



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1913-05-25

## Letter from Clara Barrus to John Muir, 1913 May 25.

Clara Barrus

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424 Seventh Avenue, Pelham, N.Y.

May 25, 1913

Dear Mr. Muir,

My thoughts have gone out to you many times since two weeks ago when I received Edna's message that our dear Mr. Browne has gone from us. We were indebted to you for knowing him, and to know him was to love him almost instantly, and ever since I have held him in my inmost circle of friends, and am proud to believe he felt the same to me. Since those happy days in Pasadena, and our memorable ones in Yosemite, his friendship has been one of my dearest treasures. I have been living over again those days in the last two weeks, and thinking of our other meetings and of the comfort his letters have since been to me—he of the understanding and tender heart.

He and Mr. Burroughs were here in my little home for several days last September—an unforgettable experience. How often we talked of you, and summoned you in our midst!

I am so filled with a painful regret that I had not written him for the last two or three months, and his last letter to me had begged me to write. I could see from it that he was ill, and fagged and rushed with the re-writing of his book on Lincoln, but I was so rushed myself and strung up to an nervous pitch with my multiplicity of work—keeping house, taking care of my patient, and my little nieces, who live with me, having loads of company, and, with it all, writing a book,—and so I kept putting off writing to him, thinking soon to finish my writing, and send him a long letter of cheer soon—and just the day before I finished my Ms. the news came of his passing! If I had only dropped all and written him! Edna says one of the last things he did was to have the nurse take down my address and send word to her, Edna, to write to me. I am so glad you obeyed the promptings of your heart and wrote him, as Edna says you did, a beautiful letter which cheered him greatly. He so loved his friends—it meant so much to him to be remembered, he who was always thinking of others.

The sea and the sky and the rocks and the trees all remain, but where is he who so loved them, and us, and all life? We ask and no answer comes, and all we have is his blessed memory.

Mr. Burroughs is much cast down by his death, and has the additional pang which I must always feel, that he, too, had neglected writing him for some months past. Mrs. Ashley also. But what beautiful memories we have of him. Was there ever a more lovable man? If only I had done ever so little to cheer those last hard months of his over-burdened life! Such idle regrets serve no purpose, unless they make us cling with greater fondness to the friends who are still left to us.

I hope you received The Craftsman which I sent you last winter, and that you were not displeased at my characterization of you. I am reading your boyhood story for the third time, this time to my nieces, ages 11 and 10. They wonder what little Sarah was doing all the time in the Wisconsin wilderness, when you and your brother were having such fine times. I wonder what you are writing on now.

Last week I sent my Ms to H.M. and Co. of Boston, and met Mr. Burroughs

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there, and he introduced me to the publishers, and gave my Ms. an auspicious beginning. I hope it will find favor in their sight, and that they will bring it out this fall. I have called it, "Our Friend, John Burroughs"; it is just an unpretentious little affair, giving intimate glimpses of him, a preliminary study to the more serious work I hope to do later. The thing which ought to make the book a success is J.B.'s own contribution to it—some autobiographical sketches which he wrote to me several years ago, in a series of letters. I decided to use these now, instead of waiting and using them in the Biography. I hope you will see it some day. I have a chapter in it, "Camping with Burroughs and Muir", which has never been published in the magazines, although I took bits from the Century article, and incorporated in it.

Mr. Burroughs took me to see many literary persons, the most memorable experience was an afternoon at Trowbridge's home; he is hale and mentally alert, and, as you doubtless know, a winning personality. He spoke of his enjoyment of your Boyhood book.

I must not take more of your time. I wish you could put on some magic boots and step across to the Catskills this summer. I hope to be up there some weeks, and help Mr. Burroughs with the proof of his new book which will come out this fall.

Give my cordial regards to Helen—I suppose her babies occupy a good deal of her time.

I wish you could hear the tanagers and the orioles and wood thrushes as they are singing here this morning, but wherever you are you are doubtless steeped in beauty, and then you are always encompassed with the memory of all the beauty you have experienced along the way.

Don't forget that way off here is one whose happiest and most beautiful experiences are inseparably linked with you and the other dear friends amid those glories and wonders, making of it all a joy forever.

Affectionately yours,

Clara Barrus

*I wrote this on the machine, thinking  
to make it easier for you to read.*