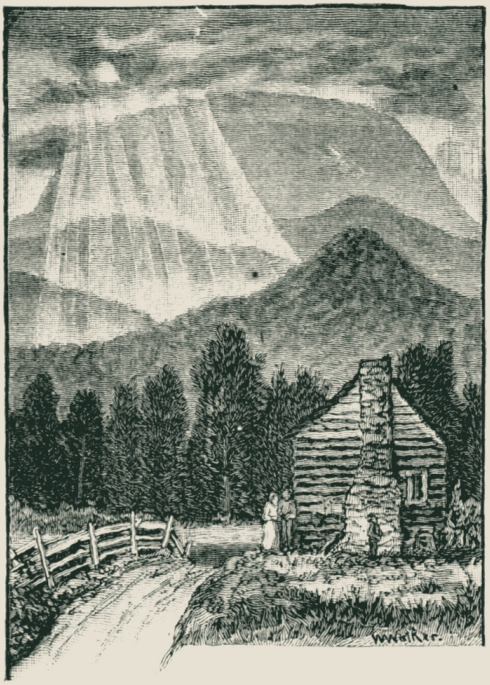
WAKING UP IN
BOONE

JOHN MUIR

IN THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAINS

Across the Cumberlands and the Blue Ridge, 1867
and on Grandfather Mountain, 1898



THE MUIR MOUNTAIN LIBRARY · NO. 1

JOHN MUIR

IN THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAINS

From A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf

edited by William Frederic Badè, 1916

with two stories from The Conversation of John Muir
by Melville B. Anderson, 1915



WAKING UP IN BOONE
Boone, North Carolina

The text is chapter two of John Muir, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, edited by William Frederic Badè (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), preceded by the journal entry for September 10 that closes chapter one. It is reprinted without change. Words in square brackets and the numbered notes are Badè's.

The closing pages are from Melville B. Anderson, "The Conversation of John Muir," *The American Museum Journal* 15 (March 1915), page 119, reprinted without change. The short note that introduces them is new to this edition.

The engravings are from Wilbur G. Zeigler and Ben S. Grosscup, *The Heart of the Alleghanies; or, Western North Carolina* (Raleigh and Cleveland, 1883). The map of Muir's route is from the 1916 edition. Text, engravings, and map are in the public domain in the United States.

Cover: *The Warrior Bald.* Title page: *A Glimpse of the Toe.*

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Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity.

JOHN MUIR
Our National Parks, 1901

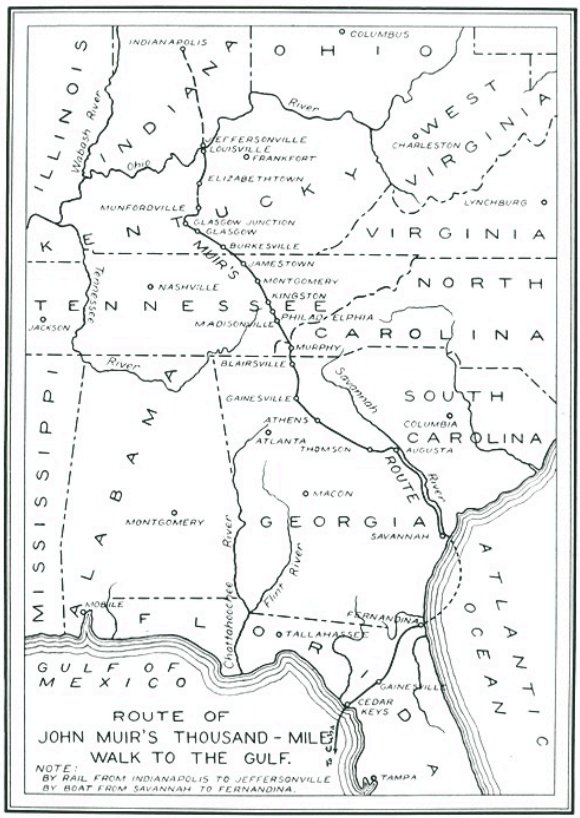
INTRODUCTION

In September 1867, John Muir was twenty-nine years old and walking from Indiana to the Gulf of Mexico. Earlier that year an accident in an Indianapolis carriage-parts factory had blinded him for a time, and when his sight returned he decided to spend his time among plants instead of machines. He carried a plant press and a small bag. He planned to keep going to South America.

