



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1910-03-08

**Letter from S. M. Brown to John Muir, 1910 Mar 8.**

S. M. Brown

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Toronto, Ontario

Mar 8<sup>th</sup> '10

Dear Mr. Muir

Strooken is one of my dearest dog friends, now, and forever, and I have quite a number of them, that, like him, I have never seen. The well hairy, sleek "beastie". The little herd; and yet he was not heroic until the moment, when, while still in deadly fear, he decided to face the peril, and deliberately laid his little feet over the edge of the ice diver. That moment should make him immortal. But the manner of manifesting his joy in being saved, exceeds any thing I have ever read of being shown by any creature below the human.

Perhaps Browning was right when he said "God made all the creatures, and gave them our love and our fears to give sign we and they are His children, one family here"

But the little book that your kind thought prompted you to send me, has given me much more than the story of little Strooken. It has given me not a glimpse merely, but a wide open gaze into the heart of John Muir, and I trust that I have found another friend, and not alone for the brief end of time that may remain to us here, but, for all the eternal years of God that lie beyond. Yet I reverently thank God for giving me the privilege of beginning the friendship while here, for it is so much the more gained, besides being an added joy to life

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I have kept step by step with you and little Dickreen from the moment you started out in the early morning called by the luring yet imperative voice of the storm. Had I been there I think I would have insisted upon the cup of coffee and a breakfast as a wise preparation for a day's tramp over a glacier in the company of so fine a storm - I watched with you the flying clouds and the driven rain, and listened to that most thrilling of all woodland music, the whispering of the leaves, and the long, deep, sighing, half-moaning voice of the wind among the topmost branches of the trees. And well I know that sound, it catches my heart as few things can. Then I saw the trees - my special friends - being torn and crushed and ground in the cold, pitiless grasp of the beautiful ice.

Then as you pushed out for the western shore of the great "prairie of ice", I note your remarkable that "Nature can make us do any thing she likes". True, and yet what truths she often plays upon her devotees. Like little Dickreen, I easily crossed the crevasses met with during the early part of the day. But when the "return journey began, and the "flowers of the mountain clouds" came down upon the swift wings of the wind, wrapping all in a gray gloom, my heart began to be faint with fear for the two wanderers, swimming alone with the tempest and the night. For, after all, you see I was only cooking me, and that is the most nerve-trying thing any one can do in a time of danger. But no. When worn and spent by the fatigue of the day, the awful storm gawped at your feet, like the gate of death, and with no alternative! Ah, dear friend, I am glad that Time has spread her



softening have over that 3<sup>rd</sup> soul-testing experience,  
and that now you know of a surety that "Courage Will  
and Fortitude" were "replaced by power" that has its  
source only in <sup>the</sup> Almighty hand of God. "whose wisdom  
saer wabeth" and "whose aift is never dim"  
repet  
In closing the little book, my great  
- was that you were afterwards parted from little  
Stoeken. He should have spent the remainder of his  
too fine dog-life, with you - By the way - the missionary  
M<sup>r</sup>. Gornf. must surely be the author of "My dogs  
of the Northland", a book that I read with much interest  
for I have ever been a lover of dogs, as well as of all  
"the hundred of the wild"

You spoke of "wandering Peter" that having visited  
you. He visited me also, later. Yes, he has evidently  
wandered, or drifted, thro' life, and will do so in the end  
of years. He spoke of three or four projects that he had in  
mind, by means of any of which he could make a fortune,  
but added that he "must not do any of them". although  
he unconsciously told me the story of his life. It is a  
pity, for Nature endowed him with the capability of  
being a man

The biographical sketch  
enclosed in your letter, tells me that you are  
only two years my senior, as I have just passed  
the limit of the years allotted to human life - a fact  
that I find it hard to realize. But we are  
learning that age is not a matter of years, but  
of the mind. I note that the story of Stoeken  
is dedicated to Helen Muir - William, Frank  
wrote me giving a minute account of the domps and  
festivities at the marriage of his daughter Lucretia



and incidentally <sup>4</sup> mentioned that your daughter  
Helen had been married about the same time.  
But her mother's name might also be Helen.  
May I ask to know something of your family. I  
know nothing. But I noted - in the article by H.  
J. Hill, in Feb - Scribner's - that you were living alone  
at the time the party visited you, but that might only  
mean that your family were absent for a time - I  
venture to hope that you will know that these  
enquiries are not prompted by curiosity  
I had read some time ago of the danger that threatened,  
of Hetch-Hetchy being stolen from the people. But  
the pamphlet you sent me gives a much clearer and  
more concise view of the whole matter, than anything  
I had seen before. No worthier monument of  
your life's work could be desired or imagined,  
than to avert such a wrong being done to posterity.  
And I most sincerely hope, and believe that you will  
succeed in preventing such a crime. for it would  
be that - - It was most generous of you to say  
"write again", and I will endeavour not to abuse  
your generosity by trespassing upon your time.  
I have not seen your other two books, but must  
get them. I presume they are published only in your  
land of "the Emerald". I wish you could know with what  
pleasure, and pride too, I received the little book, and  
the inscription adds to its value a hundred fold.  
You will be familiar with the Scottish use of the word  
"lifted" - for a good Scot never forgets - that is my  
state of mind since receiving your letter, and the  
other tokens of your regard. For all of which please  
accept the thanks of your sincere friend  
S. M. Brown

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