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Letter from John Muir to Jeanne C. Carr, 1865 Sep 13

John Muir

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possibly 66 Tronts-miles vear Meafard Sept- 13 th [1865] your precious letter with its burden of cheer and spad wishes has come to our hollow, and has done for one that work of. sympathy and Encouragement which I know you Kindly wished it - h - do, Is-came at -a Time when much needled, for I am subject to love someness at - himes, accept then my had fell gratitude - would That I could make a belle return. letter, for I waited and wewied for it a long time, of have been Keeping up an irregular course of study armse leaving Machison, but with - no great - Quecefs. I do not believe That study, especially of the natural Sciences, is incompatable with-ordinary attention to business, Rtill & seem to-be able to-do but one Ming al-a lime. Time undertaking a mouth or two ago to innent - new machinery for our mill, my mind seems to as heary start in the work that I am fit for but-little else. and then a lifetime is so little a lime that we die ere we get-ready to-line. I would like h-go h-college, hul-Thun I have h- day to myself fou will die ere you can do any thing class - I should like to mount næful machinery-, but - it- comes " you do not wish to spend your bythine among machines and you will die ere you can do arrything clase", I ahoused like h- aturely medicine that I might do my part in lessening, human misery; but again it-comes, "Fou will die ere you are really or able to do do , how intensely & dearie to be a Humboldto

lunt-again the chilling answer is reiterated hent-could we but have a million of years, then how delightful to spend in perfect - content ment - do many Thousand years in griet - aludy in cally do many amid the groleful din of machines, de many among Truman fram, 20 many Thousands in the evel- Thely Mature among the dingles and and defen of Doutland, and all the other legs important parts - over world: Then perhaps onight was, with - at-level a show of renson, Elings If this mortal coil and look hack whom our star with something of satisfaction; I should be ashamed if shame might be in the other world, if any of the powers, birtues, especimens et ahould ask one for common knowledge concerning our world which I could not beaton -, But away with this aged elective and we are back to our hands ful of harty years half gone, all of the Creators plan conserving us, In our higher State of existence we shall have time & intellect for Study - Eternty - with - pechops the whole untimited creation of God as our fuld Should ratisfy us, and make us patrent- trustful, while we pray with - the Polinist - Teach us to mucher our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" I was struck with your remerks about - our real home as being a Thing of elilling and peace - how little does the outer I wisy world in general know of that "real home" true uner life, trappy indeed they who have a friend to whom they can unmack the warkings of their real life, and of sympathy Torbearance. I sent for The book which you recom mend; I have just been reading a short extent of the

the of the mother of Lamartine. you say about so Muse are beautiful things and about the fathering in the Sunthine What you any respecting the littlenet of the number who are called to the fine & deep communion of the beautiful all'towing Nature", is particularly true of the hardworking, hardodrinking, etolid Canadans, In vain is the glowous cheel of sal in value spread out for them - as arrang acres chopped is Their mottor, do they your away amid the emote of magnificent forest trees black as demons I material as the Roil they more upon - I flew Think of the Doctors leature whom the condition of the-different races of men as controlled by physical agencies. Canada Though abounding in the elements of wealth - is too difficult to author to permit- the first-few generations to arrive at-any great intellect nal developement , die my long rambles last aurimen I did not find a single person who knew anything of botany and but - a few who knew the meaning of the ward; and wherein lay the charm that could conduct a man who might as well be gathering mannon, so many miles Through These fastnesses to suffer hunger and exhaustion was with them never to be deservered, so not these answer well to the person described by Mu-poet- in these lines Aprimose by the rivers brin. Ayellow primrose was to him, And nothing mon" -I thank It Carr for his kind remembrance of me, but still more for the good patience he had with so inoff a scholar, We remember in a peculiar way those who first give no The along of Redeeming Love from the good-book of revolution, and I ahall not forget the Doctor Who first haid before one the greathand he has it-least shown me where those mine officely, knowledge lie and how to reach them -

addup & Majord, P.a. I have frequently Mrs Carr, when lovely tweened haved wished that like dome hungry warm creek wito that delightful Kernel of your house - Your library, with ito-portraits- of eccentific men, and go bountiful a stare of Their Cheaves amid The blogsoin and verdue of your little kingdom of plants, tuxuriant & happy as though holding Their leaves to the open exy of The most flower love me you in the world -That " level - day" diel as you wishell reach our hollow, and another is with-us now, the eley has the harge of autumn and excepting aspen not a tree has motion _ lapon our enclosing wall of verdine new tinto appear the Gorgeous diges of autumn are to plainly seen, and the forest seems to have foundful - that again its - leap must-fade, Our Stream bot has a less cheerful count and as it-bears its-fram-bells pensively away from The Rhallow rapids in the rocks beens to feel That Rumme is past-You propose Mrs can an exchange of thoughts for which I thank you very smeety. This will be a means of pleasure and improbement - which I could not have holped ever he have been petsefal of but then here is difficulty, I feel that I am estagether incapable of properly conducting a correspondence with one to much obone me - he are indeed, so you say, students in the Rame life Rehool, but in very different - classes, I am but an alpha novice in Those leiences which you have atudied Housed so long, If however you are willing in This to adopt - The plan that our Saviour endeavoured to head-noto the chingy Soraelites, Die to give hoping for nothing again" all will be well, and as long as your letters resemble This one lefore me, which you have just written, in genns, order, when - clap province, or Kingdom, be apared that by way of reply you shall at least lessin on honest "Thank you!"
The flie that no never thanks him for his fretty flowers and would like to see him, also that I have a alway for him which

Original letter in mounted of letters to Mrs. Carr, marked #3]

[C.W.]

Trouts Mills, near Meaford, [Canada],

Sept. 13th [1865].

