



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1871-10-01

Letter from John Muir to Mrs. [Jeanne C.] Carr, 1871 Sep or Oct.

John Muir

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strange to cast any kind of an anchor
All is so equal in glory, so ocean like
That to choose one place above another
is like drawing dividing lines in the
sky. I think I answered you last
with respect to remaining here in
winter. I can do much of this ice
work in the quiet, & the whole subject
is purely physical so that I can get
but little from books, all depends
upon the goodness of ones eyes, no
scientific book in the world can tell
one how this Yosemite granite is put
together or how it has been taken down
patient observation & constant brooding
above the rocks, lying upon them for
years as the ice did, is the way to
arrive at the truths wh are grown so
causally upon them

would that I knew what good prayers I
could say or good deeds I could do so
that Ravens would bring me bread & venison
for the next two yrs, then would I get some
tough gray clothes the color of granite so
no one could see or find me but yourself
then would I reproduce the ancient ice-
rivers & watch their workings & dwell
with them, I go again to my lessons
tomorrow morning. Some snow fell & bye
the bye I must tell you about it

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Yosemite Sep or Oct 1871
Dear friend Mrs Carr. I am
again upon the bottom meadow
of Yosemite after a most intensely
interesting bath among the outer
mountains. I have been exploring
the upper tributaries of the Cascade &
Tamarac streams. And in particular
all of the basin of Yosemite Creek
The present basins of every stream
wh enters the valley on the north side
was formerly filled with ice, wh also
flowed into the valley, although the
ancient-ice basins did not always
correspond with the present water
basins. because glaciers can flow
up hill. The whole of the north wall
of the valley was covered with an unbroken
flow of ice with perhaps the single excep-
tion of the Crest of Eagle Cliff, & though

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If poor good Melancholic Cooper
had been here yesterday morning
here is just what he would have
said
The rocks have been washed just washed in a shower
which winds to their faces conveyed
The plentiful cloudlets hemmuffed their brows
or lay on their beautiful heads

But Cold raged the winds in the fir trees above
And down in the pine trees below
For the rain that came laving & washing in love
was followed alas by a snow

which being unmetaphored & prosed
into sense means that yesterday morning
a strong South East wind cooled among
the highest snows of the Sierra drove back
the warm NW winds from the hot San Joa-
quin plains & burning foothill woods, & piled
up a jagged cloud addition to our valley walls
soon those white clouds began to darken & to
reach out long filmy edges wh writing over

the valley made ⁽⁶⁾ a close dark ceiling
Then came rain unsteady at
first - now a heavy gush, then a
sprinkling halt, as if the clouds so
long out of practice had forgotten
something, but after a half hour
of experimental pouring & sprinkling
there came an earnest steady
well controlled rain

On the mountain the rain
soon turned to snow & some
half melted flakes reached the bottom
of the valley. This morning Star King
& Tisserack & all the upper valley rain
is white,

Did I tell you in my last
that I had settled up with Hutchings
He used me very shabbily trying
to keep back part of my wages
If I am about the valley hotels
at all next summer I shall stop
at Blacks

Ever devoutly yours
friend John Muir

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