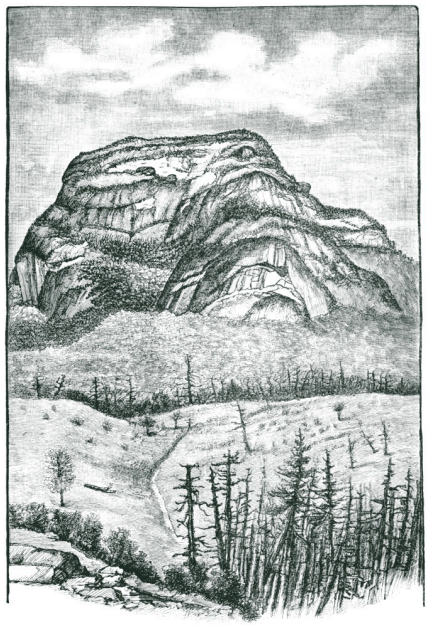
On September 10 he climbed into the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee. They were, he wrote, the first real mountains he had ever seen. Over the next twelve days he crossed the valleys of East Tennessee, came in sight of the Unaka Mountains, followed the Hiwassee River to Murphy, North Carolina, and reached the crest of the Blue Ridge in north Georgia. His notes from those days are mostly about trees, ferns, and rivers, and about the people he met two years after the Civil War.

Muir kept a journal on the walk. William Frederic Badè edited it after Muir's death, and Houghton Mifflin published it in 1916. This edition reprints the part of the journal that crosses the Southern Appalachians, without change, including language of its time that readers today will notice. The bracketed words and the numbered notes are Badè's.

Thirty-one years later Muir came back to these mountains. In September 1898 he climbed Grandfather Mountain, near Boone. He told the story of that day in the last summer of his life, and a friend printed it the next spring. It closes this volume.



Muir's route, from the 1916 edition. This volume covers the stretch from the Kentucky line to the Blue Ridge in Georgia.



Unaka Kanoos, 1883

CROSSING THE CUMBERLAND MOUNTAINS

SEPTEMBER 10

Escaped from a heap of uncordial kindness to the generous bosom of the woods. After a few miles of level ground in luxuriant tangles of brooding vines, I began the ascent of the Cumberland Mountains, the first real mountains that my foot ever touched or eyes beheld. The ascent was by a nearly regular zigzag slope, mostly covered up like a tunnel by overarching oaks. But there were a few openings where the glorious forest road of Kentucky was grandly seen, stretching over hill and valley, adjusted to every slope and curve by the hands of Nature the most sublime and comprehensive picture that ever entered my eyes. Reached the summit in six or seven hours—a strangely long period of up-grade work to one accustomed only to the hillocky levels of Wisconsin and adjacent States.

◊

I had climbed but a short distance when I was overtaken by a young man on horse-back, who soon showed that he intended to rob me if he should find the job worth while. After he had inquired where I came from, and where I was going, he offered to carry my bag. I told him that it was so light that I did not feel it at all a burden; but he insisted and coaxed until I allowed him to carry it. As soon as he had gained possession I noticed that he gradually increased his speed, evidently trying to get far enough ahead of me to examine the contents without being observed. But I was too good a walker

and runner for him to get far. At a turn of the road, after trotting his horse for about half an hour, and when he thought he was out of sight, I caught him rummaging my poor bag. Finding there only a comb, brush, towel, soap, a change of underclothing, a copy of Burns's poems, Milton's Paradise Lost, and a small New Testament, he waited for me, handed back my bag, and returned down the hill, saying that he had forgotten something.

I found splendid growths of shining-leaved *Ericaceæ* (heathworts) for which the Alleghany Mountains are noted. Also ferns of which *Osmunda cinnamomea* [Cinnamon Fern] is the largest and perhaps the most abundant. *Osmunda regalis* [Flowering Fern] is also common here, but not large. In Wood's[1] and Gray's Botany *Osmunda cinnamomea* is said to be a much larger fern than *Osmunda claytoniana*. This I found to be true in Tennessee and southward, but in Indiana, part of Illinois, and Wisconsin the opposite is true. Found here the beautiful, sensitive *Schrankia*, or sensitive brier. It is a long, prickly, leguminous vine, with dense heads of small, yellow fragrant flowers.

Vines growing on roadsides receive many a tormenting blow, simply because they give evidence of feeling. Sensitive people are served in the same way. But the roadside vine soon becomes less sensitive,

[1]Alphonso Wood, *Class-book of Botany, with a Flora of The United States and Canada*. The copy of this work, carried by Mr. Muir on his wanderings, is still extant. The edition is that of 1862.

like people getting used to teasing—Nature, in this instance, making for the comfort of flower creatures the same benevolent arrangement as for man. Thus I found that the *Schrankia* vines growing along footpaths leading to a backwoods schoolhouse were much less sensitive than those in the adjacent unfrequented woods, having learned to pay but slight attention to the tingling strokes they get from teasing scholars.

