



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1897-01-26

Letter from S. Hall Young to [John Muir], 1897 Jan 26.

S. Hall Young

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Recommended Citation

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Wooster (not Worcester) Ohio. Jan 26, '97.

Friend of my soul;

Your letter has reached me this minute and I will answer it "while it is hot."

I acknowledge my culpable neglect of your much valued correspondence. (That sounds formal, but it is sincere.) But you surely got my note written last Spring, immediately after your first letter. If you did not, you must have left on your proposed trip before it arrived. Not having any response to that, and the other being long delayed in the P.O. of Cedar Falls, Iowa, I did not send the account of Stickline which I had written & herewith enclose.

But I feel that I have had no adequate excuse for not writing much & often to

02227

you the past five years.

My life has been a hard struggle in some respects, pleasant & successful in others. I have had work always requiring very close attention, and filling my life with work & care. I have been successful in my lectures, preaching and pastoral labors, having large congregations & constant encouraging additions to my churches. I have received much, improved much (I hope) in preaching power, and enjoyed much. Have been successful in everything but in making money. During the last two or three years the "horror of poverty" as Marion Crawford says, has "smitten me in the face." It has been a losing fight against debt and want. So owe money and not be able to pay it - that seems to me to be the very climax of human misery. And the added an-

guish of it - that swells the heart to bursting - is that others suffer in the same way. For I would not be in debt at all if I could collect what others owe me - but they can not pay, & thus have added the bitter drops of broken promises, made in good faith, to my cup.

I don't know why I have told you this. I have never written it - before to a soul. Perhaps in a vague feeling of self-justification for my long stupor of almost despair. The feeling has been so strong at times that only family ties have prevented me from breaking entirely away & fleeing back to my "beautiful, fruitful wilderness" - buying my body in the forest shades - laying my weary head on Mother Nature's breast. But I have strong ties, strong love for my own, am much beloved by them, and am, in a sense, happy. I certainly have had in good meas-

were of that highest pleasure which
ever comes to mortal - for so I be-
lieve - that of seeing souls born
anew into the kingdom of God -
lives received, unbled, sweetened.

I buried my noble old tea-
cher, as you know, in 1890; stayed in
Butler, Pa. one year; was in Leeburg,
Ill., another year; moved to Lead-
ville, Iowa, where I was pastor
of a growing & working church
for three years. But the hard times
struck that town hard - closed down
the manufacturing - broke two ^{out} of the
three banks - and paralyzed the
finances of the church. I was stoned
out.

Then I received very unexpectedly
a call to my old Alunka Water, and
here I have been for a year and a
third, pastor of the University
Church, ministering to one of
the most intellectual and spirit-
ual congregations in the U. S.

I have an audience of five to
seven hundred bright minds &
noble souls - unit of them. Behind
ministers & missionaries & their
families, men & women, who
have come here to educate their
children, retired business men, etc.,
- besides the Profs & the students.

It takes hard study and careful
work to keep ahead of such a con-
gregation. My study is in the U. S.
my home nearby. I am reviewing
religion books for our quarterly,
delivering a good many lectures
throughout the state, studying hard
along the lines of sociology and
biblical criticism, teaching four
classes in the College, doing the
practical work, etc., etc. But the
U. S. is hard pushed for funds &
I have been living on half sala-
ry - swimming hard but still getting
choked by the bitter water.

I have improved my

Alaska lectures. Have fine of them. Have lectured to six Leontangas, & have had great success. Although I have been negligent of about writing to you, I have not neglected any opportunity of talking about you, and audiences all through these states have seen Glacier Boy with your eyes and shined as I worked up my chimneys - your wonderful & heroic feat of strength & skill & love on the mountain, when you saved my life at such risk to your own. Indeed the wonder of that grows upon me more & more - and I believe I feel more lively, eye-filling grateful to you ever since I recall it.

Your splendid article in the June Century of 1895 has been read by one of my friends with great delight. How fresh the whole journey seemed to me. And the other

articles - wonder if I have missed any of them?
Your book I have not seen.
Who is the publisher?

