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Reminiscence of John Muir by Magee, William A., [Speech]

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Dr. Hunter, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with a deep sense of pleasure and gratitude that I attempt to give some of my memories of John Muir. From the time my brothers and I were 12 years old and until we were 15 and 16, we were privileged to go with my father and Mr. Muir on trips to the Sierras both in Summer and in Winter.

These mountain trips were an inspiration and education to us. They were not fully appreciated at the time--but you may be sure were most deeply appreciated and remembered in after years, when we came to understand with grateful hearts, that we have no richer inheritance than these mountain experiences in all our treasury of unearned blessings.

We absorbed on these trips a love of the woods and the mountains, and from Mr. Muir a knowledge of the different kinds of trees, plants, flowers and shrubs, and he frequently called our attention to the action of glaciers so that we knew a lateral from a terminal ~~moraine~~. *moraine*.

On one occasion while in the Yosemite Valley, Mr. Muir picked a tiny flower at the base of a cliff. He gave us its name and called attention to its beauty of form and delicacy of color. My father then repeated some lines from Gray's "Elegy"

" Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness **On** the desert air."

They agreed that this was poetic license but not true, and that no natural thing is "born to blush unseen or waste its sweetness" while in the sight of the Creator it does its part as truly as a Sequoia, an El Capitan, or a Half Dome.

Others have spoken of the sterling character and remarkable accomplishments of this truly great man, but I have tried in this short talk to give you my happy recollection that he was kindly to us as young boys, considerate of us in the woods, in camp and on long mountain tramps, and most entertaining to us at all times.

All this we took for granted in the same ^{stolid} ^{serious} way most boys do expect ^{ing} these things from their elders. We were too young to appreciate the affectionate consideration shown and interest taken in us any more than we fully appreciated these things from our own father. We looked on him as our "Uncle John" and were glad to find after we grew up that others had come to know, love, and admire him as we had always done.

My deep and lasting respect for the memory of this great and good man, this devoted and sincere lover of the mountains and the outdoors, led me, some years ago, to write these verses in his memory:

IN MEMORY OF JOHN MUIR

To those who love the streams and trees,
The mountain air and fragrant breeze,
Who seek their rest in forest shade,
What difference has your passing made !

From lowlands to the mountains bound,
You led us up to holy ground,
A high priest true, with wisdom shod,
Where those who walk must worship God,

And bow in wonder at the shrine
Where branching fir and fragrant pine
Form sylvan aisles and pierce the sky,
And give us thoughts that never die.

As on your grave, our tribute deep,
We humbly lay, we do not weep;
The guerdon of immortal life
Has come to you from earthly strife.

Great as a teacher true and sure,
You planted thoughts which shall endure;
And though you've gone unto that bourn,
From which no travellers e'er return,

Your monument shall stand for aye,
The canyons vast and mountains gray;
While we repeat in frequent praise
And often tell in passing days,

How much you loved to walk and roam
The mountains grand, where torrents foam,
Where peace pervades the soul divine,
As sunshine does the tow'ring pine;

That from your mind, refreshed so well,
Your cares like leaves in autumn fell,
That oft the trees of stately form
Had sheltered you in raging storm;

That you had traced the glacier cold
From cragland to the valley old,
And felt the wildflowers wondrous spell
And loved each shrub and tree full well.

With all of these you had, most rare,
A wondrous gift, beyond compare,
Inspiring those with whom you walked
And all to whom you wrote or talked

With love of nature, deep and true,
And understanding known to few,
So that they breathe a purer air
And find this world more bright, more fair,

Because you lived; you turned their eyes
To peace and joy of hills and skies;
While evermore, though earth be trod,
You lead our minds to Nature's God.

April 22/39 William A. Magee.

MOUNT SHASTA

While bent on fishing Klamath's stream,
To cast the fly and wade and dream,
And waiting for the rivers fall,
We hearkened to the mountain's call,

And climbed the wooded Siskiyou
To see the glorious mountain views;
We left the river far behind
Intent a vantage point to find,

But when we stood upon the range
At Lookout Point, it was not strange
That with bared heads and feelings stirred,
All were so moved we spoke no word;

For looking north and south and west,
On range o'er range our eyes would rest,
Till turning east with what surprise,
Awed by the sight in deep blue skies,

We saw, where higher mountains rise,
Mount Shasta stand before our eyes!
So vast, so grand, alone it stood,
To us it seemed the throne of God,

As in the morning's radiant light
It reached from earth, as if it might
To heaven above point us the way
From earthly strife, to a perfect day.

Symbol of all both great and high,
Reaching aloft from earth to sky,
It stands for aspiration's highest goal,
The longing of the human soul.

And while in spellbound mood we stand,
Amidst this mountain sculpture grand,
It flashed on us in bold surmise,
That not by chance these mountains rise;

But in accordance with design
Of an Almighty power divine;
That what in blindness is called chance,
May through unchanging laws advance,

Its curve of action which is cast
On lines so intricate and vast,
That all its meaning, to the end,
We have not learned to comprehend.

But still in wonder there we stand,
While mountains high on every hand
Turn all our thoughts to worship true
Of God above to whom it's due.

William A. Magee