It is startling to see the pairs of pinnate leaves rising quickly out of the grass and folding themselves close in regular succession from the root to the end of the prostrate stems, ten to twenty feet in length. How little we know as yet of the life of plants—their hopes and fears, pains and enjoyments!

Traveled a few miles with an old Tennessee farmer who was much excited on account of the news he had just heard. "Three kingdoms, England, Ireland, and Russia, have declared war agin the United States. Oh, it's terrible, terrible," said he. "This big war comin' so quick after our own big fight. Well, it can't be helped, and all I have to say is, Amerricay forever, but I'd a heap rather they didn't fight."

"But are you sure the news is true?" I inquired. "Oh, yes, quite sure," he replied, "for me and some of my neighbors were down at the store last night, and Jim Smith can read, and he found out all about it in a newspaper."

Passed the poor, rickety, thrice-dead village of Jamestown, an incredibly dreary place. Toward the top of the Cumberland grade, about two hours before sundown I came to a log house, and as I had been warned that all the broad plateau of the range for forty or fifty miles was desolate, I began thus early to seek a lodging for the night. Knocking at the door, a motherly old lady replied to my request for supper and bed and breakfast, that I was welcome to the best she had, provided that I had the necessary change to pay my bill. When I told her that unfortunately I had nothing smaller than a five-dollar greenback, she said, "Well, I'm sorry, but cannot afford to keep you. Not long ago ten soldiers came across from North Carolina, and in the morning they offered a greenback that I couldn't change, and so I got nothing for keeping them, which I was ill able to afford." "Very well," I said, "I'm glad you spoke of this beforehand, for I would rather go hungry than impose on your hospitality."

As I turned to leave, after bidding her good-bye, she, evidently pitying me for my tired looks, called me back and asked me if I would like a drink of milk. This I gladly accepted, thinking that perhaps I might not be successful in getting any other nourishment for a day or two. Then I inquired whether there were any more houses on the road, nearer than North Carolina, forty or fifty miles away. "Yes," she said, "it's only two miles to the next house, but beyond that there are no houses that I know of except empty

ones whose owners have been killed or driven away during the war."

Arriving at the last house, my knock at the door was answered by a bright, good-natured, good-looking little woman, who in reply to my request for a night's lodging and food, said, "Oh, I guess so. I think you can stay. Come in and I'll call my husband." "But I must first warn you," I said, "that I have nothing smaller to offer you than a five-dollar bill for my entertainment. I don't want you to think that I am trying to impose on your hospitality."

She then called her husband, a blacksmith, who was at work at his forge. He came out, hammer in hand, bare-breasted, sweaty, begrimed, and covered with shaggy black hair. In reply to his wife's statement, that this young man wished to stop over night, he quickly replied, "That's all right; tell him to go into the house." He was turning to go back to his shop, when his wife added, "But he says he hasn't any change to pay. He has nothing smaller than a five-dollar bill." Hesitating only a moment, he turned on his heel and said, "Tell him to go into the house. A man that comes right out like that beforehand is welcome to eat my bread."

When he came in after his hard day's work and sat down to dinner, he solemnly asked a blessing on the frugal meal, consisting solely of corn bread and bacon. Then, looking across the table at me, he said, "Young man, what are you doing down here?" I replied that I was looking at plants. "Plants? What

kind of plants?" I said, "Oh, all kinds; grass, weeds, flowers, trees, mosses, ferns,—almost everything that grows is interesting to me."

"Well, young man," he queried, "you mean to say that you are not employed by the Government on some private business?" "No," I said, "I am not employed by any one except just myself. I love all kinds of plants, and I came down here to these Southern States to get acquainted with as many of them as possible." "You look like a strong-minded man," he replied, "and surely you are able to do something better than wander over the country and look at weeds and blossoms. These are hard times, and real work is required of every man that is able. Picking up blossoms doesn't seem to be a man's work at all in any kind of times."

To this I replied, "You are a believer in the Bible, are you not?" "Oh, yes." "Well, you know Solomon was a strong-minded man, and he is generally believed to have been the very wisest man the world ever saw, and yet he considered it was worth while to study plants; not only to go and pick them up as I am doing, but to study them; and you know we are told that he wrote a book about plants, not only of the great cedars of Lebanon, but of little bits of things growing in the cracks of the walls.[2]

[2]The previously mentioned copy of Wood's Botany, used by John Muir, quotes on the title page 1 Kings iv, 33: "He spake of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall."

"Therefore, you see that Solomon differed very much more from you than from me in this matter. I'll warrant you he had many a long ramble in the mountains of Judea, and had he been a Yankee he would likely have visited every weed in the land. And again, do you not remember that Christ told his disciples to 'consider the lilies how they grow,' and compared their beauty with Solomon in all his glory? Now, whose advice am I to take, yours or Christ's? Christ says, 'Consider the lilies.' You say, 'Don't consider them. It isn't worth while for any strong-minded man.'"

