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Reminiscence of John Muir by Calkins, J.E.

J. E. Calkins

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My acquaintance with John Muir was an episode that I have been constrained to think revealed a phase of his psychological organization that was little known, even by his nearest friends, but that was, possibly, a major characteristic of his ~~organization~~ makeup. It really began with the pleadings of my mother that ^{Mr. Muir's} ~~his~~ writings, then occasionally appearing in the better magazines, be sought out and read by me. Every letter I had from her reiterated these persuasions, but I was busy, and none of Mr. Muir's work happened to fall across my path, till one day I caught his name, in connection with a short story, as I was glancing over a copy of the Century Magazine. Thinking to merely ^{scan} ~~glance over~~ this tale of ~~glacial~~ adventure I was presently so gripped by it that I could not lay it down till I had finished it—"A Story of A Man, A Dog, and A Glacier." With that reading, I found, I had also finished with all indifferent neglect of John Muir and his writings. From that day on I read, with an eager and growing appetite, everything of his work that I could lay hand on. I had an actual ^{for} hunger anything and all that he had written, or that he might write; and presently, along with that zest, another developed; I wanted to meet and know the man who could frame mere dead dry words into such vital glowing phrases, and before

My acquaintance with John Muir was not ordinary or casual. Though most of his admirers never knew it he was not only the master of narative^{to} and descriptive English, he was also strongly psychic, and, though I had no idea, at the time of our meeting, that he was remarkably receptive of telepathic influences, I am now fully convinced that our quite unusual friendship was based on that susceptibility.

9 -This friendship really

long this desire to know the man himself had become a major ~~impulse~~ impulse.

I knew it was crying for the moon, ~~but~~ for there was no smallest probability that this longing could ever be gratified, but still the longing persisted.

Then, quite suddenly, I was in California, with my craving for acquaintance ungratified, but redoubled. In a presumptuous moment I wrote to ~~Mr. Muir~~ Mr. Muir, begging for the pleasure of calling upon him. I put all the persuasion I could muster into that letter. I wrote as one Nature-lover to another, ~~and~~ but, as I feared and expected, my appeal ~~letter~~ was not answered. It lacked even the dignity of being refused; it was simply ignored. Disappointed and chagrined, I turned back home and tried to forget the discomforting incident. Months passed, then, like the proverbial bolt from a blue sky, I had a letter from John Muir, at his home. It was comforting with its explanation and elating with its cordial warmth. He had been half-way around the world when my letter reached his home; his reply had been written among the first that disposed of a stack of accumulated ^d correspondence; written as by one Nature-lover to another. Real Nature-lovers, he went on to say, were not so numerous, and so should know each other, and stand together. He continued, at the length of pages, to tell where he had been and what he had seen, and then to lament that he had not been at home to receive and

entertain us, and, finally, to hope that we would come to California again, to make his ~~house~~ ^{home} our home as long as we could stay, with other cordial and captivating things. As one Nature-lover to another that letter was all that could ~~have~~ have been desired; as one stranger to another ~~that~~ it was exquisitely heart-warming. I had never had a letter like it before, and I have never had one like it since.

- Of course there were more letters, bridging over many months; then, on an unforgettable day in October, 1907, we were being greeted by John Muir himself; bare-headed, out in front of the big white house; looking as we had been expecting he would look; smiling the welcome we had hoped he would give us. By every friendly token of countenance, and word, and manner our welcome was as genuine, and our host as unaffectedly sincere and cordial, as we had been hoping, but it was hard for me to believe that it was actually happening.

All clear details of that afternoon and evening have been blurred by the attrition of 35 years, but I know ~~it~~ ^{they} passed in the pleasant process of getting acquainted. Mrs. Muir had gone; only Mr. Muir and Helen were there, attempting to fill those spacious high-ceilinged rooms with the atmosphere of home. Bereft of that lovely presence, it was not difficult to understand that they were lonesome enough to be glad of any friendly visitor; but from the first moment

with those plain, ~~simple~~ forthright persons it seemed to me that they were giving us something far beyond mere courtesy, as John Muir was somehow beyond all that I had been imagining.

