



1871-04-05

Letter from [John Muir] to Sarah [Muir Galloway], 1871 Apr 5.

John Muir

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[Original letter in possession of Sarah Muir Galloway]

In the sawmill,
Yosemite Valley, Apr¹¹ 5th, 1871.

Dear Sister Sarah:

This is one of the most surpassingly glorious of Yosemite days, and I have suddenly thought to write you. We have rain and storm. The vast column of the upper Yo^{Sem}[ite] falls is swaying with wonderful ever-changing forms of beauty, and all our mountain walls are wreathed in splendid clouds. In some places a strip of muffy white cloud reaches almost from the bottom of the wall to the top, and just across the meadow the summit of a pine-crested mountain is peering above the clouds like an island in the sky - thus:[sketch]

It is hard to write here, as the mill jars so much by the stroke of the saw, and rain drips from the roof, and I have to set the log every few minutes. I am operating this same mill that I made last winter. I like the piney fragrance of the fresh-sawn boards, and I am in constant view of the grandest of all the falls. I sleep in the mill for the sake of hearing the murmuring hush of the water beneath me, and I have a small box-like home fastened beneath the gable of the mill, looking westward down the Valley, where I keep my notes, etc. People call it the hang-nest, because it seems unsupported, thus [sketch]. Fortunately the only people that I dislike are afraid to enter it. The hole in the roof is to command a view of the glorious South Dome, 5000 ft. high. There is a corresponding skylight on the other side of the roof which commands a full view of the upper Yo^{Sem}ite falls, and the window in the end has a view sweeping down the Valley among the pines and cedars and silver firs. The window in the mill-roof to the right is above my bed, and I have to look at the stars on calm nights.

Two evenings ago I climbed the mountain to the foot of the upper Yo^{Sem}ite falls, carrying a piece of bread and a pair of blankets so that I could spend the night on the rock and enjoy the glorious waters, but I got drenched and had to go home, reaching the house at two o'clock [in the] morning. My wetting was received in a way that I scarcely care to tell. The adventure nearly cost all. I mean to go tomorrow night, but I will not venture behind the column again.

Here are the outlines of a grand old pine and gnarly mossy oak that stand a few steps from the mill. You liked[the] flowers. Well, I will get you a violet from the side of the mill-race, as I go up to shut off the water. Goodnight, with a brother's warmest love. [Sketch]

[John Muir]

^{omit} I rec'd mother's picture. Will write the children soon.