This evidently satisfied him, and he acknowledged that he had never thought of blossoms in that way before. He repeated again and again that I must be a very strong-minded man, and admitted that no doubt I was fully justified in picking up blossoms. He then told me that although the war was over, walking across the Cumberland Mountains still was far from safe on account of small bands of guerrillas who were in hiding along the roads, and earnestly entreated me to turn back and not to think of walking so far as the Gulf of Mexico until the country became quiet and orderly once more.

I replied that I had no fear, that I had but very little to lose, and that nobody was likely to think it worth while to rob me; that, anyhow, I always had good luck. In the morning he repeated the warning and entreated me to turn back, which never for a

moment interfered with my resolution to pursue my glorious walk.

SEPTEMBER 11

Long stretch of level sand-stone plateau, lightly furrowed and dimpled with shallow groove-like valleys and hills. The trees are mostly oaks, planted wide apart like those in the Wisconsin woods. A good many pine trees here and there, forty to eighty feet high, and most of the ground is covered with showy flowers. Polygalas [milkworts], solidagoes [goldenrods], and asters were especially abundant. I came to a cool clear brook every half mile or so, the banks planted with *Osmunda regalia, Osmunda cinnamomea*, and handsome sedges. The few larger streams were fringed with laurels and azaleas. Large areas beneath the trees are covered with formidable green briers and brambles, armed with hooked claws, and almost impenetrable. Houses are far apart and uninhabited, orchards and fences in ruins —sad marks of war.

About noon my road became dim and at last vanished among desolate fields. Lost and hungry, I knew my direction but could not keep it on account of the briers. My path was indeed strewn with flowers, but as thorny, also, as mortal ever trod. In trying to force a way through these cat-plants one is not simply clawed and pricked through all one's clothing, but caught and held fast. The toothed arching branches come down over and above you like cruel living arms, and the more you struggle the more

desperately you are entangled, and your wounds deepened and multiplied. The South has plant fly-catchers. It also has plant man-catchers.

After a great deal of defensive fighting and struggling I escaped to a road and a house, but failed to find food or shelter. Towards sundown, as I was walking rapidly along a straight stretch in the road, I suddenly came in sight of ten mounted men riding abreast. They undoubtedly had seen me before I discovered them, for they had stopped their horses and were evidently watching me. I saw at once that it was useless to attempt to avoid them, for the ground thereabout was quite open. I knew that there was nothing for it but to face them fearlessly, without showing the slightest suspicion of foul play. Therefore, without halting even for a moment, I advanced rapidly with long strides as though I intended to walk through the midst of them. When I got within a rod or so I looked up in their faces and smilingly bade them "Howdy." Stopping never an instant, I turned to one side and walked around them to get on the road again, and kept on without venturing to look back or to betray the slightest fear of being robbed.

After I had gone about one hundred or one hundred and fifty yards, I ventured a quick glance back, without stopping, and saw in this flash of an eye that all the ten had turned their horses toward me and were evidently talking about me; supposedly, with reference to what my object was, where I

was going, and whether it would be worth while to rob me. They all were mounted on rather scrawny horses, and all wore long hair hanging down on their shoulders. Evidently they belonged to the most irreclaimable of the guerrilla bands who, long accustomed to plunder, deplored the coming of peace. I was not followed, however, probably because the plants projecting from my plant press made them believe that I was a poor herb doctors a common occupation in these mountain regions.

About dark I discovered, a little off the road, another house, inhabited by negroes, where I succeeded in obtaining a much needed meal of string beans, buttermilk, and corn bread. At the table I was seated in a bottomless chair, and as I became sore and heavy, I sank deeper and deeper, pressing my knees against my breast, and my mouth settled to the level of my plate. But wild hunger cares for none of these things, and my curiously compressed position prevented the too free indulgence of boisterous appetite. Of course, I was compelled to sleep with the trees in the one great bedroom of the open night.

SEPTEMBER 12

Awoke drenched with mountain mist, which made a grand show, as it moved away before the hot sun. Passed Montgomery, a shabby village at the head of the east slope of the Cumberland Mountains. Obtained breakfast in a clean house and began the descent of the mountains. Obtained fine views of a

wide, open country, and distant flanking ridges and spurs. Crossed a wide cool stream [Emory River], a branch of the Clinch River. There is nothing more eloquent in Nature than a mountain stream, and this is the first I ever saw. Its banks are luxuriantly peopled with rare and lovely flowers and overarching trees, making one of Nature's coolest and most hospitable places. Every tree, every flower, every ripple and eddy of this lovely stream seemed solemnly to feel the presence of the great Creator. Lingered in this sanctuary a long time thanking the Lord with all my heart for his goodness in allowing me to enter and enjoy it.

