



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1903-06-02

## Letter from Frank H. Scott to John Muir, 1903 Jun 2.

Frank H. Scott

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THE CENTURY CO.  
UNION SQUARE, NEW YORK

June 2, 1903.

My dear Mr. Muir:

I regret very much that I was not here when you called on Friday; I wanted to see you before you sailed and especially to take up the book question with you. The situation has changed very much since we published the "Mountains of California" nearly ten years ago, and there are several things which we should do differently now. It was an experiment to put out such a volume, with fifty or more pictures scattered through the text, and sell it for one dollar and fifty cents retail - the price of an ordinary novel - as printed in this way the book cost almost twice as much to manufacture as the average novel. But our idea as you will remember was to make a cheap, popular volume and push for the largest possible sale, and under this scheme there could be but a slight margin of profit to either you or us on each copy sold. Looking back from our present standpoint this was probably a mistake. But we want you to know that the brunt of this has fallen upon us. I have just gone over the figures and find that on the total sales to date our profits have been considerably less than yours.

Different conditions prevail in

the trade now. We note that Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin and Co. have published "Our National Parks" at one dollar and seventy-five cents net, which - with the present system of discounts - is equivalent to at least two dollars and twenty-five cents old style; and if we were publishing a new volume by you of this size we should probably make the price at least two dollars, leaving a larger margin for you as well as for us. We certainly can, and will pay you as large a royalty as any other house. On the Yosemite book we propose to make the royalty fifteen per cent, and we will pay the same on the volume on Siberia and your present trip which we have asked you to write for us. We should hope too that considerable portions of this latter volume would be available for first publication in the magazine at prices to be agreed upon with the editors.

I hope soon to hear from you and to know that the Yosemite volume will be ready at an early date and that we are also in due time to have the Siberian book, to which we are all looking forward as one of your most important and interesting volumes.

Believe me,

Very sincerely yours,

John Muir, Esq.

03258