



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1902-03-10

Letter from Ernest C. Smith to John Muir, 1902 Mar 10.

Ernest C. Smith

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would it be wiser to take a pack animal? Any hints you may give will be appreciated.

I once taught school in Benicia, across the bay from your present home. Then it was that I saw Yosemite and first saw *Cheilanthes Californica* growing. Three years later my home was at Seattle. Two seasons saw three trips^{to} and two ascents of Mt. Rainier. Now your book brought back those happy days! How I long to dwell once more, even if only for a few weeks, in Paradise and pluck lilies and *Asphodels* and *Crucifera* and *Pedicularis* and *Valeriana* and *Pentstemon* and *Bryantia* and the rest, not forgetting *Eriogon salicoides*. One forest fire I went through, between Indian Henry's and Kernohan's. One little grove of subalpine fir and hemlock near the Camp of the Clouds I saw as a pillar of fire in the night. These

Kinsdale, Ill.

March 10th, 1902.

John Muir,
Martinez, Cal.

My dear Sir; -

After preaching a sermon yesterday on "The Message of the Mountains" inspired by reading your book "Our National Parks" I am moved to write and thank you for the delight and inspiration your words have been to me. It is given to few men to trace the chain of sacred causes in Nature with scientific accuracy and at the same time to attain to the beatific vision of the secret and past. It is rare for the seer to love and persistently seek the companionship of the visible forms which are the garments of his vision. I can not imagine Emerson exploring the high Sierras, or sleeping without shelter or blanket, or calmly enjoy-

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are things one cannot forget, and life is richer for them. The herbarium I gathered is gone, - sold to the Missouri Botanical Garden, but the memory of the mighty forests, the flowery meadows and the grand white peak is fresh and distinct and cannot fade.

There is beauty here, too, only seven or ten miles from Chicago. Pussy willows and poplar catkins are on my desk and only this morning I heard bluebirds, song sparrows, meadowlarks and robins within half a mile of home. These are good, but since your book caused memories of greater days I am restless until I find the mountains again.

Appreciatively yours

Ernest C. Smith.

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ing a night in the midst of a forest fire, or seeking in the earthquake to assist at the birth of a mountain talus. So much the greater joy is yours, - to love Nature, body and soul together and not merely the soul without the body. For my part I pity the man who has never slept out of doors and him who has never felt a savage joy in doing without the conveniences of cities. (There is more religion in your book than in all the theological treatises I have read in a twelvemonth, or for that matter, in many years.)

The reading had another effect upon me also. It woke all the old wild yearning for the mountains. They call me and draw me to them. I wake at night and plan how I may visit them this summer. Especially does my heart turn to the Yellowstone, which I have never seen. And because I am also a humble fellowcraftsman and love the mountains I make bold to ask your counsel with regard to the trip. I hope to spend four weeks in the Park. By necessity I must make the expenses light; by preference I shall camp out and seek the less frequented portions of the Park. But it is now twelve years since I climbed Rainier with Ingraham and ~~Parker~~ Piper, and ten since I was an Old Baldy in Colorado without a companion and my more recent camping has been of a milder type. What I need to know is whether storms are frequent in August; whether the temperature demands blankets; and chiefly about bases of food supply. Are these frequent enough to make it safe to proceed on foot from the "Hot Springs", or