Discovered two ferns, *Dicksonia* and a small matted polypod on trees, common farther South. Also a species of magnolia with very large leaves and scarlet conical fruit. Near this stream I spent some joyous time in a grand rock-dwelling full of mosses, birds, and flowers. Most heavenly place I ever entered. The long narrow valleys of the mountainside, all well watered and nobly adorned with oaks, magnolias, laurels, azaleas, asters, ferns, Hypnum mosses, Madotheca [Scale-mosses], etc. Also towering clumps of beautiful hemlocks. The hemlock, judging from the common species of Canada, I regarded as the least noble of the conifers. But those of the eastern valleys of the Cumberland Mountains are as perfect in form and regal in port as the pines themselves. The latter abundant. Obtained fine glimpses from open places as I descended to

the great valley between these mountains and the Unaka Mountains on the state line. Forded the Clinch, a beautiful clear stream, that knows many of the dearest mountain retreats that ever heard the music of running water. Reached Kingston before dark. Sent back my plant collections by express to my brother in Wisconsin.

SEPTEMBER 13

Walked all day across small parallel valleys that flute the surface of the one wide valley. These flutings appear to have been formed by lateral pressure, are fertile, and contain some fine forms, though the seal of war is on all things. The roads never seem to proceed with any fixed purpose, but wander as if lost. In seeking the way to Philadelphia [in Loudon County, Tennessee], I was told by a buxom Tennessee "gal" that over the hills was much the nearer way, that she always went that way, and that surely I could travel it.

I started over the flint-ridges, but soon reached a set of enchanted little valleys among which, no matter how or in what direction I traveled, I could not get a foot nearer to Philadelphia. At last, consulting my map and compass, I neglected all directions and finally reached the house of a negro driver, with whom I put up for the night. Received a good deal of knowledge which may be of use should I ever be a negro teamster.

SEPTEMBER 14

Philadelphia is a very filthy village in a beautiful situation. More or less of pine. Black oak most abundant. *Polypodium hexagonopterum* and *Abspidium acrostichoides* [Christmas Fern] most abundant of ferns and most generally distributed. *Osmunda claytoniana* rare, not in fruit, small. *Dicksonia* abundant, after leaving the Cumberland Mountains. *Asplenium ebeneum* [Ebony Spleenwort] quite common in Tennessee and many parts of Kentucky. *Cystopteris* [Bladder Fern], and *Asplenium filix-fœmina* not common through the same range. *Pteris aquilina* [Common Brake] abundant, but small.

Walked through many a leafy valley, shady grove, and cool brooklet. Reached Madisonville, a brisk village. Came in full view of the Unaka Mountains, a magnificent sight. Stayed over night with a pleasant young farmer.

SEPTEMBER 15

Most glorious billowy mountain scenery. Made many a halt at open places to take breath and to admire. The road, in many places cut into the rock, goes winding about among the knobs and gorges. Dense growth of asters, liatris[3], and grapevines.

Reached a house before night, and asked leave to stop. "Well, you're welcome to stop," said the

[3]Wood's Botany, edition of 1862, furnishes the following interesting comment on *Liatris odoratissima* (Willd.), popularly known as Vanilla Plant or Deer's Tongue: "The fleshy leaves exhale a rich fragrance even for years after they are dry, and are therefore by the southern planters largely mixed with their cured tobacco, to impart its fragrance to that nauseous weed."

mountaineer, "if you think you can live till morning on what I have to live on all the time." Found the old gentleman very communicative. Was favored with long "bar" stories, deer hunts, etc., and in the morning was pressed to stay a day or two.

SEPTEMBER 16

"I will take you," said he, "to the highest ridge in the country, where you can see both ways. You will have a view of all the world on one side of the mountains and all creation on the other. Besides, you, who are traveling for curiosity and wonder, ought to see our gold mines." I agreed to stay and went to the mines. Gold is found in small quantities throughout the Alleghanies, and many farmers work at mining a few weeks or months every year when their time is not more valuable for other pursuits. In this neighborhood miners are earning from half a dollar to two dollars a day. There are several large quartz mills not far from here. Common labor is worth ten dollars a month.

SEPTEMBER 17

Spent the day in botanizing, blacksmithing and examining a grist mill. Grist mills, in the less settled parts of Tennessee and North Carolina, are remarkably simple affairs. A small stone, that a man might carry under his arm, is fastened to the vertical shaft of a little home-made, boyish-looking back-action water-wheel, which, with a hopper and a box to receive the meal, is the whole affair The walls of the mill are of undressed poles cut from seedling trees

and there is no floor, as lumber is dear. No dam is built. The water is conveyed along some hillside until sufficient fall is obtained, a thing easily done in the mountains.

