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John Muir

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## A Thousand Mile Walk to California

*by John Muir*

I followed the Diablo foothills along the San José Valley to Gilroy, thence over the Diablo Mountains to the valley of the San Joaquin by the Pacheco Pass, thence down the valley opposite the mouth of the Merced River, thence across the San Joaquin, and up into the Sierra Nevada to the mammoth trees of Mariposa, and the glorious Yosemite, and thence down the Merced to this place. The goodness of the weather as I journeyed toward Pacheco was beyond all praise and description—fragrant, mellow, and bright. The sky was perfectly delicious sweet enough for the breath of angels; every draught of it gave a separate and distinct piece of pleasure. I do not believe that Adam and Eve ever tasted better in their balmyest nook.

The last of the Coast Range foothills were in near view all the way to Gilroy. Their union with the valley is by curves and slopes of inimitable beauty. They were robed with the greenest grass and richest light I ever beheld, and were colored and shaded with myriads of flowers of every hue, chiefly of purple and golden yellow. Hundreds of crystal rills joined song with the larks, filling all the valley with music like a sea, making it Eden from end to end.

The scenery too, and all of nature in the Pass is fairly enchanting. Strange and beautiful mountain ferns are there, low in the dark canyons and high upon the rocky sunlit peaks; banks of blooming shrubs, and sprinklings and gatherings of garment flowers, precious and pure as ever enjoyed the sweets of a mountain home. And oh! what streams are there! beaming, glancing, each with music of its own, singing as they go, in shadow and light, onward upon their lovely, changing pathways to the sea. And hills rise over hills, and mountains over mountains, heaving, waving, swelling, in most glorious, overpowering, unreadable majesty.

When at last, stricken and faint like a crushed insect, you hope to escape from all the terrible grandeur of these mountain powers, other fountains, other oceans break forth before you; for there, in clear view, over heaps and rows of foothills, is laid a grand, smooth, outspread plain, watered by a river, and another range of peaky, snow-capped mountains a hundred miles in the distance. That plain is the valley of the San Joaquin, and those mountains are the great Sierra Nevada. The valley of the San Joaquin is the floweriest piece of world I ever walked, one vast, level, even flower-bed, a sheet of flowers, a smooth sea, ruffled a little in the middle by the tree fringing of the river and of smaller cross-streams here and there, from the mountains.

Florida is indeed a "land of flowers," but for every flower creature that dwells in its most delightful places more than a hundred are living here. Here, here is Florida! Here

FROM A THOUSAND MILE WALK TO THE GULF [1916].

they are not sprinkled apart with grass between as on our prairies, but grasses are sprinkled among the flowers; not as in Cuba, flowers piled upon flowers, heaped and gathered into deep, glowing masses, but side by side, flower to flower, petal to petal, touching but not entwined, branches weaving past and past each other, yet free and separate—one smooth garment, mosses next the ground, grasses above, petaled flowers between.

Before studying the flowers of this valley and their sky, and all of the furniture and sounds and adornments of their home, one can scarce believe that their vast assemblies are permanent; but rather that, actuated by some plant purpose, they had convened from every plain and mountain and meadow of their kingdom, and that the different coloring of patches, acres, and miles marks the bounds of the various tribes and family encampments.