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## Reminiscence of John Muir by Trout, W. H.

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THE COMING OF THE MUIRS

1864

About this time (1863) on one midsummer day a grown up beardless boy called at our mill applying for work. I asked him how he came to look for work with us in our secluded valley? He replied that he had tried all over town to get work and failed, and was advised by several that our place was the likeliest to find it. I told him our spring rush was over and we had then nothing for him to do. His fine boyish face and frank open manners interested me. I said to him, "You are evidently a stranger in this part of the country?" "Yes," he replied, "I am, my brother and I are students at Ann Arbor University in Michigan and we are spending the summer vacation here in Canada botanizing." A couple of my farmer customers were standing by, and that big new word "botanizing" aroused their curiosity. "What's that?" "Why," I said, "the boys are examining and studying the different kinds of plants." "What for? For medicine?" "No! but for knowledge." They looked bewildered, but said no more. He explained that his brother and he found it best to separate for a while and meet again at a certain town, but somehow they failed making connection, and each was no doubt hunting the other; also his money was about all gone and he must find work till he could get word from home or from his brother. I again regretfully told him I had no work nor could I tell him where he would get it. He left, and at evening I was surprised to find him working for the man who was running the sawmill. I said to him, "I am glad you got a job." "Oh, just working for my board?" "Is that all? Why you come with us, you'll get better board and at least a dollar a week." "Thank you, I shall be glad to do so." So I soon introduced Mr. Daniel Muir of Portage, Wis. and Ann Arbor, Mich., to my sister-housekeeper, and he soon became to us not a needy young tramp but a most welcome, companionable guest. He remained with us about six weeks; then through a few home communications his brother was finally located and he left us to join him, and they continued their journeyings for a couple of months longer, until winter was likely to set in and snow would cover up nearly all of the plant life.

They had not returned to the Ann Arbor University because of a positive order from their parents that Dan should remain in Canada while the military draft was enforced in the northern United States and John, his elder brother, being of manhood age, was urgently requested to remain with him. While John's feelings did not at all coincide with their wish, yet especially for his mother and Dan's sake he complied. So now on the approach of winter, like the squirrels and marmots and bears, the great question was, "Where shall we den up?" Not in the inactivity of the two last mentioned animals, but with the common characteristic activity of the squirrels, the Trouts, and Muirs as well. So the question was not alone, "Where shall we go?" But also, "What shall we do?" (The Muirs never knew idleness). After John had proposed several places that fell under his observation and were considered, Dan suggested our mill place. It would be as much like a winter den as they could find, and though the place was not our family home, yet a good part of it would be there and then we were a studious, well-informed, lively lot of boys and girls, some of them school teachers and they were all in touch with others of the same style, and we had a large shop in which they could likely have employment, or they could work in the woods getting out logs for the mill. Dan's proposal carried the day. One evening after returning home from town, I met our former good boy friend Dan Muir, who at once introduced me to his brother John, who after a few minutes of general friendly chat laid before me their situation very much as I have outlined it above, and hoped we might make some mutual good arrangement in regard to work for the winter at least, such that would be profitable to us and helpful to them.

After due consideration an agreement was made, and their first work was to assist in building an addition to our shop, or rake factory as it was afterwards known. They remained with us altogether a year and a half or until near the close of the war, when Dan went home and John remained to complete a contract which he had entered into with us to make 1000 dozen rakes and turn 30,000 broom handles. The broom handles were turned and stored in every available space about the factory for final seasoning and a good start made on the rake contract, when one stormy night near the first of March, 1866, the factory took fire and sawmill and factory with broom handles and part manufactured rakes all were completely destroyed, and no insurance. We had recently paid the second payment on the property, which was not forfeited. We had accounts to collect and debts to pay, one