Your precious letter with its burden of cheer and goed wishes has come to our hollow, and has done for me that work of sympathy and encouragment which I know you kindly wished it to do. It came at a time when much needed, for I am subject to lonesomeness at times. Accept, then, my heartfelt gratitude — would that I could make a better return.

I am sorry over the loss of Prof. Sterling's letter, for I waited and wearied for it a long time. I have been keeping up an irregular course of study since leaving Madison, but with no great success. I do not believe that study, especially of the Matural Sciences, is incompatible with erdinary attention to business; still, I seem to be able to do but one thing at a time. Since undertaking, a month or two ago, to invent new machinery for our mill, my mind seems to so bury itself in the work that I am fit for but little else; of and then a lifetime is so little a time that we die ere we get ready to live.

I would like to go to college, but then I have to say to myself, "You will die ere you can do anything else." I should like to invent useful machinery, but it comes, "You do not wish to spend your lifetime smong machines and you will die ere you can do anything else." I should like to study medicine that I might do my part in lessening human misery, but again it comes, "You will die ere you are ready or able to do so." How intensely I desire to be a Humboldt, but again the chilling snswer is reiterated. 77 but Could we but live a million of years, then how delightful to spend in perfect contentment so many thousand years in quiet study in college, so many amid the grateful din of machines, so many among human pain, so many thousands in the sweet study of Nature among the dingles and dells of Scotland, and all the other less important parts of our world. Then perhaps might we, with at least a show of reason, shuffle off this mortal coil and look back upon our star with something of satisfaction all should be ashamed-if shame might be in the other world, if any of the powers, virtues, essences, etc. should ask me for common knowledge concerning our world which I could not bestew. ## But sway with this aged structure and we are back to our handful of hasty years half gone, all of course for the best did we but know all of the Creater's plan concerning us. In our higher state of existence we shall have time and intellect for study. ## Eternity, with perhaps the whole unlimited creation of God as our field, should satisfy us, and make us patient and trustful, while we pray with the Psalmist, "Teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

I was struck with your remarks about our real home as being a thing of stillness and peace. */* Now little does the outer and noisy world in general know of that "real home" and real inner life! Happy indeed they who have a friend to whom they can unmask the workings of their real life, sure of sympathy and forbearance!

I sent for the book which you recommend. I have just been reading a short sketch of the life of the Mother of Lamartine. These are beautiful things you say about the humble life of our Saviour and about the trees gathering in the sunshine.

What you say respecting the littleness of the number who are called to "the pure and deep communion of the beautiful, all-loving Nature," is particularly true of the hard-working, hard-drinking, stolid Canadians. In vain is the glorious chart of God in Nature spread out for them. "So many acres chopped is their motte, so they grub away smid the smoke of magnificent forest trees, black as demons and material as the soil they move upon. I eften think of the Doctor's lecture upon the condition of the different races of men as controlled by physical agencies. Canada, though abounding in the elements of wealth, is too difficult to subdue to permit the first few generations to arrive at any great intellectual development. In my long rambles last summer I did not find a single person who knew anything of botany and but a few who knew the meaning of the word; and wherein lay the charm that could conduct a man, who might as well be gathering mammon, so

[Letter of John Muir to Mrs. Carr, dated Sept. 13, 1865, continued]

many miles through these fastnesses to suffer hunger and exhaustion, was with them never to be discovered. Do not these answer well to the person described by the poet in these lines:

"A primrose by the river's brim, A yellow primrose was to him, And nothing more."

I thank Dr. Carr for his kind remembrance of me, but still more for the good patience he had with so inapt a scholar.)

We remember in a peculiar way those who first give us the story of Redeeming Love from the great book of revelation, and I shall not forget the Doctor, who first laid before me the great book of Nature, and though I have taken so little from his hand, he has at least shown me where those mines of priceless knowledge lie and how to reach them.

O how frequently, Mrs. Carr, when lonely and wearied, have I wished that like some hungry worm I could creep into that delightful kernel of your house -- your library -- with its portraits of scientific men, and so bountiful a store of their sheaves smid the blossom and verdure of your little kingdom of plants, luxuriant and happy as though holding their leaves to the open sky of the most flower-loving zone in the world.

That "sweet day" did, as you wished, reach our hollow, and another is with us now. The sky has the haze of Autumn and, excepting the aspen, not a tree has motion. Upon our enclosing wall of verdure new tints appear. The gorgeous dyes of Autumn are too plainly seen, and the forest seems to have found out that again its leaf must fade. Our stream, too, has a less cheerful sound and as it bears its feam-bells pensively away from the shallow rapids in the rocks seems to feel that summer is past.

You propose, Mrs. Carr, an exchange of thoughts for which I thank you very sincerely. If his will be a means of pleasure and improvement which I could not have hoped ever to have been possessed of, but then here is [the] difficulty: I feel that I am altogether incapable of properly conducting a correspondence with one so much above me. We are, indeed, as you say, students in the same life school, but in very different classes. I am but an alpha novice in those sciences which you have studied and loved so long. If, however, you are willing in this to adopt the plan that our Saviour endeavored to beat into the stingy Israelites, viz. to "give hoping for nothing again," all will be well, and as long as your letters resemble this one before me, which you have just written, in genus, order, cohort, class, province, or kingdom, be assured that by way of reply you shall at least receive an honest "Thank you."

Tell Allie that Mr. Muir thanks him for his pretty flowers and would like to see him, also that I have a story for him which I shall tell some other time. Please remember me to my friends, and now, hoping to receive a letter from you at least semi-occasionally, I remain,

Yours with gratitude,

JOHN MUIR

Address Meaford P.O., County Grey, Canada West.

[This letter is answered by Mrs. Carr's letter of Sept. 24,(1865)].