The dominant note of that interior, as I caught it in that first look about, was its dignified simplicity; or, perhaps, its simple dignity. There was no telephone, no electric light, no domestic gadget of all the myriad of inventions with which even that day was beginning to complicate the American standard of living. Candles, and the open fire, gave light by night, and it was by the grace of the horse and buggy that one went to town. That same simplicity pervaded all the house. Sizable oil paintings of noble Sierra scenery surmounted some of the stately white marble mantels, or adorned wide wall spaces, all of them, I surmised, from the brush and palette of William Keith, but there was nothing ostentatious about them or their hangings, The kitchen was an ample and adequate workshop, with sufficient equipment. It did not overwhelm one by the number and variety of the mechanized appliances of the more abundant life, but it was a pleasant place in which to provide a good, plain old-time meal. I cannot definitely picture the dining room, but I am sure there was no mounted deer's head, and no stuffed fish to gaze goggle-eyed from its varnished plank, and I still remember that I felt refreshed by their absence, but there was plenty of plain satisfying food, and no ado about it, and very little waste. And I have the happiest

of memories of the cheerful table talk that made each meal there an event. I don't remember what we talked about, except that Mr. Muir told us quite a lot about his tour around the world, and that, at other times, he told us quite a lot about the mountains, and that we were more than content to let him do the talking. The only scrap of all this chat that is still distinct was his admiring word about our globe—"my, but this world is a big thing!" Oh! I can recall in a general way things he told us, such as his search ~~from~~ in Australia for a eucalyptus larger or taller than our California big trees—a search that was agreeably fruitless—or his trailing of the ghinko tree to its native heath, or the gratifying incident of being recognized and called by name by somebody on the other side of the world who had never seen him. He smiled his pleasure as he related such an incident as that, and there could be no doubt that it went far to warm his heart when he was a stranger in a strange land. These things, and others, all remote from politics or business, were told or talked over, but that was all so long ago that the details are not remembered; but I do remember that there was never a time when conversation lagged or halted for want of a topic, or the will to carry on. Always and unfliningly Mr. Muir had so much to say, and we were so pleased to sit by and let him say it, that there was never lack of entertainment. As he talked at table,

where he was always at his best, he seemed to need the feel of bread in his hand in order to be provisioned for a long discourse. Anything in the way of bread would do, if only it was friable enough to crumble easily. There was only white bread then; all the other brands of bread that we have now had not been invented; but if he had been permitted to pick and choose among all the varieties we have today I am sure he would not have been particular. One day I asked what kind of bread he preferred, cut and dried, to carry in his bread bag when he went ranging through his beloved mountains. "just bread," he said; "I don't see that one kind of bread is better than another." That indifference to small things that really did not matter was one of his great characteristics.

^H How he came to fall into that bread-breaking habit I often wondered but never thought to ask him, but, however it happened, it seemed to give him some sort of mental stimulus when he was in the way of talking at length, after a meal was over, and the others were all set to listen, but I could ~~but I could~~ never see that there was either desire or design in it. It was an innocent habit, wasteful perhaps, but really inexpensive, and he seemed ^{to} altogether unaware of it.

I cannot remember a moment when our common talk ever did go

lanely for the want of a topic. Mr. Muir ~~has~~ had so much to tell us, and we were so pleased to be there, and hear him say it, that we were both agreeably occupied. But, I must not neglect to say that we never had the feeling that he was monopolizing the conversation. even though he might be doing all the talking. We never had the impression that he was talking down to us.

our conversation

On occasion ran in a more or less serious groove, but often it was embroidered with pleasant levity and amusing anecdote. We were a really cheerful party, even after ^{only} a few hours of contact had brought us to the status of old friends, a relation as delightful as it was surprising. There were never any jokes at our expense, but Helen was a fair mark for her father's jocundities, which she usually took with a pleased little laugh. As on the morning when her cereal was a little on the thin side. He gave it no caustic criticism, but he told us what it was. ~~He~~ called it "a poor thin beverage," and after another spoonful added, "and it is so invincibly fresh!" All in the way of play. A minute or two of this good natured sarcasm, with every word fitted into place as perfectly as though it had been pondered for publication.