of which would about balance the other. A good span of horses and wagon was the only firm property left to us. We settled with John Muir under the peculiar circumstances as equitably as only Christian brothers could. I don't remember the exact figures of the account, somewhere about \$300.00 and after paying him what cash we could scratch up, enough to carry him a good journey into the U.S., he cut down the account to \$200.00, taking our individual promises to pay, each \$100.00 without time limit and without interest. A few years afterwards in San Francisco when relating some of his experience he showed these notes to his friends who derisively asked him when he expected payment? Never mind, he replied, those notes will be paid. Laughingly they responded, won't you kindly let us know when you get the cash? They regarded it as a good soft joke on John. Not long afterwards he wrote me that he was contemplating marriage, and that he never began to feel poor till he faced the calculations regarding it, and also intimated the acceptability of the promised fund. Though poor enough myself, I got together a hundred dollars and sent him. Muir at once showed his jibing friends the cash and had the laugh on them, who said "Well that is pretty good, there is one Christian conscience in the world, but that is only one, wait till we see the other paid." "That will be all right too, one of these days," replied John, and so it subsequently proved.

#### APPRECIATIVE REFERENCES TO JOHN MUIR

The first winter of John Muir's stay with us, he regarded it as likely to be the only one, so he took up no special course of study, but gave us pretty freely the benefit of his fine conversational powers. He was making acquaintances with us and we were endeavoring to fully understand him; and when it comes to measuring up and determining the extent of the capabilities, disabilities, liabilities and various other abilities, of a gifted young man who had the advantage of about three years' university study and training, and a continuous study of nature's great book as well; it will be easy to see that we had much the hardest sizing up job. It was easy to admire, but to understand and appreciate him required some knowledge of the subject matter of his studies and his modes of thought. Though ardently devoted to science as well as the study of nature, yet the agnostic tendencies that had their beginning about that time found no sympathy with him. With him there was no dark chilly reasoning that chance and the survival of the fittest accounted for all things. On the contrary that God "cared for the sparrows of the air and the lilies of the field," was something that his kindly nature could most readily understand and heartily appreciate. He examined nature with a lover's eye, and he saw not only an All Creator, but an all Father and Protector. In temperament and parental training between myself and him there was much in common. In my 13th year I read and studied Goldsmith's Natural history, to which was added Brown's Anecdotes of Animals. Though Goldsmith could hardly be called a naturalist, yet he could write interestingly on any subject which he treated, and when I read Goldsmith I was certainly in close contact with nature and with very little else, such as the native weeds and waters of Canada can exemplify. So that Goldsmith at the least helped to make me an interested observer. Not a studious, methodical, systematic, persistent observer like Muir, but one that had always an interested eye with regard to what was going on about me. Beside this I had from childhood a strong bent for Astronomy; mastering as well as I could all accessible information regarding it. In this Muir and I more nearly mated. He was a real live inventor, while I was also so regarded, yet I felt I could not by any means take rank with him, but I was easily awarded the lead in practical mechanics, as my experience if nothing more would have justified. But John and I were not the only frogs in that little pond, there were others there to croak as well as we. There was Mary, our steady housekeeper, who had also been a teacher and three other sisters, one or more of whom would come from the home farm; or the schools where they were teaching, and visit us on Saturdays along with other teachers. Also my business partner C.H. Jay, who lived with us, and Dan Muir and my brother Peter, who was a great reader and never forgot anything. All young, lively, intelligent people, with common aims and purposes, and yet each with his distinct individuality, which in discussion, was often decidedly pronounced, but which rarely became ungentlemanly. If, as Garfield said, Mark Hopkins and a good student sitting on a log would make a university; so I should think that John Muir, though himself then a student, and others learning and contributing, our log house in the mill hollow might modestly claim the same dignity.

I have referred to similarity of temperament and parental conditions and environment between Muir and myself. These would account for my tendency to

invention and mechanics as my father was at the least a good mechanic and my ability was largely acquired, but with John it was altogether different, his father was in no sense a mechanic, yet with the seeming absence of the hereditary impulse, and the usual necessary training, both of which I had, he showed himself to be a real born inventive designing mechanic. While still a small boy he began fixing things about the house and farm, and later while still in his minority, took methodical and regular times out of each morning's sleep to construct special clocks and other intricate machinery of his own original design. In this I am not dependent on his or any one's story because I examined the constructions.

