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Letter from John Muir to Henry Randall, 1901 Dec 20.

John Muir

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Martinez, California
Dec. 20, 1901-

My dear Harry Randall.

I'm delighted to hear from you & get a sketch of your life, though a meagre one, in the long eventful years since our Yosemite days. I have no lack of friends & have acquaintances in every rank almost everywhere nowadays, but I never forget old friends, & those of early pioneer days in the grand Sierra are my especial delight.

I have often wondered where you were & how the battle of life was going with you. I remember you took a great liking to Mr Hamilton the Carpenter who was working with Mr Ledges & he to you & I think you told me that you were going into partnership with him to raise cattle in some of the wild states. I'm glad to learn you

settled down & am enjoying a fair
 share of peaceful prosperity -
 Had you stayed with me I might
 perhaps have pushed you a
 little farther ahead. But Heaven
 guides us more than we know
 & our Gate none of us can foresee.
 Mine has been to wander in all
 wild places as a lover of nature
 botanist, geologist, naturalist
 And though I never intended to
 write or lecture or seek fame in
 any way, I now write a good
 deal & am well known: Strange
 is ^{it} not that a tramp & vagabond
 without worldly ambition should
 meet such a fate. I spent about
 ten years altogether in the Sierra Nevada,
 then two or three seasons in Nevada &
 Utah, then I wandered through the
 mountains of Oregon & Washington
 then began a system of exploration
 in Alaska especially with a view
 to fountains, glaciers, mountains etc.
 In 1881 I went to the Arctic regions about

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Bering Sea on the Steamer Corwin
in search for the lost Jeannette Ex-
pedition. During which I saw a
good deal of the frozen Arctic region
along the coast of Siberia & the
northern extremity of the N. American
Continent. Later I spent a little
time in Montana Idaho, Colorado
Arizona - also in the New England
States & southward through Delaware,
Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia,
Alabama & Florida. Studying the
forests mostly. Also made a short
run into Canada. In 1893 I went to
my old home in Scotland, visited
Ireland, England, Norway, Switzerland
& Italy. In the summer of 1899 I joined
the "Harriman Alaska Expedition"
The Narrative part was published this
last fall. & you should try to get ^{it} from
your Worcester Library. It is splendidly
illustrated. I wrote some of the chapters
of the first volume. Last summer
I took my two girls, 15 & 19 yrs. old
to Yosemite & eastward toward the
the summit at the headwaters of the

In column. When you visit Yosemite
you will not find many of the old
times inhabitants. Galen Clark, now
nearly ninety years old is living in the
valley & is in good health. I also saw
old Caulter, George Kenny's father in law.
George has grown up sons & daughters
he is fat & heavy - perhaps drinks a
little too much. but attends sharply
to business with the Washburns in
the saddle train business & I guess is
pretty well off. The Liddy Hotel is gone
pulled down by the Commissioners &
Liddy & his wife are keeping a hotel
or eating house at Raymond for
the Washburn Stage Co. I saw them
there not long ago. Black's Hotel has
also vanished. & Mr Black died long
ago. Mrs Black is still living. She visited
me here several times a few years
ago. There is only one hotel now in the
valley. on the river bank at the old
Hutchings place. The Old Hutchings Hotel
is now a furniture gallery & lodging house
The big Cedar tree is still growing through
the roof. Hutchings Winter Cabin where
we boarded & ate those memorable
mushpuns is still standing but was full

of hay last time I saw it. & of the
Cabin we built not a vestige remains,
I tried to show my girls where it stood
but could not exactly. The apple trees
are still alive but they get no care
neither do those of the Larnon
orchards, they are now hay fields.
Good old Larnon died about 20 years
ago. Mr Hutchings is still lively & over
80 & with his fourth wife is keeping
the Sperry Hotel at the Calaveras
Big Trees. His first wife the one
we knew is I believe still living
though I have not seen her for
many years. She obtained a divorce
from Hutchings ^{or he from her} long ago. The second
wife was a school teacher & artist
a fine woman everybody says.
She died in Yosemite. The third I
never saw that I know of ^{she also died.} The present
wife was a teacher, a nice woman
as far as I learn. I stopped at the
hotel a day or two summer before
last. Mr Hutchings has never been
quite successful, & never has quite
failed. Had he more business sagacity
he might have been well off.

Floria's fate was very sad. You know she was a queer girl. When she grew up her parents sent her to school at San Francisco. but she was so strangely unmanageable the teachers could do nothing for her & expelled her. Then in Yosemite she became a ladies guide. dressed in mens clothes, rode like a cowboy or Tomboy, & was a great favorite with the visitors. When she was about 17 yrs old, she was converted & was very devout. One day as she was guiding a party of ladies up the Glacier Point trail she dismounted in front of the Sentinel Rock & climbed up a few feet to get some ferns for one of the ladies. There is a small stream there & in climbing she slipped & got her feet wet in the icy current. at a critical time, took sick & died. In so simple a way notwithstanding her vigorous constitution & constant exercise poor Floy lost her life. She was sincerely mourned. She lies in the little graveyard a few hundred yards east of the old mill. I visited her grave this last summer. Al. May also lies there. died long ago. Dick Horton was shot in a quarrel about the

Cascade Meadows at the foot of the valley
Indian Tom was shot & killed by that
little Jimmy who couldnt speak plainly
I've forgotten his surname. Willie, the
baby of Hutchings family when we
went to the valley never was perfectly
well. He is undersized & a cripple
He learned to do fine carpenter work
& carving, inlaying etc, He was keeping
a store in Yosemite this summer
that belonged to a dealer in fancy
woodwork. I went into the store
& asked him if he knew me.
He answered No. I said I have
known you for over 30 years
"Then said he you must have
known me all my life for"
I'm not much over 30 yrs of age
I made him guess a while
then had to tell my name. His
father they say has never done
much for him. Cosie I think
I told you about in my first
letter. She is happy from all reports
& always was a favorite & a capital

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Billy Bowen is living at Garrote
not doing much of anything
That was a pretty hard tramp into
the valley in the fall laden like pack
animals. & your pack was heaviest.
And that walk, or scramble rather,
down the river from the valley
to the plains was pretty rough most
of the long way. I must write an
account of it some time. I guess
we were the only ones who ever
made the trip. Well I remember
that good Sabbath days journey
up the Glacier Point side canon, along
the rim of the valley to the head of the
Bairdal Veil thence down into the
valley by the south side of the Cathedral
Rocks & up to our cabin in the
starlight - arriving at 3 o'clock
in the morning. That night for the
first & last time in my life I saw the
shadows from the trees & stones
that Venus cast. They were perfectly
distinct. Perhaps you remember
my calling attention to the wonderful

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brightness of that planet. She seemed
half as big as the moon. A glorious
sight worth any amount of rough
night rambling to see. Will Harry
I guess you will think that this
letter ramble is about long enough.
It is the longest I have written
in more than ten years to anybody.

I spend my summers in study
& exploration in the wildernesses,
my winters in writing books or
magazine articles. I'll send you
a copy of my last book with this.
My first was published by the
Century Co. ^{of New York} about six years ago. It
is called "The Mountains of California".
Write again soon & tell me
about yourself. I believe me
Ever your friend
John Muir