My own hazy fire. Perfection is the chief difficulty; - I've actually not had sufficient money to buy the books, pictures & cuts needed; for I want to make it good. I have a great part of it written. Perhaps I will be able to publish it this summer.

For now I am going to astonish you. I tell you a secret: I hope to go back to Alaska next Fall as its Governor. Of course it is uncertain as yet, but things are very hopeful I have been introduced ^{to the Territory} by one of his closest friends, and have been sent for by him, and am to go to see him this week, in company with three of the strongest and best men of D, all warm, personal

friends of his & mine. I have besides this the warm backing of the present Gov. of Alaska, and many other good men there & in Wash. & Cr., including two U. S. Judges, two Senators & other good men. Other influences from Pennsylvania, Pa, Key, Ohio, Minn., N.Y., Mass. & W. Vir. is gathering in - men whose character the Pres. elect will respect. The points are being urged in any favor that I was there, constituted the principles of good govt during the lawless times, explored, instituted school & missions, put down witchcraft & slavery, and for civil govt, drafted the first bills, acquired through knowledge of the country, its features, resources, peculiar conditions; especially the natives & the whites; and had great influence with both, etc.

Now you can do me a great favor. I am asked by Maj. McWhinley to get together letters and

endorsements. What he wishes is not mere political endorsement, but letters from good men, who know me and my work in Alaska. Now if you will write him a concise letter, telling what you think are some reasons I should have the office, and send the letter to me, to forward with the others after the Fourth of March, it will have great influence with him.

I think Alaska needs me, as I need the office. I believe I am going chiefly (if I go) to do good. I have stood up for the cause of both whites & natives against their traders, and have been studying the questions that have arisen in the Ser.

At the same time I am hungry for a sight of the snow-tops & glaciers again. One of the most joyful anticipations is that of doing some more explanation with you; for we will ex-

fect you and all your family to be frequent visitors at the gubernatorial summer at Letha.

Mrs. G. is well, except that she is worn out by household cares. Our two bright girls are in the Prep. Dept of the college, studying Latin, Ger. &c. The second one, Hlacka, has become quite a violinist, and will make her mark there. Should I get my appointment I would put them in some good school on the Pacif. Coast.

But "there's always a slip" - and I may not get it. If I do I hope we will get take among trips together.

A tringle in every nerve, whenever summer comes, to be gone to the woods & wilds. I have taken several enjoyable outings, but they do not compare with Hlacka. The best I have had was a canoe ride, two summers ago, from Globe Pt. across to Aitkin's Minn. - 500 miles of Ribber & lakes - a solid month

"
of camping & sport.

Then I have run down several of the Porca rivers in my canoe, I have a fine canoe, made by myself, in which my daughters & myself have had some fine outings.

What is your family now? Tell me about them.

Now my best old friend, write me a good long letter, & forgive my neglect.

I don't want you to think by what I said of poverty, etc, that I am lying down on my back & squealing. I am ready for a sturdier fight against the elements than ever. I feel far younger than when I went to Hlacka. My troublesome shoulders haven't been out of place since I left Hlacka. No! For a glacier climb!

Ever since the length of this spillo. I couldn't stop. My "terminal facilities" are not good when I get to writing to you. Perhaps

that is one reason I have not
got at it before.

Give my warm regards to Mrs.
Muir and the daughters. How the girls
do grow up! Abbie, the baby you used,
in your conceit, to show me how
to hold, is a young lady of 17 - and
Alaska is nearly 16! Wanda must
be over 16, is she not?

I am still getting illustrations
for my sermons from Alaska.
Got some fine ones from your
Glacier Boy article, especially from
your "gospel of the ^{mountain} flowers". That is
one of the best paragraphs you ever
wrote.

Are you doing much literary
work now? What was your special
field of operations this summer in
Alaska?

Must stop. God bless you!
Good bye.
I Hall Young.