When John Muir made his rake and broom handle contract with us, he also made a proposition to be given the liberty of improving the machinery as he might determine, and that he should receive therefor half the economical results of such improvement during a given period. An arrangement of this kind was entered into, and he began with our self-feeding lathe for turning rake, fork, and broom handles and similar articles, which I considered nearly perfect; <sup>by</sup> rendering this more completely automatic he nearly doubled the output of broom handles. He placed one handle in position while the other was being turned. It required great activity for him to put away the turned handle, and place the new one in position during the turning process. When he could do this there would be eight broom handles <sup>made</sup> turned in a minute. Corresponding to this <sup>lathe</sup> I had on the floor immediately above him a machine that would automatically saw from the round log after it was fully slabbed or rounded eight handles per minute, but setting in the log and the <sup>with</sup> stabbing process occupied about  $\frac{3}{8}$  of the time. This, with keeping <sup>drawbacks</sup> saws and place in order, cut the daily output to about 2,500. John had his <sup>drawbacks</sup> in similar ways and at best could not get ahead of the sawing. It was a delight to see those machines at work. He devised and started the construction of several new automatic machines, to make the different parts of the hand rakes, having previously submitted and discussed them with me, "from which our intimacy may be judged."

Like all others who have made much of themselves, and much for the world of humanity, Muir was a most diligent student and systematic worker. He would make inroads on his time for sleep and recreation. In fact for the latter there was no time allowed. What fun we had was generally caught on the fly. For him, seven hours was the allotment for sleep, that was from 10 P.M. to 5 P.M. The encroachments were made on the first part of the period, when the study became more especially interesting, an hour or two was not considered, and the clock would strike 11 or 12 before retiring; but that made no difference about the rising. That was previously determined and unalterably fixed. His bed was mounted on a cross axle, sustained by two high pedestals; one on each side, and nearer the head than the foot, so that if the foot was not held up it would fall and lie on the floor, and the bed would be reclining at [an] angle of about 45 degrees. A rod screwed to the ceiling and held to the foot sustained it in the level position. At night, however, a special trigger was affixed to the rod and sustained the bed. A string connected the trigger to his specially constructed clock, which at the determined hour, 5:00 A.M. would pull the trigger and release the bed, which would instantly fall, leaving the occupant in a half upright position, with his feet on the floor. If he lay crooked in the bed, or crossways he was apt to be rolled out sharply to the floor. Our house had only board partitions, ordinary sounds could be heard in every room, so that when John's bed fell it was a wake-up signal for all in the house; but if we heard a double shock, which would be caused by a roll out, then we had the signal for a good laugh on John, and he had further jolly reminders of this at the breakfast table. Charlie (Mr. Jay) generally led off in these jibes.

When the bed fell, an arm swung around, into the fingers of which had been placed a match, which in swinging rubbed over a piece of sand paper, and being ignited, came to rest over the wick of an oil lamp, perched in its regular place on a shelf. The lamp was thus lighted with the fall of the bed. A sponge bath in the tub was the next move, then dressing, which was followed by study, till breakfast time, then the day was for work except the noon hour, when there was always the handy book, and place to turn to, and if there was one minute or five minutes before eating it was used in reading; and it was the same after dinner for the remainder of the noon hour, unless some very interesting topic was started at the table that must be extended beyond the meal.

## MUIR IN INDIANAPOLIS

Soon after the burning of our mill, as has been previously mentioned, John Muir left us and went to Indianapolis, Indiana, and engaged himself to [a] wagon manufacturing firm. They soon discovered John's ability in fixing things and gave him the care of all the machinery. After he had been there about four months, one day while unlacing a belt, using the tang end of a file to pull out the laces (such as I have done hundreds of times) in which he had a hard pull with a sudden release this allowed the strain on his arm to plant the tang of the file into the center of his right eye, causing the vitreous humor to run out, and it was thought the eye was totally lost: but with highly skilful treatment and eminent "Visnaturae" or good healing force, his sight was fully recovered. An angular corner in the pupil of the eye is testimony to this day of the entrance of the file. He had about one month's confinement in a dark room, and was gradually brought to the light. While in this confinement, as he remarked to me in a letter, he had the grandest opportunity for prolonged meditation. He decided that life was too short and uncertain, and time too valuable, to spend it mending belts, and sharpening saws. While he was looking after wagon-making machinery, God was making a world, and if his eyesight was spared he would devote his time to watching the process. Accordingly about six weeks after the accident, he settled up with his employers, paid his bills, and started across country journey on foot, from Indianapolis to South Carolina.