When our first evening was over, and our host surmised that we were tired,

and so should rest for the good long day we should have on the morrow, we were shown, candle in hand, to a roomy, airy upper chamber, without a fireplace, or a family portrait, or any other effort at interior decoration, but with simple comfortable furnishings, the chief of these being a huge, old, high-post bedstead, capped off with a Gargantuan feather bed that looked to be unscalable without a ladder. By all visible evidence it was one of the old corded beds that were in vogue a hundred years back; no springs; but we did not miss them. Mr. Muir, whose ever-preferred bed chamber was the starlit open air, went to his repose on a cot, on the flat roof of a west side porch, or bay window, and Helen slept in a small tent that was guyed fast on some similar flat area above the front door. The sleeping arrangements of the family were elementally simple, like ^{all} the rest of its equipment for living. But this elimination of the needless was not carried to absurd extremes; when light or fire was wanted matches were used, not flint and steel. John Muir had a fine sense of the practical.

It was the very next morning — there had been only that first evening and then this first morning in which our measure could be taken — that I was conducted upstairs, to a large and relatively empty room, Mr. Muir's workshop. Explicit details are not remembered; only the impression that it

was a grand, spacious, quiet place, ideal for the business of framing
 matchless phrases for the gratifying of mountain appetite in poor town-
 bound folk. It was roomy enough to house the gatherings and outgivings of a
 long and busy lifetime. Here, I opined, had been written those ~~poor~~
 papers that had so captivated me, and I looked about me with something of
 awe and a full measure of reverence. I remember a few chairs, and a good
 sized flat top desk that stood against the west wall, between two windows.
 I think there must have been more pieces than these, but the thing that
 followed close upon my entrance was so impressive that all details but
 these were blotted out. A devoted mountain student, in long years of
 exploring peaks and canons, must inevitably come upon many interesting and
 curious things, worth retrieving for places in cabinets or museums, and I had
 supposed that John Muir would be the very properest of all persons to make
 great spoil of such finds, but here I was to learn that he was a student,
 not a collector. A few most so wonderful concretions lay along the wall on the
 floor, along with other odd-shaped rocks, but I saw nothing remarkable in
 any of them, and Mr. Muir did ~~not~~ notice them or mention them. I may have
 supposed that morning that he had lugged those specimens, with great labor,
 long miles from their sierra fastnesses, but now I think that these oddities
 were purely local; merely interesting bits picked up in the neighborhood, or

on his own orchard acres. If there were any glassed cases, housing labelled fragments, or even open shelves, with their dusty omnium gatherum, I was not aware of them.

After that marvellous morning I often wondered by what unwitting charm I had won so quickly to the inner confidence of that man whose name is borne by a hundred schoolhouses scattered all over this land. It was only the afternoon before that I had come; there had not been time for any appraisal, yet here he was throwing open to me all the contents of that big over-loaded desk, to rummage through at my will. I had not asked that privilege; he had freely offered it, without condition.

That desk had a solid bank of drawers on each side; they reached all the way down to the floor, and, as I remember them, they were all packed full of the notebooks in which his years of Sierra adventure, and observation and study had been recorded. All the harvest of his active life was concentrated in them. I did not comprehend it at first, for I had not imagined that I would ever be so privileged. I opened one of those books picked at random, with something of the reverent touch of the savant who has discovered a priceless ancient manuscript; then another, and then others. On every page I caught the glitter of those gems of speech that had already made

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him famous. And pencil sketches, where he wanted to preserve a more accurate record than he could embalm in words. Book after book; every one of them a reliquary, full of unset jewels. Every one of them at my hand without limit or condition. It was almost intoxicating. When I had written to Mr. Muir, begging to be permitted to call on him, I had certainly not envisioned such an adventure as this. Ali Baba in the cache of the Forty Thieves had never ~~uncovered such a treasure as this~~ uncovered such a treasure as this, that been freely opened to me without any form of "open sesame."

