



1893-01-13

Letter from John Muir to [Robert Underwood] Johnson, 1893 Jan 13.

John Muir

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⁽¹³⁾
John Murray
Martinez, Cal. Jan. 13, 1843.

My dear Mr Johnson.

I was very glad to get your letter of Dec 8th showing you were well again, as good a man as before your dangerous illness or better with all your capacity for work & fight & poetry jubilant & exuberant. I heartily congratulate you & bid you Godspeed over the ways of the New Year.

I should have written you long ere this but for sickness in the family. For more than a week I did not take off my clothes, - watching by the bed of my sick babies. - All are well again. Thank Heaven. By the way Arnie's father died a short time ago.

²
This probably was the cause of his not answering your letters; for he is heartily in favor of the recession of Yosemite & a good worker & good fighter.

I think that not less than nine-tenths of the people of Cal are in favor of the recession of the Valley to the Gen Government to be made a part of the national park which naturally it is, but among the other tenth are those who are pecuniarily interested & one man whose pocket is touched to the quick will do more fighting in a case of sentiment & scenery than a thousand who only look at the question in a careless abstract way though they look in the right direction. Very few people in

³
California care for scenery to any appreciable extent, - to the extent say of subscribing 25 cents each to save Yosemite from being sunk in the sea. El Capitan meadows forests & all though nominally on the right side. We have a few good workers however in the Sierra Club those who have friends in the legislature or in Congress have written to them. I have written to Noble & we have got the S. F. Call to take up the subject & some good lively columns are being printed. One of our directors is a state Senator Mr McAllister & he will introduce a bill for recession. Our Sec of State is cordially with us, but the Governor seems to be

against us. Anyhow sooner
or later we must be successful.
Allen a Special Agent of the
Interior Department, attended
one of the meetings of the directors
of our club & submitted his
report asking suggestions &
aid in the Yosemite & Tulare
Reservation aims & this report
probably submitted ere this is
~~so~~ as strongly favorable as we
could make it. We meet
again tomorrow chiefly for
the Yosemite question & will
do what we can. Your
Century editorial was capital.

And now your poems - it goes
without saying that so keen a
literary sharp would write
nothing silly even in verse
but I never knew before that
you were so much a poet.

5.
I have sauntered through
your songs only once &
doubtless have missed much
of the best they hold, but I
am going to them again.

I too love the gorse ever golden
& am glad you set it "at the
door of your little book -
suggestive of the gold within."

The Winter hour - is a fine
manly well-balanced poem
but you should not have
introduced candle-light as
you have in the second
line. Candle light is a fuddle
greasy smutty thing; rather
you should have gone straight
to the glowing godlike heart of
the fire on the hearth.

"The world is saved not lost by fire"
a good line, here you might possibly
have hinted Volcanoes, God's hearths.

about which wheat & wine, life
& light abound.

"Where's a warmer friend than fire" is
certainly a safe question. The "hearth
song" is lively & goes dancing
like a hillside stream.

Fireflies mock the early stars, - a
good line, & so is

"The music's lullaby
Locks down at last the sleepy eye" -

where
Beyond the midnight & the dawn
Has now that other footstep gone -
very fine

Poets that keep the world in heart
Milton's massive lines that pour
Like waves upon a windward shore
Wordsworth's refuge from the crowd -

- like a lark that mounts so high
he sees not earth but from the sky
fine lines all of them

A Madonna of Sagnan - how sweet is
charming

"Outglow the rainbow" - good
"Love in Italy" - lively & witty
Life at its full is holiest

thy heart a throzzed confessional
A fount of sympathy, a store
of jewels at an open door

Very good
& the end of the poem is capital.

"Grass half robin high" in a Spring
prelude is I think very good & vivid
& so is "Onole flute rich as his coat"

Love in the Calendar has wit & a jolly
lilt. When chinks in Aprils windy dome
Let through a day of June -

And every sound's a tune - are
fine sturdy poetic lines

A sign from now & it will be night
in September Eve - good. So is the
line - When tired equinoctials sleep in "Cald".
Here is the watershed of all the year

8.
The gaunt & wrinkled orchard shivers' nest
The blast like Lear upon the English heath
And mossy boughs blow wild that undistressed
Another spring shall hide the cheerful nest
These lines in "November" seem to me
wonderfully vivid & telling

The Washington Hymn is grand
but too short

The poem that "Lights up the farthest dark
& the final haze" - very fine.

In Browning at Asolo

Yesterday he was part of it all -

Sat here, discerning cloud from snow
In the flush of the Alpine afterglow
is vivid & telling as only the poet can make it.

O muffled bell
Of speech

"Divided honors" is very clever
& so is A tracer for J. B.
Then are the lines that at first sight
caught my eye. It seems wonderful.

7
That such a working, fighting
man of affairs as you are
should be so much a poet -
I'm proud of you - go ahead
& plow up more poets gold to
brace & cheer & inspire your many
already deeply indebted friends.

I send herewith a few clippings
will send more soon - Also the
report of the Yosemite Commissioners
containing the Governor's letter to
the chairman of the Senate Committee
on Public Lands - The Governor
is as you will see violently opposed
to recession.
We have found out (directors of the
Sierra club) that Caminetti's bill is
mainly in the interest of lumbermen &
those who own timber claims for sale
to lumbermen - Timber claims
within the boundaries of the park
are very nearly worthless to the owners
as they can make no use of them

10.
by themselves. not being able
to build mills, roads, flumes
etc, or get their lumber
to market if they could.

Again wishing you
Godspeed in this other
new swing around
the sun I am
Ever cordially your
friend John Muir

Give my regards to J.B.
When next you see him
I tell him to come to Cal.

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