



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1878-02-09

Letter from Annie K[ennedy] Bidwell to John Muir, 1878 Feb 9.

Annie Kennedy Bidwell

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ing for, & it would doubtless be construed against
him, for which I should rather be glad than otherwise.
Today Mr. Hamilton accompanied him to the
"Foot-hills" in search of fossils, specimens of which
Mr. Hamilton has shown him, & which elicit his
admiration & wonder.

I will read the works to which
you refer, in so far as I can, and shall always
be grateful for any suggestions regarding desir-
able works which you may think profitable to
me. Your article on the "Humming bird of the Sen-
eca" was charming. (I hope some of your articles
may escape me.) Mamma read the article &
wrote me that she thought it "the loveliest av-
icle she had ever read!" But adieu, and
believe me

Ever sincerely Yours
Anne K. Bidwell.

00772

Rancho Chico
Feb 9th 1878

My dear Mr. Minn. I have but a few mo-
ments at my command this morning, but
feel impelled to use them in writing you a
few lines of thanks for the beautiful &
highly prized specimen of sand carved wood,
and for your views regarding Prof. G.
In the mean time I had written Talbot to
ascertain from Dr. Gray - visiting Washington
his opinion of the professor's reliability, the
latter professing the most cordial and auto-
mate relations with Prof. Gray. Her reply
I enclose, which you are at liberty - if you
desire - to shew confidentially to Prof. Allen
& Mr. Swett. However I would prefer you
suggest to them to ascertain from Boston
the standing of Prof. Gunning among sci-
entists, as it is painful to me to appear

hypocritical in acting friendship for the Professor
while I expose him. You can appreciate my
position, though I can say I have not acted to-
ward him in anyway my conscience condemns.
I told you of his letters to us, & the nature of our
friendship, and it is now just where it then was.
I still confess to him my unbelief in his pecu-
liar views, & drive him to the wall if I can; so
there is no hypocrisy. He says forty teachers
urge him to establish a school of Natural
History at Santa Cruz; & he tells of lectures
in San Francisco when twelve hundred were
present, & the hall crowded, & I can not quietly
sit by & fail to warn the innocent seekers
after knowledge that they ought to ascertain
how reliable is the information they are
absorbing, or hope to absorb. His lectures here he
pronounces miserable failures, so very few attending.
Believing him unreliable I could not ask him to lec-
ture, so he arose for, & obtained, the Congregational
Church. The pastor thereof having some enemies who
decline to enter his church under any circumstances,
influences some to absent themselves. The rainy weather
others, while some "have read the reports of his lectures
elsewhere & do not like their tenor": while some say
"he is no scientist in our opinion." I am sorry for the
Professor, but glad so few have been instructed by
him here. He says his audiences here have been
"simply ridiculous". Today I heard from reliable
source that he says he has been told that our pas-
tor, Mr Ellis, has kept persons away. That is
not so, for Mr Ellis has attended several himself,
& told some of his people to ^{hear him} judge him for themselves,
as he intended doing. I have refrained from influence

Rancho Chico,
Feb. 9th, 1878.

My dear Mr. Muir:

I have but a few moments at my command this morning, but feel impelled to use them in writing you a few lines of thanks for the beautiful and highly prized specimen of sand carved wood, and for your views regarding Prof. G[unning]. In the meantime I had written Sallie [Kennedy] to ascertain from Dr. Gray, visiting Washington, his opinion of the professor's ability, the latter professing the most cordial and intimate relations with Prof. Gray. Her reply I enclose, which you are at liberty, if you desire, to shew confidentially to Prof. Allen and Mr. Swett.

However I would prefer you suggest to them to ascertain from Boston the standing of Prof. Gunning among scientists, as it is painful to me to appear hypocritical in acting friendship for the Professor while I expose him. You can appreciate my position, though I can say I have not acted toward him in any way my conscience condemns. I told you of his letters to us, and the nature of our friendship, and it is now just where it then was. I still confess to him my unbelief in his peculiar views, and drive him to the wall if I can; so there is no hypocrisy. He says forty teachers urge him to establish a school of Natural History at Santa Cruz, and he tells of lectures in San Francisco when twelve hundred were present, and the hall crowded, and I can not quietly sit by and fail to warn the innocent seekers after knowledge that they ought to ascertain how reliable is the information they are absorbing, or hope to absorb. His lectures here he pronounces miserable failures, so very few attending. Believing him unreliable I could not ask him to lecture, so he wrote for, and obtained, the Congregational Church. The pastor thereof having some enemies who decline to enter his church under any circumstances influences some to absent themselves, the rainy weather others, while some "have read the reports of his lectures elsewhere and do not like their tenor," while some say "he is no scientist in our opinion." I am sorry for the Professor, but glad so few have been instructed by him here. He says his audiences here have been "simply ridiculous." To-day I heard from reliable source that he says he has been told that our pastor, Mr. Ellis, has kept persons away. That is not so, for Mr. Ellis has attended several himself, and told some of his people to hear him and judge for themselves, as he intended doing. I have refrained from influencing for, and it would doubtless be construed against him, for which I should rather be glad than otherwise. To-day Mr. Knowlton accompanied him to the "foothills" in search of fossils, specimens of which Mr. Knowlton has shewn him, and which elicit his admiration and wonder.

I will read the works to which you refer, in so far as I can, and shall always be grateful for any suggestions regarding desirable works which you may think profitable to me.

Your article on the "Humming Bird of the Sierra" was charming. (I hope none of your articles may escape me.) Mamma read the article and wrote me that she thought it "the loveliest article she had ever read." But adieu, and believe me,

Ever sincerely yours,

Annie K[ennedy] Bidwell