He rather avoided the ordinary roads, preferring the woods, river banks and mountains, plant and general nature study being his object. At Charleston he had a weary time waiting for money from home. South Carolina had scarcely begun to recover from the devastations of the war, food was scarce and very limited was the money to buy. He took up his abode in a half ruined church outside the city, from which for six successive days he made his anxious journey to the post office, for the needed money that was to come from home. When it finally arrived, he continued his way southward through Florida; then over into Cuba, making the double journey through its extent; then taking in some of the West India Islands, he crossed the Isthmus of Panama, and took steamer for San Francisco, from thence he started for the mountains: and in order to fill up his depleted exchequer, he engaged as a shepherd for a large flock of sheep, the migrations of his flock enabling him to see the country and pursue his studies, which were never lost sight of.

Shortly previous to this Yosemite Valley had been discovered, and its possibilities as a great wonderland for tourists estimated. A company was formed, a stage road projected, and a hotel was to be built in the valley. The inaccessibility of the valley called for a sawmill to be built on the ground, in order to make the lumber of build the Hotel. Muir was in touch with all this and convinced the money magnates that he could build the mill, a simple structure which when satisfactorily completed he ran, until the hotel was finished. Then, except for Muir's residence in it, the mill was of no further use. He had built his bachelor's den in the back end up under the roof. It was a bedroom, kitchen and dining room, as well as a naturalist's studio and museum of botanical collections, and interesting curios, natural and mechanical. It was reached by a ladder and a plank stretching across the wide space from one beam to the other. I am describing it from his letter and my sawmill knowledge. It seemed as primitive as a cliff-dweller's home; yet he had city privileges. He had an aqueduct system, by which constantly clear sparkling water flowed through his room or rather headquarters as he traveled the mountains.

He now began to be known as a magazine writer and lecturer, and scientific and literary celebrities from eastern America and Europe visiting the Yosemite, called on him, pleased to enjoy his humble hospitality, and his enthusiastic enlightening conversation. Early in the seventies, when in the reading-room of the Mechanics Institute, Peterboro, Canada, in looking over one of the leading magazines, my eye fell on a well illustrated article, captioned "The Glaciers of the Sierras." Glancing over it I inwardly remarked that style of writing and those sketches make me think of Muir. I then began at the beginning, enjoying the reading, thinking how much it was like Muir's talk; and at the end was most agreeably though not wholly surprised to find my fiends's brief name appended to it. He was and always is, just plain John Muir.

A life like this, so interestingly interwoven with ours, hardly calls for an apology for the extended references, which I have made to it. What I have given is only a brief introduction to a great career. He became the great mountain explorer of America, giving particular attention to finding the location and action of the great Glaciers, from the arctic circle to the Gulf of California.

Often for months at a time he never saw the face of humanity. The masterly mountain sheep that spurn all but the loftiest crags and bears and deer and the birds were his principal acquaintances: but he was never lonely, to him all nature was alive, and told a never-ending charming story. Woods and winds and waters had their ceaseless music. Even quiet, restful, sleepy winter occasionally broke out into the howling storm of booming avalanche or the shaking earthquake which were regarded as only demonstrations of Nature's great power and fulfilment of God's purpose. But I must leave off. Those who would like a further acquaintance with this fine old friend must read some of his charming books, "The Mountains of California," "The Forest Reservations of America." Young folks will be delighted with his dog story, "Life in the Sierras," and "Boyhood Life." There are several other works, all charmingly written, and can be had at most of the publishing houses.

About two years ago I received one of his specially good friendly letters, and I turned it over to my son to read, after which I said to him, "Now you are a business man and understand the money worth of things, can you put a value on that letter?" He reflected a moment and said, "Oh, I give it up!" My reply was, "So do I." And so it is always; genuine friendship never gets down to the dollar measurement.

