
 our inportunity. If you ever feel like trying the ex-
 periment do not hesitate to do so, & should it prove a
 failure in regard to work accomplished, you can turn
 away without giving offence to either of us, for

as she looked about for irregularities
to "smooth down," a cry of pleasure
escaped the hitherto sad little creature &
she pointed to the flower growing on the
foot of her sister's grave. Then she took
it up, brushed the earth from it and
said "It's from little sister's grave. I'm
going to take it home." I felt that I told

her the truth when I said "God made that
 flower blossom for you today, I say, that
 you might get it when you came here to-
 day, and that it might teach you God's
 care over your Maamma + Sister and I say.
 Then I got her to sing the hymn she had
 either had me sing, or sung herself, every day
 for weeks -
 "Oh what can you tell little flower, little flower
 Oh what can you tell little flower on the leaf
 The secret of your sweet perfume ~~now whisper~~
 Now whisper it to me. ~~Permit it to me.~~
 It is the love of "God in Heaven
 The God who loves both you & me
 And every day I breathe His praise
 In fragrance on the leaf"

There was not another ^{wild} flower to be seen in the
Cemetary, & it seemed to me this was truly a
Heavenly messenger. They would not trust it from
her hands until she gave it me to put in her
trunk, and as I did so I felt that flower and child
had preached one of the tenderest sermons I had
ever heard. But I must not extend my

Rancho Chico, Feb. 11th, 1879.

My dear Mr. Muir:

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General regretted not meeting you when he called on you (about the 31st of Dec.) He had determined to see you and say that if you left your quarters on Taylor Street he wanted you to bundle up your goods and remove your study to Rancho Chico. He thought he would be able to convince you that it would be the very best place for study until the summer called you to your mountain work. When I told General you said you might have to leave present quarters and had no plans where to go, he said, "Why, have him come here." I told him I had invited you to do so, but you seemed so surprised that I did not press the matter. So you see he thought he would be able to persuade you, though neither of us would wish you to come unless you did so from a desire to come, not because of our importunity. If you ever feel like trying the experiment, do not hesitate to do so, and should it prove a failure in regard to work accomplished, you can run away without giving offense to either of us, for we would not interfere with that for anything. Also we would not try to draw you from work. Our hope is that sometimes you would join us in our drives and rambles and, as General says, "tell us something of the world we live in on Rancho Chico." Now I promise to drop this subject permanently, and trust you to trust us and come at any -- to you -- convenient or agreeable time. All times will be convenient to us.

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[Letter of Mrs. Bidwell to John Muir, Feb. 11, 1879, continued]

the hymn she had either had me sing, or sung herself, every day for weeks,

"Oh, what can you tell, little flower, little flower,
Oh what can you tell little flower on the lea,
The secret of your sweet perfume
Now whisper it to me.
It is the love of God in Heaven
The God who loves both you and me,
And every day I breathe His praise
In fragrance on the lea."

There was not another wild flower to be seen in the cemetery nor elsewhere, and it seemed to me this was truly a Heavenly messenger. Lucy would not trust it from her hands until she gave it me to put in her trunk, and as I did so I felt that flower and child had preached one of the tenderest sermons I had ever heard.

But I must not extend my letter, for I find the opposite page written on, so must abruptly say adieu, and thanks for "Glacier meadows," in Scribner, which we all so enjoyed.

Sincerely yours,

A[nnie] K[ennedy] Bidwell.