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Letter from Geo[rge] G. Mackenzie to [Robert Underwood] Johnson, 1891 Dec 3.

George G. Mackenzie

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Raymond, Cal., Dec. 3, '91 [1]

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I encountered Henry Washburn last evening at Raymond. He was furiously wrath, referred to Noble as a damned son of a skunk (to use Mark Twain's paraphrase) and was ready to curse everybody. He was very mad at the Examiner, which has an article quoting Mr. Noble as having said that 600 to 800 acres in Yosemite are fenced in and under cultivation. I don't believe Mr. Noble's report could have said that. I hope it ^{did} not make that error, because nothing like that much land has ever been cultivated at one time. Indeed I don't think that the cultivation at all times has covered so much ground. I ascribe the mistake to the blundering Examiner and not to Mr. Noble.

Washburn, however, said that not even 600 acres was fenced, and that anybody who said to the contrary was a — as above, &c. I immediately told him that to my knowledge the assertion was true, for a rough estimate, but that perhaps they had been taking down

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✓ fences. "Yes," he said, "they have been taking them down." I had not then seen the Examiner, and didn't know what its article contained.

I think that the Valley people must have got wind of what Mr. Stobbs' report would be like, and have been trying to head him off by removing some fence. I would have tried to learn from Washburn the amount of fences removed, but he is such an infernal liar that one cannot safely accept a word he says. It may be of some importance to know the exact truth about this. I would run up to Yosemite myself if I could do it. There has, however, been a snow storm in the mountains, and the weather is still threatening, and one would have to go by way of Stiles' Cove. Why could not A. H. Ward write to his brother to find out. If the weather should be good the brother could easily ride into the Valley, or, otherwise, could perhaps learn from the mail carrier just what is the fact. I do not believe that much fence has been removed. As a matter of fact, the fences are of use to the horse people only by keeping the public out of the meadows and land

by the river; for the Valley horses run everywhere. And the fences can be taken down, and an order issued excluding the public from those grounds, which would answer the same purpose as fencing.

But the fencing is only one point of the indictment. Nevertheless, it is well to be very exact and fully posted on all our points, so I would urge Mr. Ward to try to get the information through his brother. I would write to the latter myself, but do not know his address - nor his initials. None of the Yosemite people whom I can see here can be trusted to tell the truth.

I think that after Mr. Noble's report something will have to be done by Congress. If it should come to an investigation calling for witnesses at Washington, please let me know at the earliest moment when the information shall reach you. I suppose that I would be summoned, and I would have to trouble to prepare myself with necessary clothing and other matters of that sort. But I hardly expect an investigation of that sort. I cannot

indeed see what action Congress can take, the Act granting the Valley being what it is. But perhaps some of the big lawyers can find a device. I think, without a doubt, the "ring" would fight the matter in the courts before agreeing to a recession.

I'm not going to give myself much more anxiety about the question. The mere fact of getting such a report from Mr. Noble is victory enough to satisfy a reasonable desire. The burden of further duty now rests with the law-makers. I have worried over the business far too much for my own good. I would have hated to have our attempt dribble along and peter out ignominiously, as other efforts in the same line have done. Now, although the fight has not reached a finish, it has reached a stage of success that few people in California ever thought could be attained. People here have become such abject slaves of Southern Pacific influence that they regard anyone who bucks against it as something like a hopeless idiot. The Yosemite question, if final success turns our way, will assume a far wider importance than intrinsically belongs to it. It will teach Californians the strange doctrine that the Stanford is not the sole God, nor the Southern Pacific influence

5/ The motive power of the whole world. If that crowd had any common sense, they would back out of their position with all speed, but I don't expect it. Their experience has taught them that hard and loud lying, bluster and corruption will do anything in California, and they expect it to work elsewhere. Mike de Yonze is a brilliant specimen of that class.

By the way, I think there is a row among the Yosemite folks - Washburn and Cooke - themselves. I have no idea what it is about, and it will not prevent them from standing together in a fight before Congress, but there has been something wrong for over a year. I would like much to get an inkling of the reason, which might be of use to us, but both Washburn and Cooke are close-mouthed to an extreme concerning their private affairs. One indication is that, instead of boarding the stage drivers at the Stoneman house as formerly, Washburn built a house for the men ^{this summer,} for the reason that Cooke asked too much board. It may all be a pretense, to enable them to disclaim the monopoly, etc., but I think not. There is something back of it. Cooke is a very hog for money, and I suspect he has been claiming too big a share of the plunder.

I did hope to have got away from this place before now, but have been "out of luck" and haven't been able to earn anything more than a subsistence. However, if I can scrape together the necessary cash I will go "east" after a while. I'm wasting my life at present at a desperate speed - or rather at a most deadly dull and unproductive stage of vegetation.

I hope you will get your share of "kudos" (is that the word?) for your Epsemitic action. Indeed you are getting it in the blame of the corporation agencies.

Yours Very Truly
Geo. G. MacKenzie.

God forgive me for such a letter! You won't, I know.

It just occurs that it would be proper to inform Mr. Noble about some of the wire ^{or other} fences being removed. Will you do it? If Mr. N. should write to Galen Clarke and ask for an exact statement of the fences taken down, I don't believe the old man would lie about it.

4th I have been storm-bound in the house for a day, and have written an 1800 word letter to go to the Boston Transcript. Mr. Clement will probably think that the coon might as well come down, as I seem bound to fetch him some way. In this letter I blame the Southern Pacific company for the Yosemite management; say that that concern is bent on stealing the Valley; and that the contest now on is to determine whether the S. P. company can bulldoze the whole United States. I'll be glad if the letter is published. It is just the truth and precisely what is needed. I wind it up by intimating that California's

Congressmen will show whether they have at heart the honor of the State or the S. P. interest. The letter is planned partly to be a bait for Atchison, Topeka & S. F. and Denver, Rio Grande influence on our side, and, if published, will probably have some such effect.

I have also got a letter partly written for the Chicago Inter-Ocean. It will have at least one new point that will astonish people - and amuse perhaps - in the Zolaesque fashion. Can you find out if these letters are published, and let me know. I have no way of learning, and it is of no use to ask those terrible beings, the editors, to send a copy of their paper. I will also simultaneously send a short letter to the Times repeating my new point - Zolaesque - so it will have a double chance.