I would have supposed that so pains-taking and precise a student as I had imagined Mr. Muir to be would have some such stock of field notes safely stowed in some fireproof storage, but I had not thought that even John Muir would have amassed so vast a treasure, and all exposed to the fire hazard of a frame ranch house lit with candles. I wanted to read them all, but that was beyond all possibility, for there seemed to be hundreds of them. I turned away from them reluctantly, but stirred by that unexpected show of confidence in me. It was natural that I should be made bold to go a step further, so I exclaimed "why— Mr. Muir! Here is the stuff for the making of a whole five-foot shelf of books of the kind you write; the kind that a whole nation of readers are hoping you will write. Why, Mr. Muir—"

But Mr. Muir appeared not to be reproved, or even impressed. He tossed off my high tension appeal with a gesture of disclaimer and denial. "Yes, of course," he admitted, "one might, by searching, find out the material for a book or two, of a kind, but it would be a big job; and I am not sure that there are as many persons waiting for ~~them~~ ^{those books} as you seem to think. You seem to have an extravagant idea of the demand for my books."

From that starting point we went on with an argument such as I could not have believed possible a week before. I protested against his belittling of the interest in his writings; insisted that he was the only person who had such a mass of first hand material for such works; then that he was the only person living who had the art of telling about all this wildwood loveliness in a way that made mere cold type come alive and fairly glow in the telling, and, finally, that there were multitudes of poor town-bound folk who could never have any glimpse of all this wilderness beauty if he did not realize his duty to get about it and write books, and then more books. Also I had the temerity to tell him to his face that all this writing actually was a duty, and that I hoped, with thousands of others, that he would feel that obligation.

Then he told me some things; first, that I was all wrong in thinking that a man could get the blessed flavor of the mountains by reading any book—

the mountains would not come to him in any such weak left-handed way; he would have to go to the mountains; then he cited the authority of the psalmist — "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from ^{whence} ~~which~~ my strength cometh;" and after more of such negations he hit the nail on the head; "beside," he said, it is such a tremendous task for me to write ^{enough to make} ~~as much as~~ a book that I shrink from it. I don't want to undertake it again."

"Why!" I cried out loud, astonished; "you write so easily—"

"O ho!" he flung back at me, "much you ~~g~~ know about that! Let me tell you: writing is the very hardest kind of work I can lay my hand to. It is a very slavery. I should dread to think of writing another book."

I was quite taken aback. In my surprise at that statement I ceased to be in any degree impressive. I could manage only to murmur something about his writings being so easy to read, and that was no argument with him.

"Yes—easy to read! I hope they are; they cost enough hard labor. But you must have heard that anything that is easy to read has been hard to write. No. To write another book would be a ~~g~~ tremendous job."

We talked a little while about this writing business, and as we talked an idea took form with me. After all the liberties I had taken with him that morning one more impertinence might not matter, so I ventured: "I think I

understand. It is the mere mechanics of composition that seem to be such a heavy burden. If you could have that eased up the rest would not be so hard. You might even enjoy it."

He shook his head; "I don't think I could ever have any help in composing. It wouldn't be a help, but a hindrance."

I made all haste to assure him that there should never be any such sacrilege as interference with his lone-hand composing. To keep the John Muir flavor, pure and unadulterated, with no admixture of any bungling efforts at assistance, must always be the first objective. As he had no rivals or competitors in his chosen field, so he could have no aid of that ~~any~~ kind. It was the merely mechanical part that it had seemed possible to lighten. He sat looking at me, with that steady, long gray gaze of his, but without a question, so I had to go on without his bidding, for now that I had started I had to finish. "It is very simple, I said. You sit there, or walk up and down if you prefer, and tell it, whatever it is, as you would tell A. C. Vroman, or any other good friend. Your assistant, man or woman, sits somewhere in range of your voice and catches what you say, and later puts it through the typewriter, with triple spacing and wide margins, so that you have room for the changes you ~~shall~~ ^{may} want to make, and two good carbon copies. Now you have a first draft of what you want to say, and

my word for it, you will find that it is not a hard job to make the changes and corrections that you will think are needed. With that first unfinished form before you you will find that suggestions of betterment will come thronging, and the really laborious part of the job will be out of the way."

