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1885-06-20

## Letter from Helen [Hunt] Jackson to John Muir, 1885 Jun 20.

Helen Hunt Jackson

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San Francisco  
1600 Taylor St.  
June 20.  
1886

Dear Mr. Minor, If nothing  
else comes of my camping  
air castle, I have at least  
had one pleasure from it -  
your kind and delightful  
letter. I have read it so  
many times I half know  
it. I wish Mrs. Carr were  
here that I might tripe  
over <sup>her</sup> she wrote me that  
I might "as well ask one  
of the angels of heaven, as  
John Minor." "So entirely  
out of his line" was the  
thing I proposed to do. - I  
know better, however, and  
I was right. You are  
the only man in California  
who could tell me just  
what I needed to know  
about ranges of climate,  
depression, heat &c, also,  
roads. -  
You have already ruled

It is not the mudwell which the birds  
are said to find in those columns but which  
to destroy them - the mudwell is only  
they tell me the mudwell is only  
curious. Do you never come into town?  
- The report I should make at being  
you see the "remains" - (ghostly but inevitable)  
word of me, would I think be small in  
and perhaps with the pleasure I should feel  
in seeing you. I am much but would to  
see strangers - but it is long since we were  
a stranger's good sincerely Helen Parkson.

wonder at your gentleness. Confounded by  
and array so I'm afraid to you. — I trust  
you may never have to be so dependent —  
perhaps you do not know that each year  
I broke my leg — I have not for ten months  
stopped walking entirely — this in addition to the  
utter exhaustion of that eighteen weeks' illness,  
makes me helpless indeed. — If you had got  
to go with the worst, fear on your back on  
a bed in an ambulance, or not at all,  
wonder if you take pity to "spokes" — and  
if your life (apparently) depends on staying  
broths & gruels, "wonder" you take a  
good cook & his "pans" — If you were  
to see me, you would only wonder that I  
have courage to even dream of such  
an expedition. — I am not at all sure

of my first plan — i.e. the  
skirmishing along the middle  
Sierra foothills. — I am  
drawn towards Truckee &  
the Lake Tahoe region, by  
what you say — but I fear  
that altitude. It is of the  
too little oxygen, & the nerve  
strain of 6000 ft up, in my  
Colorado home, that I have  
been breaking down for years,  
getting ready for this attack.  
— Now, tell me a little  
more in detail about the  
Shasta region; and the  
Redwood district in the  
Coast range; of the  
latter, I know nothing.  
For you better con-  
venience, I will make  
a memorandum on a sep-  
arate sheet of the points  
I need to know. —  
I am nothing answered  
or astonished at your sar-  
castic phrases about my  
"spokes & spooks", and  
"wheels & pans" — I only



Three days journey for me - ~~the~~  
horses will have to walk -  
- And Strawberry Valley (delicious  
name) - when I reach that  
am I among forests & streams?  
- The "hundred mile orbit around  
Shasta", is that a plains? -  
or foot hills? - I have fancied  
Shasta arising sharply like a  
pyramid, from a plain. -

Can you give me a list  
of points, roads, places in  
this "orbit"? - bearing in mind  
always that what I most  
need, is moisture; what  
I simply cannot endure ~~and~~  
is dry heat; dust also is  
dangerous to me. - a forest,  
and a dashing stream are my needs.

3<sup>rd</sup> The Lake Tahoe Region -

Why do you call that  
"moist & leafy"? - I was there  
at the Tahoe House once - a week.  
It was glowing - but it was  
dry; and no trees but <sup>thin</sup> pines  
as I recollect. The sun blazed  
like Sahara, every day. - We  
did not explore; only rowed on  
the lake. It was fourteen years  
ago. - Are there roads all round  
the lake - would the prevailing altitude  
there be good for? -

01169

H. H. died  
Aug. 12, 1885  
in S.F.

1600 Taylor St.,  
San Francisco, June 20, 1885.

Dear Mr. Muir,

If nothing else comes of my camping air castle, I have had at least one pleasure from it -- your kind and delightful letter. I have read it so many times I half know it. I wish Mrs. Carr were here that I might triumph over her. She wrote me that I might "as well ask one of the angels of Heaven, as John Muir" "so entirely out of his line" was the thing I proposed to do. I knew better, however, and I was right. You are the only man in California who could tell me just what I needed to know about ranges of climate, dryness, heat, etc., also roads.

You have already ruled out my first plan -- i.e. the skirmishing along the middle Sierra foothills. I am drawn towards Truckee and the Lake Tahoe region by what you say, but I fear that altitude. It is of the too little oxygen and the nerve strain of 6000 ft. up in my Colorado home, that I have been breaking down for years, getting ready for this attack.

Now, tell me a little more in detail about the Shasta region and the redwood district in the Coast Range. Of the latter I know nothing.

For your better convenience I will make a memorandum on a separate sheet of the points I need to know.

I am nothing angered or astonished at your sarcastic phrases about my "spokes and spooks", and "wheels and pans". I only wonder at your gentleness, confronted by an array so repugnant to you. I trust you may never have to be so dependent -- perhaps you do not know that last year I broke my leg? and have not for ten months stepped without crutches -- this in addition to the utter exhaustion of the eighteen weeks' illness, makes me helpless indeed. If you had got to go into the woods, flat on your back on a bed in an ambulance, or not at all, wouldn't you take kindly to "spokes"? and if your life (apparently) depended on strong broths and gruels, wouldn't you take along a good cook and his "pans"? If you were to see me you would only wonder that I have courage to even dream of such an expedition. I am not at all sure it is not of the madness which the gods are said to send on those whom they wish to destroy.

They tell me Martinez is only twenty miles away. Do you never come into town? The regret I should weakly feel at having you see the "remains" (ghastly but inimitable word) of me, would, I think, be small in comparison with the pleasure I should feel in seeing you. I am much too weak to see strangers -- but it is long since you were a stranger.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Jackson.

1st -- the redwood region of the Coast Range -- what elevations could I hit there, combined with moisture and forests? How much moisture? waterfalls? streams? How long a range would I have? I want to keep moving: go over as much ground as possible, not over two days or one in any place. Can you suggest places or routes, for this region? Would I have to begin the journey by rail? or could I start from this door on my bed?

2nd -- the Shasta region. How many hours from here by rail to Redding? Do they have Pullman sleepers on that road? You say from Redding to Strawberry Valley is an "easy grade, some fifty miles". What would that fifty miles be like? hot? dusty? It would mean three days journey for me. The horses will have to walk. And Strawberry Valley (delicious name) -- when I reach that am I among forests and streams? The "hundred mile orbit around Shasta", is that plains or foothills? I have fancied Shasta arising sharply like a pyramid from a plain. Can you give me a list of points, roads, places in this "orbit?", bearing in mind always that what I most need is moisture, what I simply cannot endure is dry heat; dust also is dangerous to me -- a forest, and a dashing stream are my needs.

3rd -- The Lake Tahoe region -- why do you call that "moist and leafy"? I was there at the Tahoe House once, a week -- it was glorious but it was dry and no trees but thin pines as I recollect. The sun blazed like Sahara, every day. We did not explore, only rowed on the lake. It was fourteen years ago. Are there roads all round the lake. Would the prevailing altitude be 6000 ft?