enlivened by physical conditions. But of these so-called "hardships" Muir made nothing, and I caught his spirit; therefore, the beauty, the glory, the wonder and the thrills of those weeks of exploration are with me yet and shall endure—a rustless, inexhaustible treasure.

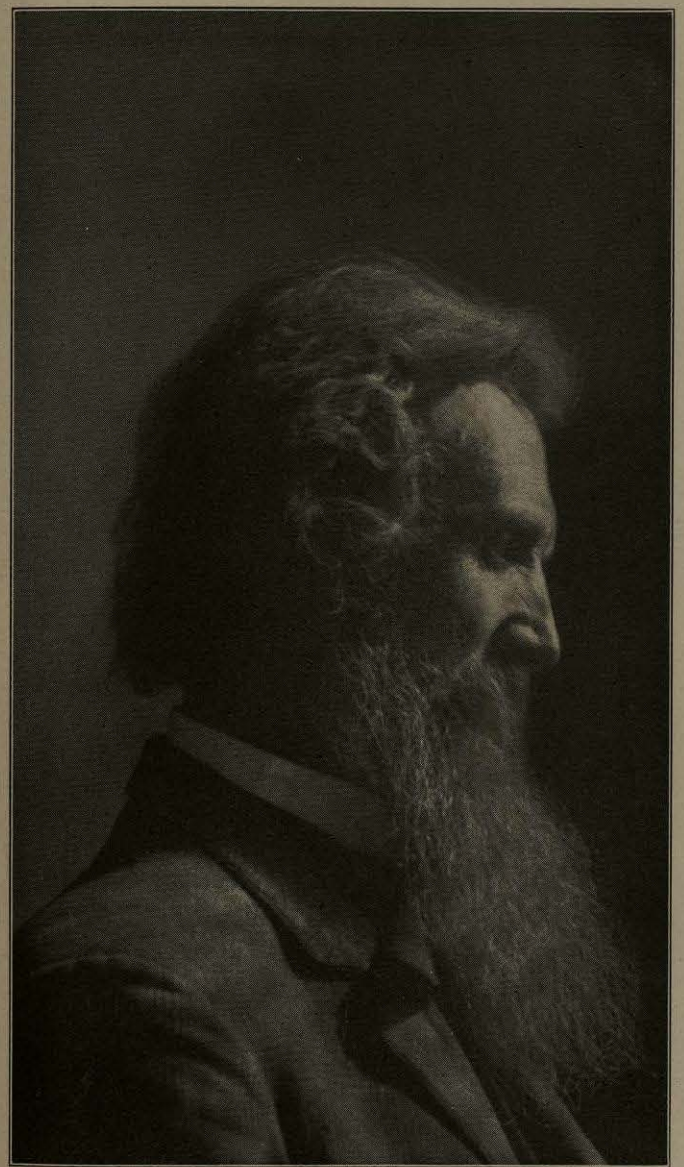
THE MAN IN PERSPECTIVE

JOHN MUIR

He lived aloft, exultant, unafraid.
All things were good to him. The mountain old
Stretched gnarled hands to help him climb. The peak
Waved blithe snow-banner greeting; and for him
The rav'ning storm, aprowl for human life,
Purred like the lion at his trainer's feet.
The grizzly met him on the narrow ledge,
Gave gruff "good morning"—and the right of way.
The blue-veined glacier, cold of heart and pale,
Warmed, at his gaze, to amethystine blush,
And murmured deep, fond undertones of love.

He walked apart from men, yet loved his kind,
And brought them treasures from his larger store.
For them he delved in mines of richer gold.
Earth's messenger he was to human hearts.
The starry moss flower from its dizzy shelf,
The ouzel, shaking forth its spray of song,
The glacial runlet, tinkling its clear bell,
The rose-of-morn, abloom on snowy heights—
Each sent by him a jewel-word of cheer.
Blind eyes he opened and deaf ears unstopped.

He lived aloft, apart. He talked with God
In all the myriad tongues of God's sweet world;
But still he came anear and talked with us,
Interpreting for God to listn'ing men.



