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1900-10-21

Letter from John Muir to Charlie [A. Keeler], 1900 Oct 20.

John Muir

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To Mrs. Richard Swain

[First draft of letter, in note-book #59]

(64)

Martinez, Cal., Oct. 21, 1900,

Mrs. Richard Swain,

That you have so long remembered that sketch of the wind-storm in the forest of the Yuba gives me pleasure and encouragement in the midst of this hard life work, for to me it is hard, far harder than tree or mountain climbing. When ^I began [my] wanderings in God's wilds I never dreamed of writing a word for publication, and since beginning literary work it has never seemed possible that much good to others could come of it. Written descriptions of fire or bread are of but little use to the cold or starving. Descriptive writing amounts to little more than Hurrah, here's something! Come! When my friends urged me to begin, saying, "We cannot all go to the woods and mountains; you are free and love wildness; go and bring it to us," I used to reply that it was not possible to see and enjoy for others any more than to eat for them or warm for them. Nature's tables are spread and fires burning. You must go warm yourselves and eat. But letters like yours which occasionally come to me show that even nature writing is not altogether useless.

Some time I hope to see Japan's mountains and forests. The flora of Japan and Manchuria is among the richest and most interesting on the globe. With best wishes, I am,

Very truly yours,

J. M.

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