



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1912-05-17

Letter from Charles N. Elliot to John Muir, 1912 May 17.

Charles N. Elliot

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304 HOYT STREET
PORTLAND, OREGON

May 17, 1912.

Dear Mr. Muir:-

After hesitating and delaying for many years, I have come to the point of writing you in appreciation of your writings about Nature as she manifests herself on our great West Coast, in our National Parks, mountains, glaciers and valleys, and to thank you for the pleasure and inspiration which has come to me through your books and magazine articles. For some eighteen or twenty years I have collected magazine articles by yourself, by John Burroughs and Walt Whitman, together with articles written by others about these three, to me in common with ever increasing thousands, greatest interpreters of Nature. For we, who are not able to keep in constant communion with the great out-doors, need some-one to bring that vast domain to our desks and our evening lamp, and to keep alive in us that, too often smothered, natural impulse to get close to Mother Earth at every opportunity. I have just been re-reading your "My First Summer in the Sierra", in which your vital descriptions have made me to walk with you under the translucent fronds of the giant California ferns, face with bated breath the upreared, leisurely tolerant cinnamon bear and sit with awe-struck senses with my heels wedged in a three inch crevice over the edge of mighty Yosemite. This last scene the more vivid to me, because of bringing to memory my own feat some years since, in leaping a narrow ribbon of rushing Snoqualmie and sitting for hours on the point of rock which splits (or did a few years ago) the rushing flood at the very brink of its near 300 foot leap, my legs hanging in space, my soul soaring higher than ever the water fell.

I have the two magnificent volumes of the Harriman Alaskan Expedition, with your wonderful descriptions of the Glaciers in that Northern wonderland, with the illustrations of those mighty rivers of ice. Your descriptions have been a constant incentive to me, since the work appeared, to break away and behold these marvels for myself, but a wife and three bairns are rather solid anchors to a single locality, unless one be possessed of (I will not say blessed with) considerable means.

I have now put off to the end of my letter, as I have delayed for these years, the request I would make: I am not an autograph hunter, have never bought an autograph in my life (such would have no charm for me) but I have sent volumes of my favorite authors to them for that personal, intimate touch a bit of the handwriting which formed the book gives to them. I would like to send my copy of "My First Summer in the Sierras" to you for a fly-leaf inscription, if that would not infringe upon your time. Please write me if I may send the book.

I had a good letter the other day from Dr. Clara Barrus, who was ill in New York City when she wrote, but she said the Doctor expected her to be able to return to Pelham in about a week. I certainly envied her the privilege and the pleasure of having "John o' Birds and John o' Mountains" both with her on the former's 75th birth anniversary.

Whether you feel to comply with my rather large request or not, I again thank you, my dear sir, for your books, and hope to add many another to my shelves.

With cordial best wishes, believe me, ever

Faithfully yours,

Charles A. Elliot

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