JOHN MUIR IN LATER LIFE

VII

THE MAN IN PERSPECTIVE

THE friendship between John Muir and myself was of that fine sort which grows and deepens with absence almost as well as with companionship. Occasional letters passed from one to the other. When I felt like writing to Muir I obeyed the impulse without asking whether I "owed" him a letter, and he followed the same rule—or rather lack of rule. Sometimes answers to these letters came quickly; sometimes they were long delayed, so long that they were not answers at all. When I sent him "news of his mountains and glaciers" that contained items really novel to him his replies were immediate and en-

thusiastic. When he had found in his great outdoor museum some peculiar treasure he talked over his find with me by letter.

Muir's letters were never commonplace and sometimes they were long and rich. I preserved them all; and when, a few years ago, an Alaska steamboat sank to the bottom of the Yukon, carrying with it my library and all my literary possessions, the loss of these letters from my friend caused me more sorrow than the loss of almost any other of my many priceless treasures.

The summer of 1881, the year following that of our second canoe voyage, Muir went, as scientific and literary expert, with the U. S. revenue cutter *Rogers,* which was sent by the Government into the Arctic Ocean in search of the ill-fated De Long exploring party. His published articles written on the revenue cutter were of great interest; but in his more intimate letters to me there was a note of disappointment.

"There have been no mountains to climb," he wrote, "although I have had entrancing long-distance views of many. I have not had a chance to visit any glaciers. There were no trees in those arctic regions, and but few flowers. Of God's process of modeling the world I saw but little—nothing for days but that limitless, relentless ice-pack. I was confined within the narrow prison of the ship; I had no freedom, I went at the will of other men; not of my own. It was very different from those glorious canoe voyages with you in your beautiful, fruitful wilderness."

A very brief visit at Muir's home near Martinez, California, in the spring of 1883 found him at what he

frankly said was very distasteful work—managing a large fruit ranch. He was doing the work well and making his orchards pay large dividends; but his heart was in the hills and woods. Eagerly he questioned me of my travels and of the "progress" of the glaciers and woods of Alaska. Beyond a few short mountain trips he had seen nothing for two years of his beloved wilds.

Passionately he voiced his discontent: "I am losing the precious days. I am degenerating into a machine for making money. I am learning nothing in this trivial world of men. I must break away and get out into the mountains to learn the news."

In 1888 the ten years' limit which I had set for service in Alaska expired. The educational necessities of my children and the feeling that was growing upon me like a smothering cloud that if I remained much

longer among the Indians I would lose all power to talk or write good English, drove me from the Northwest to find a temporary home in Southern California.

I had not notified Muir of my coming, but suddenly appeared in his orchard at Martinez one day in early summer. It was cherry-picking time and he was out among his trees superintending a large force of workmen. He saw me as soon as I discovered him, and dropping the basket he was carrying came running to greet me with both hands outstretched.

"Ah! my friend," he cried, "I have been longing mightily for you. You have come to take me on a canoe trip to the countries beyond —to Lituya and Yakutat bays and Prince William Sound; have you not? My weariness of this humdrum, work-a-day life has grown so

heavy it is like to crush me. I'm ready to break away and go with you whenever you say."

"No," I replied, "I am leaving Alaska."

"Man, man!" protested Muir, "how can you do it? You'll never carry out such a notion as that in the world. Your heart will cry every day for the North like a lost child; and in your sleep the snow-banners of your white peaks will beckon to you.

"Why, look at me," he said, "and take warning. I'm a horrible example. I, who have breathed the mountain air—who have really lived a life of freedom—condemned to penal servitude with these miserable little bald-heads!" (holding up a bunch of cherries). "Boxing them up; putting them in prison! And for money! Man! I'm like to die of the shame of it.

"And then you're not safe a day in this sordid world of money-grubbing men. I came near dying a mean, civilized death, the other day. A Chinaman emptied a bucket of phosphorus over me and almost burned me up. How different that would have been from a nice white death in the crevasse of a glacier!

"Gin it were na for my bairnies I'd rin awa' frae a' this tribble an' hale ye back north wi' me."

