



Letters to a Friend Written to Mrs. Ezra S. Carr, 1866-1879

John Muir

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John Muir (1838 – 1914) was a Scottish-American naturalist, author, environmental philosopher and early advocate of preservation of wilderness in the United States. His letters, essays, and books telling of his adventures in nature, especially in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California, have been read by millions.

To all who know and love our glorious Sierra these letters from their greatest friend make special appeal. Whenever our thoughts turn toward Yosemite Valley, home of John Muir, our hearts shall rise in thanksgiving, Valley and friend, what delight to have known them together!

As a young man at the University of Wisconsin, John Muir met one who was to mean much to him in life. Mrs. Ezra S. Carr took a friendly interest in his love for botany and in his ambitions for life. That sympathetic appreciation and understanding which he was entitled to enjoy in his own home, but destined to receive elsewhere, was offered by this large souled woman, whom he soon came to regard as his "spiritual mother."

His was a sensitive soul, one often to be misunderstood, and to find at first few friends. He writes to this one true friend:

"I have thought of you hundreds of times in my seasons of deepest joy amid the flower purple and gold of the plains, the fern fields in gorge and canon, the sacred waters, tree columns, and the eternal unnameable sublimities of the mountains. Of all my friends you are the only one that understands my motives and enjoyments."

On leaving college, Muir travels afoot around the country as a botanist, finally setting out for South America by way of Florida; but, directed by that divine Providence which ever overrules our life's adventure, his feet turn toward that most glorious of God's gardens— our California. In a letter dated July 1868, he writes,

"Fate and flowers have carried me to California, and I have reveled and luxuriated amid its plants and mountains nearly four months."

Soon he finds his chosen field in Yosemite and the high Sierra Nevada, where he is to spend the next decade in deepest study of rock and flower. So, as he wanders alone throughout this land of pure delight, his soul flows out in these letters.

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