#### THE PASSING OF JOHN MUIR

The above lengthy reference to my much esteemed old friend was written nearly a year ago and was thought to be all that might be said regarding him, and this is interjected on account of the fact that on December 24th, 1914, after a summer of irregular health conditions he contracted pneumonia, and in a few days died. The next morning I read the account in our Milwaukee paper, it had been telegraphed to all the leading papers in the United States. It was an overwhelming surprise and disappointment to me. In a prolonged journey to the Pacific Coast in 1911, I expected to make him a long visit, but before I arrived there he had started on his great South American journey. Failing to see him in 1911, I wrote him in the early part of 1912, stating that I had planned a visit for the summer of 1915, if health and strength permitted. Not mainly because this was the summer of the great Exposition in San Francisco, for that was to me a second or third consideration; seeing relatives and friends was the main purpose, and as time drew on and it was arranged that our General Missionary Convention would be in Los Angeles in the same summer, the interest of the trip became much greater. Of course, the Exposition, now going on, is a most extraordinary show -- a great beautiful mass of matter, that in some sense may represent spirit: but grand as it undoubtedly is, it is still only a fleeting show; while Christian friendship is eternal and abiding, and as we draw near the sunset of our brief day, we appraise the values of things, by their relation to the things unseen, yet enduring and eternal.

John's reply to this letter of mine is the one referred to at the close of the previous paragraph, regarding which I asked my son to adjudge its value. Now that John is parted from us, everything connected with him becomes doubly dear and valuable. On this account I introduce a copy of this letter, so that relatives and friends may share the pleasure of its reading with myself:

"Martinez, May 10th, 1912.

Dear William Trout:--

In trying to clear away the huge talus of letters a year high, accumulated while I was in South America and Africa, I find your long interesting letter of March 15th full of good news.

I'm always glad to hear from you. Friends get closer and dearer the farther they travel on life's journey. It's fine to see how youthful your heart remains: and wide and far-reaching your sympathy, with everybody and everything. Such people never grow old. I only regret your being held so long in mechanical bread-winning harness, instead of making enough by middle age and spending the better half of life in studying God's works as I wanted you to do long ago. The marvel is that in the din and rattle of mills you have done so wondrous well. By all means keep on your travels, since you know so well how to reap their benefits. I shall hope to see you when next you come West. And don't wait until the canal year. Delays are more and more dangerous as sundown draws nigh. I've just returned from a long fruitful trip. First up the Amazon a thousand miles, and return to Para. Thence to Rio de Janeiro. Thence to Santos and inland four or five hundred miles, in the State of Parana. Thence back to the coast at Paranagua. Thence to Buenos Aires, stopping at many interesting ports by the way. Thence across the Andes to Santiago. Thence south 500 miles up through grant forests to the snow, where I found Araucaria imbricata, a wonderful tree, forming the strangest woods imaginable. Thence back across

the Andes and Argentina, to Montevideo. Thence to Teneriffe. Thence to Cape Town, Africa. Thence 1300 miles northward to Victoria Falls, where I found *Adansonia digitata*, another wonderful tree. Thence to the East Coast and Beira. Thence to Mozambique, Zanzibar, etc. to Mombassa. Thence to Victoria Nyanza, Entebbe Jinji to the head of the Nile. Thence back to Mombassa, around the north end of the continent to Aden, and home by the Red Sea, and Naples and New York. Thus crossing the equator six times on a journey about 40,000 miles long. Hope to tell you about it some day. In the meantime I am, ever

Faithfully your friend,  
JOHN MUIR "

Yes, John hoped to tell me his great travel story, and I, as earnestly hoped to listen and talk it over with him; much the same as I did in the year of the great earthquake, when he had a year or two previous made his globe circuit through Europe and Asia and the islands of the Pacific back home again, a much longer and every way greater journey than the one described above. I have his letter. But I did not heed his suggestion, that it was "Dangerous to wait, we being too near sundown." I thought the danger lay all on my side. I was four years and two months older than he, and was not near so hearty and strong, though on account of his weatherbeaten face from the outdoor life, he looked quite as old as I, who for forty years past have spent nearly all my time indoors. I felt sure that if we failed to see each other it would all depend on me. But we never can tell, and while many of our troubles show advance signs of their coming, pneumonia, old people's greatest foe, gives no previous notice. It comes without warning, and even with the vigorous, often makes short work.

