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1892-10-04

**Letter from Geo[rge] G. Mackenzie to [Robert Underwood]
Johnson, 1892 Oct 4.**

George G. Mackenzie

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Recommended Citation

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[17]
Raymond, Fresno Co., Cal.
Oct. 4, 1892.

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Now that you have had time to receive welcomes and congratulations from your near-by friends, I would also express my pleasure at learning that you had returned home in greatly improved health. I trust that your strength is solidly established, not soon to be shaken by attacks of illness.

I enclose a cutting from the Examiner, the article being by one Allan Kelly, who holds the sinecure position of "State Forester" and knows as much about forest management as does a sucking calf. He is, I believe, playing for the appointment as Guardian of Yosemite, when a vacancy

06416

THE YOSEMITE VALLEY.

Recent Doings of the State Board of Commissioners.

A VISIT OF GOVERNMENT AGENTS.

Troubles Caused by a Litigious Hotel-
Keeper—Campers' Butcher Shop Closed
—Free and Easy Style of Contracts.

[Correspondence of the EXAMINER.]

YOSEMITE, August 18. — Commissioner Kidder came up here last month with authority to set men at work on the new improvements that the board had decided to make in the valley. But it is easier to find room for improvement than to get the money to pay for it, and Mr. Kidder discovered that the appropriation for Yosemite was not inexhaustible.

Nothing would improve the valley more than the obliteration of about nine-tenths of the "improvements" that have been made there during the past thirty years. In the center of the valley is a village of tumble-down shanties and old barns, and there are more ramshackle old fences across the meadows than can be found on the most neglected ranch in the State. The Commissioners have ordered the removal of all unnecessary buildings and fences, but the work has not been begun, and there surely will be trouble with some of the lease-holders when the Guardian undertakes to carry out the orders of the board.

When a man secures a lease-hold or a privilege of any sort to live or do business in Yosemite he appears to regard his privilege as a vested right and its revocation or non-renewal as a high-handed outrage. Disgruntled applicants for privileges have caused nine-tenths of the trouble about Yosemite. The Commissioners are supposed to exercise almost absolute authority over everything in the valley, but experience has taught them that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the board to recover possession of any State property once leased to a Yosemite man.

A TROUBLESOME HOTELKEEPER.

Last January the lease of Barnard's Hotel expired, and at that time Barnard owed about \$1,600 rent. It would seem a simple matter to get rid of a tenant who had no lease and wouldn't pay rent, but when the board refused Barnard's application for a new lease at nothing a year and rented the hotel to A. B. Glasscock, Barnard set up a claim of proprietorship in the building and maintained that his lease had two years more to run. Suit was brought to eject him and judgment given in favor of the board, but an appeal was taken and a stay of proceedings granted, and landlord Barnard still holds the fort and doesn't pay any rent. Glasscock, expecting to be put in possession of the house, shipped several thousand dollars' worth of furniture into the valley last fall, and the property is now stored in a barn.

Glasscock's rental was to be one dollar per year
Six hundred dollars per year
was offered by deeding, formerly of the Valley.

[2]
shall occur, and is thick as thieves
with Washburn, Glasscock and the
rest.

Accidentally, I met Mr. A. H.
Ward at Raymond, the other
day. It was my first personal
acquaintance with him, and I
was much pleased with the man.
He told me that he had met one
of Mr. Noble's agents at Mariposa
and had posted such agent on
some points of Yosemite matters.
I have been here throughout
the summer, and my knowledge
or information of affairs in the
mountains is only second-hand
stuff, but apparently the mess
up there is worse than ever, and
the combine has been putting itself
in shape to hold fast.