So Muir would run on, now in English, now in broad Scotch; but through all his raillery there ran a note of longing for the wilderness. "I want to see what is going on," he said. "So many great events are happening, and I'm not there to see them. I'm learning nothing here that will do me any good."

I spent the night with him, and we talked till long after midnight, sailing anew our voyages of en-

chantment. He had just completed his work of editing "Picturesque California" and gave me a set of the beautiful volumes.

Our paths did not converge again for nine years; but I was to have, after all, a few more Alaska days with John Muir. The itch of the wanderlust in my feet had become a wearisome, nervous ache, increasing with the years, and the call of the wild more imperative, until the fierce yearning for the North was at times more than I could bear.

The first of the great northward gold stampedes—that of 1897 to the Klondyke in Northwestern Canada on the borders of Alaska—afforded me the opportunity for which I was longing to return to the land of my heart. The latter part of August saw me on *The Queen,* the largest of that great fleet of passenger boats that were traversing

the thousand miles of wonder and beauty between Seattle and Skagway. These steamboats were all laden with gold seekers and their goods. Seattle sprang into prominence and wealth, doubling her population in a few months. From every community in the United States, from all Canada and from many lands across the oceans came that strange mob of lawyers, doctors, clerks, merchants, farmers, mechanics, engineers, reporters, sharpers—all gold-struck—all mad with excitement—all rushing pell-mell into a thousand new and hard experiences.

As I stood on the upper deck of the vessel, watching the strange scene on the dock, who should come up the gang-plank but John Muir, wearing the same old gray ulster and Scotch cap! It was the last place in the world I would have

looked for him. But he was not stampeding to the Klondyke. His being there at that time was really an accident. In company with two other eminent "tree-men" he had been spending the summer in the study of the forests of Canada and the three were "climaxing," as they said, in the forests of Alaska.

Five pleasurable days we had together on board *The Queen*. Muir was vastly amused by the motley crowd of excited men, their various outfits, their queer equipment, their ridiculous notions of camping and life in the wilderness. "A nest of ants," he called them, "taken to a strange country and stirred up with a stick."

As our steamboat touched at Port Townsend, Muir received a long telegram from a San Francisco newspaper, offering him a large sum if he would go over the mountains

and down the Yukon to the Klondyke, and write them letters about conditions there. He brought the telegram to me, laughing heartily at the absurdity of anybody making him such a proposition.

"Do they think I'm daft," he asked, "like a' the lave o' thae puir bodies? When I go into that wild it will not be in a crowd like this or on such a sordid mission. Ah! my old friend, they'll be spoiling our grand Alaska."

He offered to secure for me the reporter's job tendered to him. I refused, urging my lack of training for such work and my more important and responsible position.

"Why, that same paper has a host of reporters on the way to the Klondyke now," I said. "There is ——" (naming a noted poet and author of the Coast). "He must be

half-way down to Dawson by this time."

"—— doesn't count," replied Muir, "for the patent reason that everybody knows he can't tell the truth. The poor fellow is not to blame for it. He was just made that way. Everybody will read with delight his wonderful tales of the trail, but nobody will believe him. We all know him too well."

Muir contracted a hard cold the first night out from Seattle. The hot, close stateroom and a cold blast through the narrow window were the cause. A distressing cough racked his whole frame. When he refused to go to a physician who was on the boat I brought the doctor to him. After the usual examination the physician asked, "What do you generally do for a cold?"

"Oh," said Muir, "I shiver it away."

"Explain yourself," said the puzzled doctor.

"We-ll," drawled Muir, "two or three years ago I camped by the Muir Glacier for a week. I had caught just such a cold as this from the same cause—a stuffy stateroom. So I made me a little sled out of spruce boughs, put a blanket and some sea biscuit on it and set out up the glacier. I got into a labyrinth of crevasses and a driving snowstorm, and had to spend the night on the ice ten miles from land. I sat on the sled all night or thrashed about it, and had a dickens of a time; I shivered so hard I shook the sled to pieces. When morning came my cold was all gone. That is my prescription, Doctor. You are welcome to use it in your practice."

"Well," laughed the doctor, "if I had such patients as you in such

a country as this I might try your heroic remedy, but I am afraid it would hardly serve in general practice."