On Sundays you may see wild, unshorn, uncombed men coming out of the woods, each with a bag of corn on his back. From a peck to a bushel is a common grist. They go to the mill along verdant footpaths, winding up and down over hill and valley, and crossing many a rhododendron glen. The flowers and shining leaves brush against their shoulders and knees, occasionally knocking off their coonskin caps. The first arrived throws his corn into the hopper, turns on the water, and goes to the house. After chatting and smoking he returns to see if his grist is done. Should the stones run empty for an hour or two, it does no harm.

This is a fair average in equipment and capacity of a score of mills that I saw in Tennessee. This one was built by John Vohn, who claimed that he could make it grind twenty bushels a day. But since it fell into other hands it can be made to grind only ten per day. All the machines of Kentucky and Tennessee are far behind the age. There is scarce a trace of that restless spirit of speculation and invention so characteristic of the North. But one way of doing things obtains here, as if laws had been passed making attempts at improvement a crime. Spinning and weaving are done in every one of these mountain cabins wherever the least pretensions are made to

thrift and economy. The practice of these ancient arts they deem marks of advancement rather than of backwardness. "There's a place back heah," said my worthy entertainer, "whar there's a mill-house, an' a store-house, an' a still-house, an' a spring-house, an' a blacksmith shop—all in the same yard! Cows too, an' heaps of big gals a-milkin' them."

This is the most primitive country I have seen, primitive in everything. The remotest hidden parts of Wisconsin are far in advance of the mountain regions of Tennessee and North Carolina. But my host speaks of the "old-fashioned unenlightened times," like a philosopher in the best light of civilization. "I believe in Providence," said he. "Our fathers came into these valleys, got the richest of them, and skimmed off the cream of the soil. The worn-out ground won't yield no roastin' ears now. But the Lord foresaw this state of affairs, and prepared something else for us. And what is it? Why, He meant us to bust open these copper mines and gold mines, so that we may have money to buy the corn that we cannot raise." A most profound observation.

SEPTEMBER 18

Up the mountain on the state line. The scenery is far grander than any I ever before beheld. The view extends from the Cumberland Mountains on the north far into Georgia and North Carolina to the south, an area of about five thousand square miles. Such an ocean of wooded, waving, swelling mountain beauty and grandeur is not to be described.

Countless forest-clad hills, side by side in rows and groups, seemed to be enjoying the rich sunshine and remaining motionless only because they were so eagerly absorbing it. All were united by curves and slopes of inimitable softness and beauty. Oh, these forest gardens of our Father! What perfection, what divinity, in their architecture! What simplicity and mysterious complexity of detail! Who shall read the teaching of these sylvan pages, the glad brotherhood of rills that sing in the valleys, and all the happy creatures that dwell in them under the tender keeping of a Father's care?

SEPTEMBER 19

Received another solemn warning of dangers on my way through the mountains. Was told by my worthy entertainer of a wondrous gap in the mountains which he advised me to see. "It is called Track Gap," said he, "from the great number of tracks in the rocks—bird tracks, bar tracks, hoss tracks, men tracks, all in the solid rock as if it had been mud." Bidding farewell to my worthy mountaineer and all his comfortable wonders, I pursued my way to the South.

As I was leaving, he repeated the warnings of danger ahead, saying that there were a good many people living like wild beasts on whatever they could steal, and that murders were sometimes committed for four or five dollars, and even less. While stopping with him I noticed that a man came regularly after dark to the house for his supper. He was

armed with a gun, a pistol, and a long knife. My host told me that this man was at feud with one of his neighbors, and that they were prepared to shoot one another at sight. That neither of them could do any regular work or sleep in the same place two nights in succession. That they visited houses only for food, and as soon as the one that I saw had got his supper he went out and slept in the woods, without of course making a fire. His enemy did the same.

My entertainer told me that he was trying to make peace between these two men, because they both were good men, and if they would agree to stop their quarrel, they could then both go to work. Most of the food in this house was coffee without sugar, corn bread, and sometimes bacon. But the coffee was the greatest luxury which these people knew. The only way of obtaining it was by seizing skins, or, in particular, "sang," that is ginseng,[4] which found a market in far-off China.

My path all to-day led me along the leafy banks of the Hiwassee,[5] a most impressive mountain river. Its channel is very rough, as it crosses the edges of upturned rock strata, some of them standing at right angles, or glancing off obliquely to right and

[4] Muir's journal contains the following additional note: "M. County produces $5000 worth a year of ginseng root, valued at seventy cents a pound. Under the law it is not allowed to be gathered until the first of September."

