



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1898-06-07

Letter from John Muir to [Charles Sprague] Sargent, 1898 Jun 7.

John Muir

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**Recommended Citation**

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Martinez, June 7, 1898.

My dear Prof. Sargent.

Yesterday I returned from a weeks trip to Shasta & the Scott Mountains for magnifica flowers but am again in bad luck. I searched the woods wallowing through the snow nearly to the upper limit of the fir belt but saw no flowers or buds that promised any except on a few trees. I cut down six on Shasta & two on Scott Mtns west of Sissons. On one of the Shasta trees I found the staminate fls just emerging from the scales but not a single protuberant flr. I send the staminate though hardly worth while. Last years crop of cones was nearly all frost killed & most of the leaf buds also so there is little chance for fls thereabouts this year.

Sonne writes that the Truckee Lumber Co. is <sup>10 miles East of Truckee</sup> to begin cutting magnifica in the Washoe Range on the 8<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> of this month & he promises to be promptly on hand among the fresh felled trees to get

The flowers. While <sup>2</sup> Miss Eastwood starts this evening for the Sierra Summit above Truckee & I have a friend in Yosemite watching the trees around the rim of the valley, so we can hardly fail to get good fies even in so bad a year as this is.

I have got through the first reading of your fine volume. It is bravely sturdily handsomely done. Grand old ponderosa you have set forth in magnificent style describing so many forms & allowing species makers to name as many as they like while showing their inseparable characters of But you should have mentioned the thick scaly uninflamable bark with which like a wandering warrior of King Arthurs time it is clad, as accounting in great part for its wide distribution & endurance at extremes of climate. You seem to rank it above the Sugar pine, But in youth & age clothed with beauty & majesty Lambertiana is easily King of all the world wide realm of pines while ponderosa is the noble unconquerable mailed Knight without fear & without reproach.

By brain & mighty <sup>3</sup> Proteus-Muggins you have  
also done well, though you might have praised  
him a little more loudly for hearty endurance  
under manifold hardships - defying the salt  
blasts of the sea from Alaska to the California  
Golden Gate, & the frosts & fires of the Rocky  
Mountains - growing patiently in mossy bogs &  
craggy mountain tops - crouching low on glacier  
granite pavements, holding on by narrow  
cleavage joints, or waving tall & slender &  
graceful in flowery garden spots sheltered from  
every wind among columbines & lilies, etc.  
A line or two of sound sturdy mother earth  
poetry such as you ventured to give ponderosa  
in no wise weakens or blurs the necessarily  
dry stubbed scientific description, & I'm  
sure Muggins deserves it. However I'm  
not going faultfinding. It's a grand  
volume - a kingly Lambertiana job, & on  
many a mountain top trees now seedlings  
will be giants & will wave their shining  
tassels two hundred feet in the sky ere another  
pine book will be made. So you may well  
sing your *nunc dimittis*, & so in dooth may  
I since you have engraved my name  
on the head of it -

That Allegheny<sup>4</sup> Trip You so kindly offer is  
mighty tempting. It has stirred up wild lovers  
longings to renew my acquaintance with old  
forest friends & gain new ones under such  
incomparable auspices. I'm just dying to see  
basswood & shell bark & liriiodendron  
once more. When could you start, &  
when would you have me meet you?

I think I might get away from  
here about the middle of July & go  
around by the Great Northern & Lakes,  
stopping a few days on old familiar  
ground about the shores of Georgian  
Bay. I want to avoid cities & dinner  
as much as possible & travel light &  
free. If tree lovers could only grow bark  
& bread on their bodies how fine it would  
be, making even hand bags useless - !

Ever Yours

John Muir

While trying to avoid people as much as possible  
& seeing only you & trees I should if I make  
this eastern trip, want to call on Mrs. Ann Gray.  
I <sup>heartily</sup> love & admire Gray & in my mind  
his memory fades not at all.