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## Letter from Geo[rge] G. Mackenzie to [Robert Underwood] Johnson, 1891 Feb 4.

George G. Mackenzie

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[1]  
Raymond, Fresno Co., Cal.

Feb. 4, 1891

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I have not yet brought up publicly the question of military rule in Yosemite; but have privately circulated an address, to gather some signatures as a nucleus for a more general congregation after a time, if necessary. I have been waiting to hear if the Overland will publish an article I offered in that direction. In January the editor wrote to me that I would hear from him soon, but the time for effective agitation is wearing away, and I will not wait much longer. There is no shadow of doubt in my mind about the result of the soldier business. The principle, in the first place, of military interference in civil matters is radically wrong, and no excuse of expediency can make that wrong right. But, waiving that consideration, the attempt to run the Yosemite park by soldiers would certainly prove a costly failure, and would bring into contempt the whole proposition of forest preservation. A company of troopers planted at Wawona, or at any other point in the Park, would be as useless as a company of Yosemite commissioners. The soldier idea appears to be, to have a camp somewhere in the Park; and to let a moral influence emanate from the camp, impregnating the air with an

element that will prevent or extinguish fires, drive away trespassers, and otherwise by an insensible magic preserve order in the reservation. It is even suggested that the troopers might take an occasional scout through the Park; but I am astonished that so much of a concession is granted by those who believe in the wonderful influence of a shoulder-strap and a sabre. An occasional "scout," however, by the troopers and their lieutenants would, to anybody who knows the mountains, be simply a source of merriment. The trouble is that the proposal to run the Park by means of a military camp is made by those who have not the first syllable of knowledge of mountaineering, and the special conditions of the Yosemite reservation. Their acquaintance extends no further (if so far) than the highway to Yosemite Valley, and they forget altogether that the reservation is a very large territory of the roughest possible character, and that while the lieutenants should be showing their uniforms to the ladies at the hotels, and while the troopers would be dress-parading for the amusement of tourists, or even riding gallantly along the road, the fires and the sheep would be going through their exercises in all other parts of the reservation, just as usual.

If the Park proposition is to be turned into that kind of a humbug, I want to be clear of any share of the ridicule that will fall on those who have encouraged the proposition. And I mean to take good care to do clear myself.



For the others who are crying for soldiers - They are simply expectations of profit. I enclose a condensation of the Yosemite commission's latest report. I have written for copies of the full report, but they have not yet come. You will see that the Commissioners' advice, to have a company of soldiers at Wawona, is exactly in accordance with what I wrote to you about the Wawona people's hopes. That advice could be grafted on Mr. Stewshaw, and through him on Mr. Stoble, apparently, but it cannot be grafted on my mind. Nor can it be made acceptable to the California public, which is already beginning to suspect the Park proposition as a sham, got up to enable the present Yosemite monopoly to gather in more money.

What better than the military scheme is offered by me? This better: as is well understood by everybody of intelligence who knows the mountains.

The reservation should be laid off in districts. Each district should have a patrol of one or two men, ~~who are~~ picked for their thorough knowledge of the mountains and usage to mountaineers' life. These men should be under orders of a chief who would be constantly active in supervision. On account of the size and the natural conformation of the land, the least number of districts would be eight. Twelve would be better, but I am reckoning on the least outlay of money. The business of the patrol would be, first, to warn off trespassers and watch for fires. With such a watch the inroads of

trespassers would be inconsiderable, and fires would be detected while incipient. In nearly all cases fires of magnitude arise just because no one takes the trouble to quench them while small. They don't burst out in an ungovernable extent all at once. Occasionally a fire might occur too much for one or two men to suppress. Their help would have to come from the other districts. But, as the patrolmen would have time to spare, they could by degrees run numerous "fire-lines" that would check the spread of flames and make the work of suppressing fire comparatively easy. "Fire lines" are merely strips, like roads or trails, from which the vegetation is stripped. With a little exercise of judgment, the Park could be by degrees well furnished with such "fire-lines".

Of course, figuring on the basis of say 8 men, the results of the work would not be showy. But I recognize that the question of appropriations must be met. I estimate the cost of the service about as follows; the pay for men being as low as will obtain and keep good service - almost too low.

