



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1909-01-21

Letter from J. E. Calkins to John Muir, 1909 Jan 21.

J. E. Calkins

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Recommended Citation

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Lordsburg, Cal., Jan 21, 1909.

My Dear Mr. Muir:—

Your fine kindly letter of recent date came to hand on time, and was very welcome. Today there is another bond between us beside that furnished by the mails, viz: the weather. We are having the southern end of the great storm that has been in progress in Northern California, raising the rivers and other kinds of Cain, and all fears of a drouth here have been dispelled. We have had enough water spilled on us the past week to last the irrigators a whole season, if it were properly conserved. Also we have mud enough and to spare. But in a day or so, if things go as they usually do go here, we shall again be in the midst of such beautiful weather that we shall forget all about the wetting we have had.

We read, with full appreciation, your statement of the difficulties that stand between you and any other arrangement for work. Sorting and packing an accumulation of relics, and any kind of curios, specimens, notes, or the like, is one of the most hopeless of tasks, for there is no visible end of it. The torment of trying to determine what shall be thrown away and what shall be kept, and how that which is kept is to be classified or stored so as to be at hand when wanted, is worse than three mere ordinary removals of furniture. I am sorry you are so burdened and perplexed — we all are sorry; but there seems to be no way in which we now can help you.

It was very kind of you to say that the plan that I proposed is ideal, from your point of view. I am not sure that it is. You might grow tired of it. You might be dissatisfied with me, after you had tried me for a while. But in the face of all these suggestions of doubt, I see no better way. If we were to try it for a time, I believe, we would find it work well. It would take a little time to get things in shape, but it need not take very long. And after we had it going, I believe, we should find it work so well that we should not be sorry for putting the scheme into operation. Once we had such a shop open for business, and work in full swing, there would be an increase of output, and an increase of comfort and satisfaction in the making of it, that would make it look good to us, in spite of its imperfections.

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But, of course, it takes time to bring such a thing to pass. There are things to be considered, things to be arranged for, and things to be done. While, frankly, I should very much like to see the arrangement made, in whatever way we determine, I understand that there are a good many things for you to settle before you enter into such an undertaking. I don't know but I am a little startled that you should speak so favorably of the proposition, and find so little to criticise in it. At least I am disposed to take all this as a very pleasant compliment. You will be good enough to understand that my hat is off to you.

I suppose that the essential merit of the plan, if we are to assume that it has merit, lies in the one broad claim that it looks to greater facility for work. When this claim is put under analysis it sub-divides into several smaller ones:—an increase of domestic comfort, possibly; assistance in the mere manual part of the work; and after these such minor advantages as might accrue to you from my own intense interest in your work, and the wish of all of us to make our home seem homelike to you, and your own absolute freedom to do as you please. If these incidentals shall happily contribute to your peace of mind, and your convenience, we may assume that they will enable you to do your work with greater facility, and this, in turn, means more work, and also easier work. It is primarily because I am so anxious to see your writing proceed that I have had the temerity to suggest the basis of this plan on which we might get together and push things a little. I shall be glad, as will my wife and son, to do whatever may be possible to assist you in case you conclude that it will be well to put some such plan into effect.

The only ground for uneasiness at this time is the danger that you may have another serious attack of the grippe, such as laid you low and knocked out a lot of good time for you late last winter. We only hope that you may escape such an affliction this winter, even though you linger at Martinez. We have rain here too, upon occasion, but continued sulky weather, excessive fogginess, and the general state of meteorological pouts that afflicts the vicinity of San Francisco Bay in wintertime ~~is~~ are hopefully lacking here. And I believe you would like it, once you were settled. We earnestly hope to hear of your continued good health and activity, and we are equally strong in hope that the good news from Miss Helen will not give place to anything less encouraging.

I have no news to give you, and I am personally so uninteresting that there is nothing to be said about myself, so I am just going to ask you to let us hear from you as you feel moved to write, or have something to say, and with that subscribe myself

Yours Sincerely - J.E. Calhoun x
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