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1870-05-01

**Letter from John Muir to [David Gilrye Muir], [1870 May].**

John Muir

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with so many indeterminate conditions dangling about it - will be of little use to you

Valley, because he settled upon it under the present laws, before it was donated by congress to the state for a pleasure ground etc - But his claims are contested. He is in Washington at present seeking satisfaction from government.

I am not annoyed with over much gold at present. I will have about a thousand dollars in the fall. I may need one or two hundred dollars myself, & I promised to let Mary have enough to keep her at Madison a year or 20% if she wishes it. If you may have the rest Dan or the girls may want some of it. If in the course of human events I be overtaken with calamities such as sickness or marriage I shall need it myself. I fear that so small a sum.

You say that you have some thoughts of retiring from the dry goods business. I think you had better not be discouraged by these hard times. So great a number of depressing influences do not often occur at the same time. After learning your business "stay with it" as Calverman says, until you make a competence. If however you have come to dislike your business in itself apart from the accidental losses & depressing of hard times, then by all means leave it soon as possible. You are still a young man & it is well worth your while to battle with the vexations & inconveniences which attend the labor of making a new home.

I do not know how soon I may escape from parents - and under a full 13

Here is a cluster of flower cups from the curious *Monyma* bush (*Arctostaphylos glauca*) I found in this morning in the red hills.

if by so doing you can make yourself & family permanently more happy, if business is overdone in Portugal seek another market for your goods, & if you decide to move at all. give a serious thought to California & to the Pacific Coast in general. Money is much more abundant here than in the Atlantic States, still there is a good deal of competition in the dry goods business, but you may find a place where you can establish yourselves. I am not qualified to give advice about the matter in anything like particular terms but I am sure that in a new country, rapidly developing & which abounds in the essential elements of natural wealth ~~and~~ is sooner or later sure to the

[37] <sup>entirely yours. Remember me to Mr Perry & warmly to your family - J.M.</sup>  
I calculated & enterprising  
If you resolve to spend your life in agricultural pursuits do not choose Cal for a home. But I will likely see you here you are found following the plow. To your old song of "increas to the jolly old farmer". Farming was a grim, maternal, debasing pursuit under fathers generalship but I think much more favorably of it - now.  
The saw mill I have been at work upon belongs to Mr Hutchings. It is in full operation now & runs extremely well. Do you perceive I am of some practical benefit to humanity as well as the strictly useful people.  
Mr Hutchings claims a quarter section of land in the

They may be united as for Katis for of course cannot look at flowers I arrived the ill-natural decisions of hard times

[Original letter in possession of David Gilrye Muir]

[ Yosemite, May, 1870 ]

You say that you have some thoughts of retiring from the drygoods business. I think you had better not be discouraged by these hard times. So great a number of depressing influences do not often occur at the same time. After learning your business "stay with it," as Californians say, until you make a competence. If, however, you have come to dislike your business in itself, apart from the accidental losses and depressions of hard times, then by all means leave it [as] soon as possible. You are still a young man, and it is well worth your while to battle with the vexations and inconveniences which attend the labor of making a new home, if by so doing you can make yourself and family permanently more happy. If business is overdone in Portage, seek another market for your goods, and if you decide to move at all, give a serious thought to California and to the Pacific Coast in general. Money is much more abundant here than in the Atlantic states. Still there is a good deal of competition in the dry goods business, but you may find a place where you can establish yourselves. I am not qualified to give advice about the matter in anything like particular terms, but I am sure that in a new country, rapidly developing - and which abounds in the essential elements of natural wealth success is sooner or later sure to the talented and enterprising.

If you resolve to spend your life in agricultural pursuits do not choose California for a home. But I will likely see you ere you are found following the plow to your old song of "success to the jolly old farmer." Farming was a grim, material, debasing pursuit under father's generalship, but I think much more favorably of it now.

The sawmill I have been at work upon belongs to Mr. Hutchings. It is in full operation now and runs extremely well, so you perceive I am of some practical benefit to humanity as well as the strictly useful people.

Mr. Hutchings claims a quarter section of land in the Valley, because he settled upon it under the preemption laws, before it was donated by Congress to the State for a pleasure ground, etc. But his claims are contested, and he is in Washington at present seeking satisfaction from government.

I am not annoyed with overmuch gold at present. I will have about a thousand dollars in the fall. I may need one or two hundred doll[ar]s myself, and I promised to let Mary have enough to keep her at Madison a year or so, if she wishes it, and you may have the rest. Dan or the girls may want some of it, and "if in the course of human events" I be overtaken with calamities such as sickness or marriage I shall need it myself. I fear that so small a sum with so many indeterminate conditions dangling about it will be of little use to you.

I do not know how soon I may escape from Yosemite. I am under a spell in this place. Here is a cluster of flower cups from the curious manzanita bush (*Arctostaphylos glauca*). I found it this morning in the rocks. The manzanita is for Katie. You, of course, cannot look at flowers amid the ill-natured distractions of hard times.

Most cordially yours. Remember me to Mr. Parry and warmly to your own family.

J. M. [John Muir]

[Place, Yosemite, supplied, as Muir states the sawmill is in operation. Year 1870 supplied, as Muir refers to completion of sawmill, and month May supplied, as this letter seems to follow closely upon Muir's letter to his brother David of April 10th, (1870)].