He sat still, looking at me with that long, steady, studious gaze, but without a word. Where he had worn a sort of cynical suggestion of a smile he was now sober enough. Studying. Looking away abstractedly for a moment, then coming back to gaze at me again. At last his intent soberness broke up in a gentle little smile. "I thought you might be meaning to lay out some such plan as Mr. Harriman had," he said. "Mr. Harriman insisted that anything and everything I said was classic literature, and should be preserved, so he set his stenographer on me, to dog me around and catch every word, no matter how common, the muggins! As if anything could be made out of such stuff as that! It didn't work. He had to give it up." At that it might not be easy to say whether Harriman, the railroad king, regarded John Muir the more, or John Muir regarded Harriman the more, but certainly Mr. Muir valued the friendship and regard of Mr. Harriman very highly. During the days we were together, as I seem to remember, he mentioned Mr. Harriman more frequently than any other man.

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I do not remember what further discussion we had, that rare October morning, of my device for softening the hard lot of over-burdened authors, but I am sure we were at no loss for words. I do remember, however, that Mr. Muir acted as though he had been relieved of some burden or problem that had been giving him considerable thought; possibly even some anxiety. He was more outspokenly cheerful; more disposed to smile, which was a very eloquent circumstance, for he was not prodigal of his smiles. Probably he told us a thrifty Scotch story or two; certainly he was more generally jocund. Nothing was said ^{just then,} about my scheme for the relief of bowed-down bookwrights, except one hopeful remark that a book might be worked up on such-and-such a subject, but his manner in general, coupled with that cheerful suggestion, sufficiently indicated that he was thinking about the matter, and thinking approvingly, and eventually we came around to the consideration of details. Where might he find that assistant who would be capable and satisfactory? Finally, should I be able to take that place? Then, from that question stemmed a group of others. He and his various materials were firmly established in their happy valley, but I was on my way to Los Angeles, so what about that? But why necessarily Los Angeles? Los Angeles was not the whole of California, and, beside, he was aware of a

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very distinct call to me from a different direction. The Muir house was under-peopled, with only two poor lonesome bodies in it; Helen was over-young to be so care-laden by it, and, wherever I might go, my housing would cost me money, so he said "come and content you here rent-free. Mrs. Calkins shall run the house and make it a home again, while you and I can work on some of those grand new books you tell me the people are waiting for so eagerly; and now and then, when we are work-weary, and need a breath of good mountain air to revive us, we can slip away and go up a canon. The Chinese boy here will take care of all the hard and menial work, so I can assure you the house-mother here shall not be burdened. We need a home-maker, not a maid of all work."

We have never felt the shadow of a doubt that the idea would have worked ideally for us all if we had been permitted to put it into operation, and we would have put it into operation if the cards had not been stacked against us. The Muir home life that we saw was almost elementally simple, and we saw enough of it to be sure that we had seen it all. The meals were wholly unostentatious, except that John Muir sat above the salt, and the ordinary table talk was, of itself, an event. There is no clear recollection of what we had to eat, so it must have been usual, and sufficient, and satisfying, except on one occasion; an evening meal that undoubtedly Mr. Muir

would have called supper. I am quite sure it was our second evening there. There were lamb chops and a half pint of California claret. I am sure that I accurately remember that Mr. Muir touched neither of those extraordinaries. They were provided in deference to the possible preferences of his guests. He thought it probable that we usually ate meat, and possible that we drank wine at dinner, but he was altogether too delicately minded to inquire about our likings, so he simply served those items and let us take our course. If there is any finer strain of hospitality I have missed it.

