



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1909-01-01

Letter from Alice Morse Earle to John Muir, [ca. 1909 ?].

Alice Morse Earle

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From
Alicia Morse Earle.

242, HENRY STREET,
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

My dear Mr. Muir -

I am deeply troubled and much gratified at receiving your book "Our National Parks" - which you have sent me. Grateful am I not only because the book stirs and stimulates my fancy, but because I am proud to know, through this gift of yours, that you have not forgotten me. And I do so hate to be forgotten - The sting of death to me rests solely in the dread that no one may remember me. Since I first knew your Mountains of California, I have read every word of yours which I could find - among these words some of the paper which now form this book. You have revealed to me through your writings, a new cut-door, an so entirely within my own English words and fields that it might

to in another plant. ⁽²⁾ Your wild gardens are
so strange so beautiful, they seem remote
from my life - They are not unreal, they
are living plants, but they seem so far away.
What can a forest or meadow be with
these strange wild flowers, vesia, sthor,
carpus, draperia, collomia, Zauschenonia,
admostoma, manzanita, ceanothus, cham
abatia - what can they be - Even the
lilies seem so strange to me. I have read
every word of the Clifton Wild Gardens of
the Yosemite twenty or thirty times. I cannot
comprehend it. The Alpine gardens, the
meadow gardens - I partly comprehend - but
these gardens where soil is crystal, mica,
brimstone and milk being ^{growing} ~~growing~~ ^{flourish}
it is not a real place is it? I am a true
lover of Larkspur, and though the tint
of Larkspur is not a pure turquoise blue
a turquoise always reminds me ^{of Larkspur} of a symbol-
ic Larkspur to me. I never in my in-
terlife bought a jewel, an ornament, ^a
trinket for myself - I could ^{- a year or two ago} to myself I

would buy myself a jewel with some of the money that has come to me from my books - But I have two daughters, and everything has gone to them - Both girls are to be married in a few weeks - and after that - I am going to buy me a turquoise. I want one clear of color fair of size, and I shall have it set in a ring because then I can see it myself - Set just in plain gold. My book California Gardens is selling well - and I will buy this turquoise with some of the money - And when I look at the turquoise I shall always think of those wonderful California gardens - It will be to me a symbol, an emblem of the color and glory of those gardens. I have an excellent picture of you - I believe it to be good though I never saw you. It is cut from a magazine, perhaps the Book buyer you saw on an concert and cloth peaked cap, and held up a bunch of pine cones against the wall. Do you know who Applesad Johnny was? He furnished apple

for half a century
trees, to all the prairie settlements of Indiana & Iowa
He deemed himself sent by God to furnish apple
seeds and young seedling trees to these settlements. He
once killed a rattlesnake, and throughout his
life he never ceased his self-reproach for his
want of success. I thought myself of him as I
read your pages. I have such a dread, an
invariable loathing of a snake that I will
not touch a picture of one; I will not even
glance at an picture of one in the Dictionary.
And one time when someone handed me a
pocket book of Snakeskin and I was told what
the skin was - I vomited so continually that
I had to go to bed and have a nurse - I
dread anyone who would touch a snake -
And even your meek and gentle words would not
allure me if snakes were there. The question
of their malignancy has no bearing upon
my attitude towards reptiles.

I have spoken little of your fine book of what
I believe it will do, namely: make distant theodolites
people to visit and love and pursue our first
reservations. I wish I could review it for some
publication - I will write and see if I cannot
I have written a book called *Old-time
Genealogy* - and I am sending a copy to you
Alice Meyer Books

Mtns of California
Review by Alice Morse Earle.

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Perhaps the most marked characteristic of the book is the intense love shown by the author for all forms & aspects of nature. The trees are his brothers; he knows their forms, their voices, the different sounds of their rustling leaves, he reads their soul; the birds & beasts are his friends - how he delineates their features! the flowers are his sweethearts; he can never cease telling their endearing traits.

The book is wholly self-forgetful, - in that respect a keen contrast to the self-conscious nature-studies of Thoreau. It is almost man-forgetful - though occasional bits of description appear - like this humorous acct of the furred Mono Inds.

The pictures of the old miners in their exaggerated dotage shows deep human sympathy. I do not like to end the arranging of this book any more than like to close its pages, over which I linger longing to quote the fine thoughts, the fair & symmetrical sentences I ever find, to give the noble expression of the sublimity & power of the winds told in that fairly passionate chapter 'A wind storm in the forest'; to tell the revealed meaning of the gestures of the trees; to recount the wonderful almost incredible story of the beautiful brave wild sheep, the analytical study & history of the giant Sequoias, the picture of the hanging gardens with Clarkspurs 8 ft high & that final reel in sweetness, the chapter on the Bee Pastures, those flowery wildernesses whose glad some praise in melodious phrase makes a picture sweeter than that of honeyed bybla, rosier than that of heathery Hymettus.

Alice Morse Earle

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