8 men @ \$75 per month - 6 months -	\$ 3,600. -
Officer's pay, by the year,	1,500. -
10 Saddle horses	750. -
2 Pack "	150. -
2 Wagon "	200. -
Wagon, saddles, harness, tools, &c.	750. -
Feed for horses (much of the time the horses would live on the meadow grass, and do well.) for year	800. -
Contingencies - say	\$ 7,750. -
	500
	\$ 8,250



This estimate leaves no room for a high-priced official, and perhaps that is a weakness. The horses and material would require renewal at small annual cost. Really, the first annual outlay ought to be \$10,000, so as to provide for at least 10 men besides the chief.

I write these things to enable you to form an idea of the practical handling of the business. Scatter-brains will say, as I have heard said, that hundreds of men would be required to guard the Park. My limit is a narrow one, but it will serve.

The greatest trouble in the Park management will be the question of the rights of persons who own lands within the reservation. There are many difficulties likely to arise from that source. An attempt to decide them arbitrarily will create an outcry that will crush the last bit of popularity of the Park undertaking, and the old Yosemite crowd will be quick to take advantage of such a mistake. A little display of military arbitrariness is what that combination prays for. If, in ~~establishing~~ the Park, ~~the~~ boundaries suggested by me had been followed, there would have been no difficulty of that kind, and, as well as I can see, all other purposes would have been sufficiently met. There may be on foot some large proposition of Park management, ~~with~~ of which I am not informed, but, according to my light, the whole present question is as I have put it - leaving out, of course, many details of park improvement.

I have no expectation of future usefulness in

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connection with Yosemite. In fact, the necessity of earning a living will soon force me to leave this region, and all I now look to do about the business is to utter a protest against the military wall with which the Yosemite people propose to surround themselves.

I was not informed about the Redwood park at Cloverdale. I think I saw a little item about it in a paper, but nothing giving information of interest.

I hope that your efforts in the Copyright matter will meet with the most gratifying success.

Yours very truly  
Geo. H. Jackson

## YOSEMITE VALLEY.

The biennial report of the commissioners to manage the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree grove has been published. It states that during the season ensuing upon the annual meeting in June, 1889, the guardian, Galen Clark, in addition to the merely preservative work necessary for the maintenance of the trails in safe condition and the roadway repairs—two items of great cost, which increases with the extension of the road and trail system required to give access to the spectacular parts of the valley—put needed improvements upon the snow trail, restored Mirror lake, built a new roadway to and along the borders of the same, and also stand and turning circles for vehicles. Attention is directed to the importance of the restoration of Mirror lake, one of the most interesting natural objects on the floor of the valley. The travel to the Valley in the season of 1889 was good, and there was an increased number of visitors from other states and countries. As a result of the carelessness of campers, or design on the part of sheep herders, the fire in the Big Tree grove have at times threatened its destruction. To defend and save it, and to take precautions against future calamities, costs nearly the whole of the annual appropriation. A re-survey of the grove is advised in order that the commission may be more certain of the bounds, and thus be better empowered to prevent trouble with fires. The working season following the annual meeting of the commissioners in June last, was devoted to the necessary repairs, to the construction of a telephone line to connect Glacier point with the hotels and trail stables, and to building a shorter trail to Cloud's Rest from the floor of the Little Yosemite. The Commissioners announce that their policy is to preserve the floor of the Valley as nearly as possible in its natural state, to avoid the groupings of buildings so as to form a village, to expel all hawkers and to restore the park-like condition of the Valley. In referring to the articles upon the Yosemite Valley which were published in the *Century* magazine the Commissioners declare them to be shameless and untruthful statements, and made only with the idea of diverting attention and travel from the most picturesque spot in the country. The Commissioners advise extending the reservation line around the Big Tree Grove, so that it will cover Signal Peak and the neighboring mountain slopes and summits and scenery, which merit preservation, and also the establishment at Wawona and some other convenient point of two companies of cavalry to patrol the mountains on police duty. The experience of the Commissioners constrains the request that the appropriation for the next biennial period be \$50,000, of which \$10,000 should be devoted to the Big Tree Grove.

S. F. Post. Jan. 17th. 86359