While I cannot recall the menu in detail I do remember that every ~~meal~~ meal was a pleasant occasion, and that we were never in haste to leave the table. From appearances mere eating of food was a minor function in Mr. Muir's *and* regimen, As he talked he mechanically crumbled up more bread than he ever ate, but that act of breaking bread seemed to somehow nourish and stimulate his peerless gift of language to some of its finest flowering. In that day we had only white bread; none of the many brands of brown bread we have today had been thought of, but if he had had all of them to choose from it is doubtful if he would have cared which he had so long as it was friable enough to crumble easily. I asked him once ~~what kind of bread he preferred to cut up and dry and carry in his bread bag when he went ranging among his blessed mountains.~~ "Just bread," he

~~said; "I don't see any reason to prefer one kind of bread over any other."~~

~~It did not occur to me to ask him how he came to fall into such an odd~~

~~habit; but it is quite likely he could not have told me if I had asked.~~

The corroding years have eaten away most of my recollections of those
 jeweled phrases with which he ~~unabashedly~~ ^{unstintedly} sprayed us, but it is not possible to
 forget the delight we had in letting him run on at random and at will. His
 good friend Harriman was not so far wrong when he deemed every casual^l word
 a literary gem that should be preserved, and not allowed to perish in dumb
 forgetfulness, But while precise recollection of his prodigal outpourings
 have been forgotten time has not dulled the thrill and charm of one aureate
 evening when we sat by, mute listeners, while John Muir talked at his best.

I think I am right in remembering that there was a little den of a room
 in the northeast corner downstairs, with a few easy chairs and a roomy
 fireplace with a good draught. The Chinese boy had laid a fire of thick
 eucalyptus logs, and in the dusk we three drifted to this pleasant nook and
 settled down in restful content, talking of this and that, none of it of
 great importance, with only the light from the fire to brighten this, our last
 evening in this House of Happy Memories. All our conferences on the making of
 books and a home lay behind us. In those swift-winged days we had all grown to
 be old acquaintances,

friends from auld lang syne who knew each other so well that we might say what we had in mind without fear of giving offense, so I went on to tell the master book-maker what I thought he ought to do about a book. He then had to his credit real books, solid and meaty and of matchless quality, but his publishers had not yet turned out a little book, rich with the unrivalled Muir flavor; such a book as a Muir adorer would like to give a friend, and that, I ventured to say, was a definitely sad lack, and all the worse because there was a surpassing story of his in the Century Magazine, a few years back; a story of just the right length, and of eminently the right kind and quality; a story that had fascinated everyone who read it—A Story of A Man, A Dog, and A Glacier, and truly named. It was brimfull and fairly dripping with John Muir at his best, and all the better because it could not be told without frequent tense mentions of its author. It was thrilling without tragedy, and it had the happy ending we ~~must~~ all require, and it was exactly right, in every way, to make an ideal little gift book, selling for, say, 75 cents; neither expensive nor cheap. Till now, I argued, it has been buried in the files of the magazine, without promise or hope of resurrection, whereas it ought to be ³ raised to a new life in book form, to be read, and re-read, and given away, and loaned, and occasionally stolen, till worn out, giving fresh interest and new pleasure to

uncounted tired listless persons to the end.

I had looked for some sort of argument from him, but the only show of opposition he made was only weakly negative. simply that the story would need a good deal of work in polishing and perfecting it if it were to make such a new appearance. I tried to say that all such work would be only painting the lily; that the story had been flawless as it appeared in The Century, and could not be improved, but he still insisted that it would be quite a job to fit it for re-publication, and a little silence fell between us. When I had raved about his duty to write more books I had thought that I saw that he had been pleased at my praise of his craftsmanship, and now, again, it seemed that he had been pleased to listened to my laud of this short story, as why should he not be pleased? Then he began to tell us that that rare tale of icy adventure, in his own living words. We kept silence while he went on, taking his time, weaving that spell of enchantment word by word, with never a moment's halt or hesitation, to the end. It was 1.30 in the morning
that last
when we crossed ~~the~~ abyss, and came off that icy waste, and back to earth again, at his word that he had no idea it was so late, and we must be getting some rest if we were bound to go on to Los Angeles in the morning. Neither had we any thought of the hour; nor should we have had if he had gone on till daylight.