While the public press of the whole country and the magazines made more or less extended reference to his death, the Pacific Coast papers showed an interest and sympathy much beyond all others. Some of my friends sent me copies or clippings. But I could not rest without more direct information. I had an acquaintance with the younger daughter at her home; my youngest daughter Lucretia who accompanied me on that journey and Helen Muir being both near the same age, were generally cordial chums. They had their daily horseback rides and other enjoyments, while their fathers had their times together at home. Mrs. Muir had died some years before this. Wanda, the elder, had just been married and was away on her bridal tour. I did not see her. Shortly afterwards Helen also married, and now, not having the address of either of the daughters, with their new and unknown names, I wrote my letter of requests and condolence to the Muir Estate, expecting it to reach at least one of the daughters, and most kindly and cordially Wanda (Mrs. Hanna) answered it; besides sending special printed matter and clippings. This good letter follows:

"Dear Mr. Trout:

I must thank you for your very kind letter. Although I have never met you, I feel that I know you as a friend, for my father so often spoke of you with regard and affection, and talked of the times when he was with you as a young man. His death was a great shock to us all, for although he had been very frail for a year following an attack of the grippe and been very sick last July, he seemed somewhat better when he started south to visit my sister on the 17th of December and we had no idea that the end was so near. He had often spoken of having only a short time left to finish his work and had put all his affairs in shape, but seemed cheerful and hopeful to the very last, and was talking of his work when his heart suddenly stopped without any warning or suffering.

My father's Alaska Book was nearly completed at the time of his death and will soon be published. There are a good many other notes and manuscripts that probably will at some time be edited and published in some form, but as yet no decision has been made as to how they are to be used.

The botanical and geological specimens are still in our possession. Some of them no doubt will be given to some scientific Association and some of them we will keep. He made no disposition of them himself.

My father had three surviving sisters and two brothers. My sister, Mrs. Buel A. Funk, lives at Daggett, San Bernardino Co., California, and has three little boys. I have four boys. If you come to California in 1915 or at any other time I hope that you will visit us. I am deeply sorry that you did not do so while my dear father was still with us.

Thanking you for your sympathy and your long friendship for my father,  
Sincerely,

Wanda Muir Hanna  
(Mrs. Thomas R. Hanna)

Martinez, California,  
Jan. 31st, 1915."

I have already referred to eulogistic articles in the magazines in regard to John Muir. I will now refer to only one, that of Theodore Roosevelt in the Outlook. During his last presidential term he made a visit to California, and as a matter of course visited the Yosemite Valley, and as a further matter of course took along with him John Muir as the best guide and exponent of the beauties and wonders of that wonderful glen, with its surroundings, the big trees, etc. In the Outlook appreciation of Muir, the President so nicely refers to his beautiful simplicity of character as well as his accurate knowledge of any subject of his attention and study. The President told of the encampment under the big trees and incidents of the journey as they related to Muir, and Muir in conversation told me the incidents as they related to the President. A great crowd of Editors, reporters, politicians and others accompanied or rather followed the President on this mountain journey. They not merely wanted to see, but to have the prestige of being a part of the President's great Yosemite party. Muir regarded them as an unmitigated nuisance, and no doubt the President partially shared his opinion. At the great Sequoia Grove Muir suggested that they quietly give the party the slip, and let it go forward while they would remain behind and encamp alone under the canopy of the towering Sequoia gigantea. To this the President promptly agreed. The manager of the party was let into the secret, and he left them what was needed. I remarked to him that an event like that, alone in confidential chat with the President of the United States in such sublime surroundings was something to be long remembered. "Oh yes," said I, "did you sleep much?" "No not very much." "Then you did a lot of talking?" "Well I did the most of it." "What was it about?" Oh! I stuffed him pretty well regarding the timber thieves, and the destructive work of the lumbermen, and other spoilers of our forests." "How did he take it?" "Well, he did not say much, but I know and so do you, how he went for them afterwards."

While it was a good time for quiet conversation, it was also a grand opportunity for great meditations. The towering majesty of the great trees as enhanced by the firelight, and their immense age, as proven by Muir's count of the rings of one that is fallen, show them to be, as he says, "respectable saplings when Adam was young." They are undoubtedly the oldest and the largest living things in the world.

John Muir held a doubtful attitude to what is called spiritualistic phenomena, telepathy and such occult beliefs as are enlisting the attention of psychologists at the present time; yet there occurred with him a remarkable presentiment, vision, or dream, whatever one may call it, relating to the death of his father.

