



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1898-01-07

Letter from John Muir to [Robert Underwood] Johnson, 1898 Jan 7.

John Muir

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Martinez, Jan. 7. 1898.

My dear Johnson.

I'm not kidnaped, nor have I been beguiled into signing away any of my own or Century rights.

The fuss you make about the bits of things I write - is most flattering. As to the forestry articles two have been published & I'm at work on three others - the Yellowstone, Yosemite, & Sequoia National Parks. Sargent started them. He urged Page to write & write & get me started on them. Page offering my own terms both for the magazine & book. Knowing what you had already done on forestry I had no reason to hope the Century would accept them. & I wanted to do all I could for the woods.

Then spurred on as before by Sargent & others Page inquired whether I had made any engagement with the Century for an Alaska book & finding the ground clear offered to print the whole book chapter by chapter on a month

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in the Atlantic² & then bring them out in a book. All on my own terms as to compensation, style, illustrations etc. & as you had given no such encouragement. But on the contrary had held one of the ten articles of the proposed book three years I thought I could not be wrong in accepting Boughton Miffles's offer.

You say that I agreed last summer "to write for us some articles consisting of the most important memoranda of your life as an explorer" etc mentioning Aurora, Eagle - or Crow - attack. Auroral salmon etc. In this you are mistaken. You wrote me before you started for Europe proposing this patch work, but I made no reply to it. Instead of writing to Gilder I thought I had better wait your return. & I reply now that I have no liking & no skill for such high colored crazy quilt odds-&-ends articles & must therefore decline attempting them.

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As to my obligations to the Century Co as I remember them. They are as follows. Years ago I offered an article on my sled trip across the Muir Glacier, wh after consulting with Elder you agreed to take. This you shall have if you still want it. (It will contain the Crow attack.) Again you requested the glorious Aurora. This also I'll be glad to write for the Century but only as a good sized article. Not as a page or half page patch. The annual Salmon also if you like, as a full-bodied fish article. & for these I shall claim the right to place them in any book I choose, as you kindly suggested. —

I also remember telling you I meant to publish a little book on Yosemite, & you saying you thought the Century Co might publish it. I'm willing they should provided the terms they offer prove as good as others I may get. You'll have the refusal of it.

But mark you. I dont know when
these things will be written. I cant dash
off things to order on time & therefore refuse
to be time tied.

As to the Klondike I may possibly go there
next summer to see the gold & trees. If I
do you shall have the refusal of
any magazine stuff I may write. but
you will have to pay well for it. Last
summer I wrote three Alaska letters for
the S. F. Examiner at ~~the~~ urgent request for which
I was paid \$50 a column. & offered as much more
than this as I might think right to ask -
By the way the little Atlantic pays more than
the Century. - probably too much. still it shows
encouraging appreciation of my awkward efforts.

Mrs M & I have run over your new book of
poems & wonder how you could have found
time amid the drudgery of editorial work to write
so many fine things. The way Mrs M. deposed
your dear Tesla rhymes you may imagine.
Tell Electric Tesla that I feel his draw over all the
continent, & will gladly give way to it whenever I can,
& now happy New Year & Goodbye. Ever Yours John Muir

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