That transcendent night fell just after the middle of October, 1907. It has always been a glistening memory, one of our loveliest, but it seemed that all my urging that he make a little book of that story had been wasted. I began to wish that I had not been so ready to advise the master book-maker about his trade. Then, one april day in 1909, a year and a half after that fadeless evening, I received by mail a little book, that very same story of a man, a dog and a Glacier for which I had entreated on that night when he had bemoaned the vast amount of work he must put on it to make it fit to be seen of men. On the fly leaf he had written me down as his friend, but aside from that valued personal touch I could not see where he had ~~amended~~ altered it by the moving of a comma, except that now its title was "Stickeen," as was most befitting. So, after all his lament about the work involved, he had gone ahead with my suggestion exactly as it was made.

But the best-laid plans of men will go on the rocks. Just at that time Mr. Muir was leading a righteous crusade for the preservation of Sierra natural beauty and sublimity. The city of San Francisco was proposing to convert^t the ~~the~~ majesty and loveliness of the Hetch Hetchy valley into utilitarian ends by making that second Yosemite the head of its water supply, and Mr. Muir was

battling that project with all the powers he could command. We had invaded his home when he was in the very thick of this fight, and out of regard for us he had laid aside his lance and armor, to humor us, and make our stay pleasant while we were his guests, but when we departed that armistice ended, and the fight was on again. For months this noble cause engaged all of Mr. Muir's powers and took all his time, quite excluding all such literary enterprise as we had had in mind.

And then, and afterward, other defeating things intruded. I cannot place them in their chronological order now, but there were several such implacable interferences that seemed to be bound to baffle us. One was an attack of that seasonal enemy of mankind, the grippe, that laid Mr. Muir flat, and kept him there for weeks, practically helpless. In one of his letters during a tormentingly slow convalescence he said that he had never known such a deadly disease; he had been absolutely "pen-barren" for months. Then, most distressing of all these bars to our progress, Helen fell ill, and her illness was so alarming that his only thought could possibly be for her. This time he wrote that it was impossible for him to compose when one of his family was ill and in grave danger. Again we should have to wait. The desert was the indicated treatment, so he had to build a house on the Vandyke acres at ~~the~~ Barstow, and then he

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must, perforce, be with the invalid, so for another long spell he parked his willing pen and lived at Barstow.

There were fair-seeming intervals between these balks, and in them our hopes revived and we resumed our plans for those long deferred books. By then I had got located in the orange district, and it was not easy to break away and remove to his home near Martinez. The alternative, that he should pack up his journals and come down-state to our house, was seriously considered, though he ~~he~~ confessed a great dismay at the thought of moving all that great mass of material. So we wavered along, alternately hopeful and discouraged, till one day he gave up the struggle to make our two ends meet, and went on to higher Sierras.

For a long time I wondered how I came to be favored with such immediate and unquestioning trust by this man who was naturally disposed to insist upon positive proof, but when I learned of his remarkable susceptibility to telepathic presentments it was all plain enough. I had gone to him absolutely unknown; without recommendation or reference; but with an ~~immoderate~~ ^{immoderate} admiration and regard for him. Some emanation from my over-ardent aura, all unsuspected by me but convincing to him, bridged the narrow space between us and gave him a satisfying assurance of my sincerity and trustworthiness; one of those ineffable facts that, possibly, may never be proved, but that nevertheless have our complete confidence; for most of us are aware that there are more things in heaven and on earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy, and, to many of us, the finest of these things are intangible and imponderable—such as my memories of John Muir and his unbonded and unbounded faith in me.

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