



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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**Letter from C[harles] S[prague] Sargent to John Muir, 1898 Jun 29.**

Charles Sprague Sargent

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ARNOLD ARBORETUM, HARVARD UNIVERSITY,

*Jamaica Plain, Mass., June 29, 1898.*

My dear Muir:

I have from Johnson the enclosed note. He sends me one from you and another from Lacey, chairman of the Public Lands Committee of the House, from which it appears that the Senate will have to recede from its action and that the reservations are to be preserved a little longer. <sup>Lacey</sup> He says,-

"The question of allowing sheep in some parts of the California reserves is one upon which there is a good deal of difference of opinion; some of the people there are interested in the reserves say that if grazing is done to a reasonable degree fires will not get into the timber, and that if cattle and sheep keep out the grass and undergrowth, if it takes fire, destroys the old timber. It is claimed that the undergrowth in the region referred to is mainly coniferous and the sheep will not browse upon it. I have tried to get at the facts and been absolutely assured by unimpeachable and sensible men that the sheep were necessary to keep out the fire, and also that the sheep were necessary to destroy the forest. It is indeed singular with what zeal gentlemen, all interested in forest reserves, take the opposite side of so apparently simple a question. Mr. Muir's judgment will probably be better than that of any one of them."

This all means, of course, that Pinchot's advocacy of pas-

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turing the reservations made at the instigation of Bliss is bearing fruit and is likely to do very serious harm to the cause. There ought to be some way of choking him off. It is incomprehensible to me that a man can one day sign a report protesting vigorously against all sheep grazing in the forests and then go about saying that sheep really do no harm in the forest, but he is paid \$10.00 a day to do so.

I feel a good deal discouraged. Johnson wants the custodians of the reservations to be appointed under the Civil Service laws. Lacey opposes this and wants to reserve these places for political rewards. The best civilian appointed under the best considered Civil Service Examination will be powerless against the timber thieves. There is nothing but Uncle Sam's soldiers that can do the work; this ought to be repeated over and over again, and there ought to be some way found to undo if possible the harm that Pinchot and Bliss's crowd are doing in advocating or condoning pasturage.

I am glad that Lacey realizes that your opinion on the subject is valuable. I am afraid nothing can be done as long as Bliss and McKinley are in office. It would not be difficult to get rid of Pinchot, but somebody else as bad or worse would be put in his place. It is a great thing, of course, to retain the fee of these lands, but we are bound to have a good many sad moments before <sup>we do so</sup> ~~that~~ by thinking of those splendid trees sacrificed to selfishness and stupidity.

The second lot of Abies came this morning, rather moldy after the long journey but still valuable. The drawing of the flowers starts for Paris tomorrow.

Faithfully yours,

P. S. Sargent

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