Muir and I made the most of these few days together, and walked the decks till late each night, for he had much to tell me. He had at last written his story of Stickeen; and was working on books treating of the Big Trees, the National Parks and the glaciers of Alaska.

At Wrangell, as we went ashore, we were greeted by joyful exclamations from the little company of old Stickeen Indians we found on the dock. That sharp intaking of the breath which is the Thlinget's note of surprise and delight, and the words *Nuknate Ankow ka Glate Ankow* (Priest Chief and Ice Chief) passed along the line. Death had made many gaps in the old circle of friends, both white and native, but

the welcome from those who remained warmed our hearts.

From Wrangell northward the steamboat followed the route of our canoe voyage of 1880 through Wrangell Narrows into Prince Frederick Sound, past Norris Glacier and Holkham Bay into Stevens Passage, past Taku Bay to Juneau and on to Lynn Canal—then on the track of our voyage of 1879 up to Haines and beyond fifteen miles to that new, chaotic camp in the woods called Skagway.

The two or three days which it took *The Queen* to discharge her load of passengers and cargo of their outfits were spent by Muir and his scientific companions in roaming the forests and mountains about Skagway and examining the flora of that region. They kept mostly off the trail of the struggling, straggling army of *Cheechakoes* (newcomers)

who were blunderingly trying to get their goods and themselves across the rugged, jagged mountains on their way to the promised land of gold; but Muir found time to spend some hours with me in my camp under a hemlock, where he ate again of my cooking over a camp-fire.

"You are going on a strange journey this time, my friend," he admonished me. "I don't envy you. You'll have a hard time keeping your heart light and simple in the midst of this crowd of madmen. Instead of the music of the wind among the spruce-tops and the tinkling of the waterfalls, your ears will be filled with the oaths and groans of these poor, deluded, self-burdened men. Keep close to Nature's heart, yourself; and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash

your spirit clean from the earth-stains of this sordid, gold-seeking crowd in God's pure air. It will help you in your efforts to bring to these men something better than gold. Don't lose your freedom and your love of the Earth as God made it."

In 1899 it was my good fortune to have one more Alaska day with John Muir at Skagway. After a year in the Klondyke I had spent the winter of 1898-99 in the Eastern States arousing the Christian public to the needs of this newly discovered Empire of the North; and was returning with other ministers to interior and western Alaska. The White Pass Railroad was completed only to the summit; and it was a laborious task, requiring a month of very hard work, to get our goods from Skagway over the thirty miles of mountains to Lake Bennett,

where we could load them on our open boat for the voyage of two thousand miles down the Yukon.

While I was engaged in this task there came to Skagway the steamship *George W. Elder,* carrying one of the most remarkable companies of scientific men ever gathered together in one expedition. Mr. Harriman, the great railroad magnate, had chartered the steamer, and had invited as his guests many men of world reputation in various branches of natural science. Among them were John Burroughs, Drs. Merriam and Dahl of the Smithsonian Institute, and, not least, John Muir. Indeed he was called the Nestor of the expedition and his advice followed as that of no other.

The enticing proposition was made me by Muir, and backed by Mr. Harriman's personal invitation, that I should join this distinguished

company, share Muir's stateroom and spend the summer cruising along the southern and western coasts of Alaska. However, the new mining camps were calling with a still more imperative voice, and I had to turn my back to the Coast and face the great, sun-bathed Interior. But what a joy and inspiration it would have been to climb Muir, Geicke and Taylor glaciers again with Muir, note the rapid progress God was making in His work of landscape gardening by means of these great tools, make at last our deferred visits to Lituya and Yakutat bays and the fine glaciers of Prince William's Sound, and renew my studies of this good world under my great Master.

A letter from Muir about his summer's cruise, written in November, 1899, reached me at Nome in June, 1900; for those of us who had

reached that bleak, exposed northwestern coast and wintered there did not get any mail for six months. We were fifteen hundred miles from a post-office.

