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

George G. Mackenzie

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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

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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.

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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

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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

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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 combinations and pools. But all these plans for improving the Yosemite hotel service are blocked by Barnard, and nobody knows when the case will be decided by the Supreme 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 recently. 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 contract 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 indefinite, 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 mistakes 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 flowering 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 endanger the groves if a fire should be started.

GOVERNMENT INSPECTION.

Special Agents Spear and Steiger of the Interior Department have been in the valley for some time collecting information for Secretary Noble. Agent Steiger's special line of investigation relates to the management of the valley by the State Commissioners, and his report probably will be used as a basis by some investigation commission 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 experience 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!

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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