



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1910-05-29

## Letter from Leonard Lyell to John Muir, 1910 May 29.

Leonard Lyell

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James Woods, Manager.

# Hotel St. Francis

## San Francisco

29<sup>th</sup> May. 1910

My dear Sir

I have been spending my time hunting the Redwood & partly from ignorance of the country have expended so much time that I shall be unable to see you at Los Angeles; & now ask if there is any likelihood of your finding your way to Hartney when I come back, after an attempt I am going to make to see the Giant Sequoia Forest which you were so good as to specially recommend to my attention.

As I had never seen the Redwood in its native forests I was specially anxious to make sure of them first & want-

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to Fort Procy - Then I saw a good deal  
 & was particularly advised to see some  
 of the finest stands in the El Estero. This  
 expedition cost far more time than I  
 had expected & after all I did not get to  
 the largest trees. Difficulties & delays  
 in getting about the country was the cause  
 & I did not think it worth while staying  
 longer - I was very much interested in  
 what I saw the stately magnificent  
 of the standing trees up to 10 & 12 ft  
 in diameter & the great value of the timber.

If the woods I saw are a fair sample of the  
 rest I fancy I must be right in regarding  
 the forest as a decadent one. Almost all the  
 largest trunks trees are dead at the top & even  
 of the next younger growth a very large  
 proportion seemed withered at the head &  
 seemed not to be increasing in height though  
 all were vigorous in growth lower down &  
 they increase in growth yet a good while -

I saw no seedlings of *S. samperoviana*  
 that I could be sure of. There were plenty

of young plants  
 of the Douglas fir, a tree that seems less  
 fastidious as to condition of growth.

Why the Redwood should stop abruptly &  
 sometimes at a distance recur again in the  
 valley, I could find no sufficient reason -  
 I suppose it is something to do with rainfall.

This decadence of the Redwood looks not like  
 of very old date. Possibly within the last  
 100 years. Anyhow I could not see any  
 evidence to show that it was now holding its  
 own against an invasion of the Douglas Fir  
 from the high slopes. The cut over stools are  
 sprouting freely but none that I saw were high  
 enough or were thick enough on the ground  
 to justify the expectation that they would  
 become forest trees, <sup>for</sup> in many cases the  
 leading shoot was very liable to wither &  
 break off. The Union Lumber Co. people  
 told me of an interesting experiment they  
 are carrying out - in planting of it intervals  
 among the cut over stools with Eucalyptus  
 both as an additional source of lumber  
 & because they hope that the side shade



will promote the upward growth of the Redwood  
 plants. This was the only case I have heard of  
 of any artificial means taken to promote the  
 growth of this tree. Though the old forest  
 seem destined to perish & every other  
 good sylvoicultural method it may  
 be continued as an economic timber tree  
 & of great value. Before this comes I hope  
 the Government will secure for preservation  
 some good sections of this most splendid  
 tree - quite irreplaceable in its present  
 beauty & dignity. - From what I know of  
 the rapid growth of S. Campoviana in Ireland  
 I think it would respond to a much heavier  
 rain fall & provided the young wood was  
 ripened in its summer a  
 moderate amount of frost  
 would not kill it -

James Woods, Manager



San Francisco

Hotel St. Francis

Cable Address "SIGNART" San Francisco  
 WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPHIC CODE.

I have pleasure in noticing a much greater  
 disposition among the lumber men to adopt  
 steps & processes some of the best <sup>for</sup> ~~to~~  
 enhancement of the ultimate selling value  
 of their land as a residential district - &  
 for scenic purposes. I decidedly this is good  
 policy - Further, I find some of them  
 willing to take more active steps to stop the  
 desecration of the country through fires -  
 Public opinion is acting on them usefully -  
 Still if the big lumber has to be got out I don't  
 see how it can be practically extracted  
 without a great deal of burning of slashing  
 & underwood. If the burning were done  
 more systematically & thoroughly, so that the land  
 might be ready soon <sup>to grow</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~grow~~  
 of well seedling & no black stumps <sup>were</sup> left  
 I think much less objection would be taken  
 to their method - This forestry  
 problem is immensely interesting to  
 me.

After seeing the Sequoia park,  
 if practicable I shall go north

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to study Sitka spruce & Douglas fir in  
 Washington from Tacoma as headquarters  
 & to revisit that delightful retreat  
 Park House Rainier, when if the snow  
 is sufficiently melted I hope to see some  
 of the higher lived silver firs. A. lasiocarpa  
 & firs of Paradise valley & the high quality  
 glaucous.

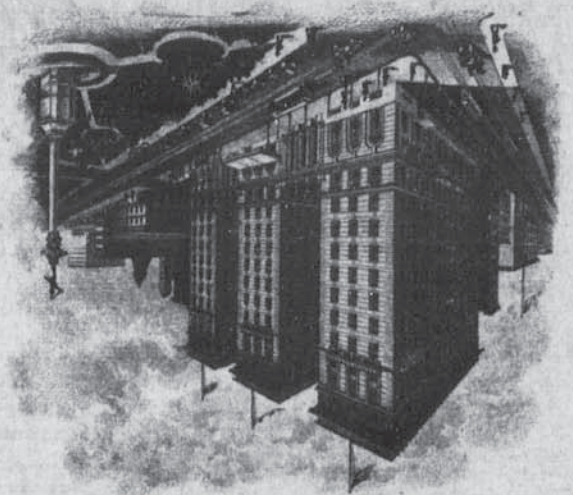
Will you be staying at Montezuma?

Believe me with many thanks

Yours sincerely,

Leonard Lyell

James Woods, Manager.



San Francisco  
 Hotel St. Francis

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