In his letter Muir wrote: "The voyage was a grand one, and I saw much that was new to me and packed full of interest and instruction. But, do you know, I longed to break away from the steamboat and its splendid company, get a dugout canoe and a crew of Indians, and, with you as my companion, poke into the nooks and crannies of the mountains and glaciers which we could not reach from the steamer. What great days we have had together, you and I!"

This day at Skagway, in 1899, was the last of my Alaska days with John Muir, except as I bring them back and live them over in my thoughts. How often in my long

voyages, by canoe or steamer, among the thousand islands of southeastern Alaska, the intricate channels of Prince William's Sound, the great rivers and multitudinous lakes of the Interior, and the treeless, windswept coasts of Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean; or in my tramps in the summer over the mountains and plains of Alaska, or in the winter with my dogs over the frozen wilderness fighting the great battle with the fierce cold or spellbound under the magic of the Aurora—how often have I longed for the presence of Muir to heighten my enjoyment by his higher ecstasy, or reveal to me what I was too dull to see or understand. I have had inspiring companions, and my life has been blessed by many friendships inestimably precious and rich; but for me the world has produced but one John Muir; and to no other

man do I feel that I owe so much; for I was blind and he made me see!

Only once since 1899 did I meet him, and then but for an hour at his temporary home in Los Angeles in 1910. He was putting the finishing touches on his rich volume, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth." I submitted for his review and correction the article which forms the first two chapters of this book. With that nice regard for absolute verity which always characterized him he pointed out two or three passages in which his recollection clashed with mine, and I at once made the changes he suggested.

Muir never grew old. After he was sixty years of age (as men count age) some of his most daring feats of mountain climbing and some of his longest journeys into the wilds were undertaken. When he was past seventy he was still tramping

and camping in the forests and among the hills. When he was seventy-three he made long trips to South America and Africa, and to the very end he was exploring, studying, working and enjoying.

All his writings exult with the spirit of immortal youth. There is in his books an intimate companionship with the trees, the mountains, the flowers and the animals, that is altogether fine. Surely no such books of mountains and forests were ever written as his "Mountains of California," "My First Summer in the Sierra," "The Yosemite" and "Our National Parks." His brooks and trees are the abode of dryads and hamadryads —they live and talk.

And when he writes of the animals he has met in his rambles, without any attempt to put into their characters anything that does

not belong to them, without "manufacturing his data," he somehow manages to do much more than introduce them to you; he makes you their intimate and admiring friends, as he was. His ouzel bobs you a cheery good morning and sprays you with its "ripple of song"; his Douglas squirrel scolds and swears at you with rough good-nature; and his big-horn gazes at you with frank and friendly eyes and challenges you to follow to its splendid heights, not as a hunter but as a companion. You love them all, as Muir did.

As an instance of this power in his writings, when I returned from the Klondyke in 1898 the story of Stickeen had been published in a magazine a few months before. I met in New York a daughter of the great Field family, who when a child had heard me tell of Muir's exploit in rescuing me from the mountain

top, and who had shouted with delight when I told of our sliding down the mountain in the moraine gravel. She asked me eagerly if I was the Mr. Young mentioned in Muir's story. When I said that I was she called to her companions and introduced me as the Owner of Stickeen; and I was content to have as my claim to an earthly immortality my ownership of an immortalized dog.

I cannot think of John Muir as dead, or as much changed from the man with whom I canoed and camped. He was too much a part of nature—too natural—to be separated from his mountains, trees and glaciers. Somewhere, I am sure, he is making other explorations, solving other natural problems, using that brilliant, inventive genius to good effect; and some time again I shall hear him unfold anew, with

still clearer insight and more eloquent words, fresh secrets of his "mountains of God."

The Thlingets have a Happy Hunting Ground in the Spirit Land for dogs as well as for men; and Muir used to contend that they were right—that the so-called lower animals have as much right to a Heaven as humans. I wonder if he has found a still more beautiful—a glorified—Stickeen; and if the little fellow still follows and frisks about him as in those great, old days. I like to think so; and when I too cross the Great Divide—and it can't be long now—I shall look eagerly for them both to be my companions in fresh adventures. In the meantime I am lonely for them and think of them often, and say, with *The Harvester,* "What a dog!—and what a MAN!!"

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