It was near the last of June, 1896, when he gave me the narration direct. The occurrence and his father's death were in the same month. He told it quite circumstantially, but the details are not well remembered. However, one night in the earlier half of the month he had a very vivid striking dream regarding his father, seeing him in bed, and likely to die. He was strongly impressed with the idea that he must go to his old Wisconsin home at once, and began getting ready. The following night he had much the same vision. His older brother, David, was then living in California. John went to him and told him he had the most certain impression that their father would die about as soon as they could get to see him. David made light of his premonitions, but finally concluded since John was surely going, and at the best his father might not live much longer, that he would go with him, and they started at once. At Omaha, Nebraska, where their younger brother Dan resided, they stopped off and soon persuaded him to accompany them. They arrived in Portage City, Wis., in time to have a recognition and some conversation with their father, as in a day or two afterwards he passed away. John did not regard this as a chance dream, but a real presentiment.

The only thing approaching that in my experience was in the town of Owen Sound, Ontario, Can., forty-five years ago. One summer morning about 8 o'clock a farmer, while plowing in his field two miles from the town, was fatally shot by a man in ambush. That very time I was at work in a shop and was suddenly impressed with the mental sight of a crouching man firing a gun at another man. I was just as much startled as if I had heard the report. I turned around and said, "Somebody is shot." I would have regarded it as a freak of the imagination had not my sister come in a half hour afterwards and related the occurrence, having got the news direct from the messenger who came in on horse-back for a doctor.



June 1896

On his return journey John Muir notified me that he would be at our Union Station at a given time, and requested me to meet him, which I did most cheerfully. After the greeting he apologized for taking me from my work to meet him, saying he never could trust himself in the cities, they were of man's arbitrary building without any intelligible common plan: "but, said he, "you might put me down in any dark valley in God's mountains and I could soon find my way out. If you come across a man's face in the dark and feel his nose you know where to find his mouth." On the streetcars going to our home he told me the story of the presentiment regarding his father, which I have given, regarding it as extraordinary. He remained with us about 24 hours. The children greatly enjoyed his talk. None of us retired till midnight. Mother and I were complimented on our family. "See those fine big boys of yours, and I have no boys. They are scarce with the Muirs, there may not be enough to carry the name."

He left us to join a commission in Chicago, appointed by President Cleveland, on Forest Reservations to be made in different parts of the United States. This occupied his attention for a year or more, and was the subject of his largest and best book.

Well, his day is past, but his story is not told: a life so full of great service can't be fully told. No one knows it all except it be himself and his creator. It is all finished and in the great record, and he passes on with the closing. One of his Eastern literary friends sublimely pictures this in three magnificent stanzas, though we might criticize the phrasing, the imaginative sweep overpowers us, except the last three lines, which approach the commonplace. Chas. L. Edson of the New York Evening Mail is the poetic author. He makes a characteristic answer for John when he says, John o' the mountains says: 'I knew.'--that is, I have been watching, I have seen it.

"John o' the mountains, wonderful John,  
Is past the summit and traveling on;  
The turn of the trail on the mountain side,  
A smile and 'Hail' where the glaciers slide,  
A streak of red where the condors ride,  
And John is over the Great Divide.

John o' the mountains camps today  
On a level spot by the milky way;  
And God is telling him how he rolled  
The smoking earth from the iron mold,  
And hammered the mountains till they were cold,  
And planted the Redwood trees of old.

And John o' the mountains says: 'I knew,  
And I wanted to grapple the hand o' you:  
And now we're sure to be friends and chums  
And camp together till chaos comes.'"

From Collier's Weekly, Jan. 16th, 1915.

Collier's editor continues, "Of course John Muir and God are friends. Muir fraternized with the birds of the field and forest and chummed with the squirrel and the bear. He rhapsodized over the beauty and sweetness of the flowers and communed with God through the Redwoods and pines. His life was a glorification of God's original handiwork."

John was familiar with his Bible, God's revealed will, as well as Nature's book. It was his child study and was ingrained in his mental makeup as his writings abundantly testify.

We must now reluctantly part from our friend and his story and again resume the family narration.