[5] In his journal Muir spells the name "Hiawassee," a form which occurs on many of the older maps. The name probably is derived from the Cherokee Indian "Ayuhwasi," a name applied to several of their former settlements.

left. Thus a multitude of short, resounding cataracts are produced, and the river is restrained from the headlong speed due to its volume and the inclination of its bed.

All the larger streams of uncultivated countries are mysteriously charming and beautiful, whether flowing in mountains or through swamps and plains. Their channels are interestingly sculptured, far more so than the grandest architectural works of man. The finest of the forests are usually found along their banks, and in the multitude of falls and rapids the wilderness finds a voice. Such a river is the Hiwassee, with its surface broken to a thousand sparkling gems, and its forest walls vine-draped and flowery as Eden. And how fine the songs it sings!

In Murphy [North Carolina] I was hailed by the sheriff who could not determine by my colors and rigging to what country or craft I belonged. Since the war, every other stranger in these lonely parts is supposed to be a criminal, and all are objects of curiosity or apprehensive concern. After a few minutes' conversation with this chief man of Murphy I was pronounced harmless, and invited to his house, where for the first time since leaving home I found a house decked with flowers and vines, clean within and without, and stamped with the comforts of culture and refinement in all its arrangements. Striking contrast to the uncouth transitionist establishments from the wigwams of savages to the clumsy but clean log castle of the thrifty pioneer.

SEPTEMBER 20

All day among the groves and gorges of Murphy with Mr. Beale. Was shown the site of Camp Butler where General Scott had his headquarters when he removed the Cherokee Indians to a new home in the West. Found a number of rare and strange plants on the rocky banks of the river Hiwassee. In the afternoon, from the summit of a commanding ridge, I obtained a magnificent view of blue, softly curved mountain scenery. Among the trees I saw *Ilex* [Holly] for the first time. Mr. Beale informed me that the paleness of most of the women in his neighborhood, and the mountains in general hereabouts, was caused chiefly by smoking and by what is called "dipping." I had never even heard of dipping. The term simply describes the application of snuff to the gum by means of a small swab.

SEPTEMBER 21

Most luxuriant forest. Many brooks running across the road. Blairsville [Georgia], which I passed in the forenoon, seems a shapeless and insignificant village, but grandly encircled with banded hills. At night I was cordially received by a farmer whose wife, though smart and neat in her appearance, was an inveterate smoker.

SEPTEMBER 22

Hills becoming small, sparsely covered with soil. They are called "knob land" and are cultivated, or scratched, with a kind of one-tooth cultivator. Every rain robs them of their fertility, while the bottoms are of course correspondingly enriched. About

noon I reached the last mountain summit on my way to the sea. It is called the Blue Ridge and before it lies a prospect very different from any I had passed, namely, a vast uniform expanse of dark pine woods, extending to the sea; an impressive view at any time and under any circumstances, but particularly so to one emerging from the mountains.

Traveled in the wake of three poor but merry mountaineers—an old woman, a young woman, and a young man—who sat, leaned, and lay in the box of a shackly wagon that seemed to be held together by spiritualism, and was kept in agitation by a very large and a very small mule. In going down hill the looseness of the harness and the joints of the wagon allowed the mules to back nearly out of sight beneath the box, and the three who occupied it were slid against the front boards in a heap over the mules' ears. Before they could unravel their limbs from this unmannerly and impolite disorder, a new ridge in the road frequently tilted them with a swish and a bump against the back boards in a mixing that was still more grotesque.

I expected to see man, women, and mules mingled in piebald ruin at the bottom of some rocky hollow, but they seemed to have full confidence in the back board and front board of the wagon-box. So they continued to slide comfortably up and down, from end to end, in slippery obedience to the law of gravitation, as the grades demanded. Where the jolting was moderate, they engaged in

conversation on love, marriage, and camp-meeting, according to the custom of the country. The old lady, through all the vicissitudes of the transportation, held a bouquet of French marigolds.

The hillsides hereabouts were bearing a fine harvest of asters. Reached Mount Yonah in the evening. Had a long conversation with an old Methodist slaveholder and mine owner. Was hospitably refreshed with a drink of fine cider.