By the way, have you or

[3]
can you obtain information as
to the truth of the claim made
very noisily by J. P. Irish's friends
that that person will "run"
the national administration in
its dealings with California
matters should Mr. Cleveland
be elected President. These boasts
and the prominence given to
Irish (or attained by his pushing
himself forward) on the stump
will cost not a few votes that
might have been thrown for
Cleveland. There are many, like
myself, who have voted twice
for Cleveland, but who are thinking
of voting for Harrison or of
going quail shooting on election
day, simply because of the
alleged influence had over

06416

It was the purpose of the board and of
the new lessee to renovate the house and
introduce into the valley the European plan
of hotelkeeping. A moderate price—from
75 cents a day upward—was to be charged
for lodging, and guests could get meals in
the hotel restaurant à la carte. Such a hotel,
well conducted, would be well patronized
by tourists and campers and would
make a trip to the valley less expensive
than it is now. Glasscock guaranteed to
keep a first-class house free of all combina-
tions and pools. But all these plans for im-
proving the Yosemite hotel service are
blocked by Barnard, and nobody knows
when the case will be decided by the Su-
preme Court.

THE CAMPERS HAVE A GRIEVANCE.

Campers in the valley also suffer much
inconvenience and discomfort on account of
the closing of the butcher-shop, which has
been maintained for their benefit until re-
cently. They are now compelled to buy
their fresh meat of the hotel-keepers and
to accept such cuts as cannot be used on
mine hosts' tables at whatever prices those
lords of the valley choose to ask. A great
many of the visitors to Yosemite prefer to
camp out, and therefore the Commissioners
should permit some one to conduct a
butcher-shop for their benefit.

Commissioner Kidder has made a con-
tract with Henry Washburn to clear out
some of the thickets that have grown up
within a few years on what was once open
meadow land in the valley, and a gang
of men are at work on the
job. The contract is somewhat in-
definite, it is said, the contractor
not having any clearly marked territory to
work in and being left to his own judgment
in the performance of \$8,000 worth of
work. But it is deemed by the board very
necessary that the thickets be thinned out
before a fire shall come along and clean out
all the forest growth in the valley, and Mr.
Washburn's judgment and good taste are
depended upon for the avoidance of mis-
takes and injury to the natural beauty of
the groves.

A DIFFIDENT FOREMAN.

The foreman in charge of the gang has
been instructed not to cut any hard-wood
trees or saplings, to leave all the cedars
and spruces and not to molest any flower-
ing shrubs or vines. The young pines,
which grow in dense thickets, are thinned
out, but no trees are trimmed. It would be
better if the commission could engage some
expert to direct the workmen and tell them
what to remove. The foreman distrusts
his own competency to do such work, and
says he would like to have instructions
from somebody who knows what should be
done, but in the absence of a competent
superintendent he uses his best judgment
in removing the thickets that would en-
danger the groves if a fire should be started.

GOVERNMENT INSPECTION.

Special Agents Spear and Steiger of the
Interior Department have been in the val-
ley for some time collecting information for
Secretary Noble. Agent Steiger's special
line of investigation relates to the manage-
ment of the valley by the State Commis-
sioners, and his report probably will be
used as a basis by some investigation com-
mission to be appointed by the Secretary or
by Congress. The agents seem to be
intelligent, level-headed men, free
from prejudice and anxious to
ascertain the facts. While they are not
prepared to express their opinion very
fully concerning affairs in the valley, not
having completed their investigation,
they say they have not found good grounds
for all the complaints that have been made
to the Secretary. Personal grievances and
disappointments are at the bottom of many
complaints, and the agents have had experi-
ence enough in that line to induce them to
discount most of the tales they hear. It is
their opinion, however, that there has been
too much "improvement" in the valley,
that there are too many fences and too
much cultivation, and that the valley should
be restored to its natural condition so far
as is possible.

Heaven preserve us!

06416

[4]

The ex-President by the bully,
liar, swindler and Thief - Irish.
I believe that California's vote
might have been given for
Cleveland but for the intervention
of the gang of which Irish
is one of the mouthpieces and
active agents for plunder. If
Mr. Cleveland does not know,
he ought to know the injury
done to him in public estimation
by such "support" as that of
the Southern Pacific's bullies
of the Irish kind.

Yours Very Truly
Geo. G. Mackenzie