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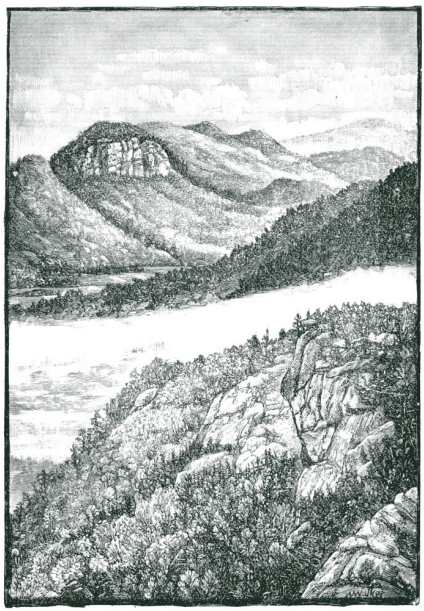

Bold Headlands, 1883

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN, 1898

From The Conversation of John Muir
by Melville B. Anderson, 1915

Melville B. Anderson taught English literature at Stanford and was Muir's friend for nearly twenty-five years. Muir died on December 24, 1914. The next March, Anderson published a short memoir of Muir's talk in *The American Museum Journal*. In it he gave two stories from a visit in August 1914, taken from notes a friend made at the time. Both are set in these mountains. The first goes back to the 1867 walk. The second took place in the fall of 1898, when Muir traveled through the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee with Charles Sprague Sargent of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum and the botanist William Canby. Anderson left the other man's name blank. Most readers take him to be Sargent, who lived near Boston.

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I venture to offer here two imperfect snatches of his talk, which I owe to a friend who accompanied me to visit Muir last August, and who jotted down a few notes. Muir rarely referred to current events, but some reference to the invasion of Belgium brought out the following deliverance:

It all reminds me of an experience of mine soon after leaving the University of Wisconsin. I wanted to go to Florida to see the plants down there; so I set out afoot toward the fall of the year. I traveled along the western foothills of the Appalachian Mountains where the people were none too hospitable. It was just after the War and they were distrustful of Northerners. When refused shelter I would creep into the thickest brush I could find under the large trees. Often it would rain, and again it would not be safe to light a fire, so that I got pretty chilly by morning. Then, when the sun was up, I'd crawl into

an open, sheltered spot and try to get another nap. But I didn't generally sleep long. The people there all keep hogs and let them run on the mountainsides to feed on the acorns. In order to keep the herd together, they throw out a few ears of corn in the morning about the cabin, at the same time calling the hogs. I'd hear a shout away down the valley somewhere, then a crackling of the brush all round, and those razorbacks would come charging down the hillside right through my little camp and right over me, if I didn't look out — snorting and squealing, blind and mad to get at that corn.

And that's the way with us in these days of our modern civilization and automobiles and a' that, rushing pellmell after something and never getting anywhere. We imagine if we make a big disturbance we're "progressing"! — Progressing down hill like the Gadarene swine! —

Much later on in the same conversation, he chanced to be speaking with humorous indignation, but not unkindly, of certain differences he had had with an Eastern naturalist, and wound up about as follows:

. . . . But I got the better of him once. A number of us, botanists and foresters and others, were examining the mountain region of Tennessee and North Carolina and on down the ridge. The autumn frosts were just beginning, and the mountains and higher hilltops were gorgeous. My friend and the rest were making a little fun of me for my enthusiasm. We climbed slope after slope through the trees till we

came out on the bare top of Grandfather Mountain. There it all lay in the sun below us, ridge beyond ridge, each with its typical tree-covering and color, all blended with the darker shades of the pines and the green of the deep valleys.— I could n't hold in, and began to jump about and sing and glory in it all. Then I happened to look round and catch sight of —— standing there as cool as a rock, with a half amused look on his face at me, but never saying a word.

"Why don't you let yourself out at a sight like that?" I said.

"I don't wear my heart upon my sleeve," he retorted.

"Who cares where you wear your little heart, man?" I cried. "There you stand in the face of all Heaven come down on earth, like a critic of the universe, as if to say, Come, Nature, bring on the best you have: I'm from BOSTON!" —

Sallies like these were not infrequent, but the main current of his talk was deeper and graver.

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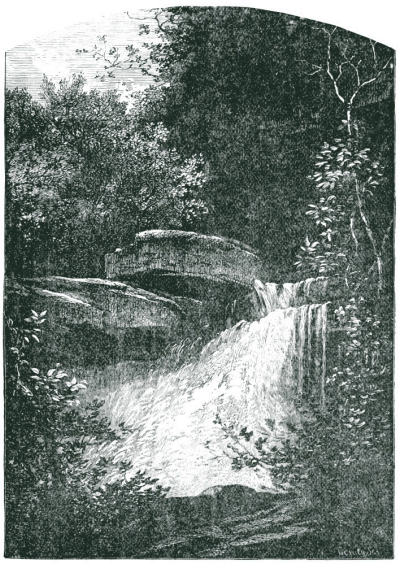

Watauga Falls, 1883

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