



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1914-11-11

## Letter from Clara Barrus to John Muir, 1914 Nov 11.

Clara Barrus

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Riverby, West Park, N.Y.  
November 11, 1914

My dear Mr. Muir,

Here I am living in the little cottage at "Riverby", formerly occupied by Mr. Burroughs's son and family, and just a stone's throw from the big house where ~~Mr.~~ and Mrs. Burroughs live, and they take their meals with me. It is charming here by the river, and is even prettier than my little chalet at Pelham where you came for that flying visit on J.B.'s seventieth birthday.

We heard this summer that you were not very well, then later we heard that you were better, but of late we have heard nothing from you, and I have been on the point of writing you many times this summer; but between the domestic duties at Woodchuck Lodge, and the type-writing, and entertaining of guests, and reading the horrible war news, the days have flown by, with my intentions never materializing. Mr. Burroughs said several times this spring, "I wish you would write and get John Muir out here for the summer in the mountains." I always meant to try, but the truth is, I felt the hopelessness of the thing. Had I really felt that any thing we might write would bring you, I would have dropped everything and written a letter a day until you came. But you are "gey ill" to persuade, and I never should attempt it, only I wish you would persuade yourself that you want to come to us for another summer, and then come, and if you don't learn to love the broad-backed hills of Delaware County, and the wide valleys, and if you don't enjoy the glacial tracings on the Catskill rocks, albeit they are not such tremendous affairs as your noble El Capitan and Half Dome, it will be because there is no place in your nature for the love of the gentler aspects of Nature-- a thing which you cannot make anyone believe who has seen you pluck a tiny pelelea densa from the rocks, and who has read what you have written about the water ouzel!

I wish you would take time to drop us a line as to how you are, entirely apart from what I am now to write to you. Concerning this proposal, if you cannot comply, don't take the trouble to write more than to signify that fact, but I am hoping that Barkis will be willin'; so here goes for explanation:

Mr. John Lewis Childs of Floral Park, N.Y., the great flower and seed man, an old friend of J.B.'s, a sound business man, an enthusiastic nature lover, and a great lover of children, is going to start a ~~school~~ school magazine, to interest and help children between the ages of five and fifteen. It is to cover nature-study, athletics, gardening, hygiene, morals, travel, short stories, hints and helps in work and play, etc. I have agreed to be its editor. He has the names of John Burroughs and two other people of note in their particular fields as contributing editors, and, as he is a personal friend of Roosevelt's, hopes to get his name to add to the list. He wants very much to have your name as contributing editor also, which will entail no burden upon you, but simply means that you will send us a short article once in a while, the oftener the better, for which you will be paid as for any magazine article. Please say yes to this, for we are going ahead with the Prospectus, and would like to put your name down with the others.

Mr. Childs has been revolving this scheme a long time and has been in communication with hundreds of teachers who assure him that there is a real need for such a magazine, even in this day of ~~overcrowded~~ multitudinous magazines. He is going to make the subscription price so

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cheap, twenty-five cents a year (ten numbers) that the poorest child can subscribe, and he is going to get the best contributors he can secure for it. The first number is to come out in April 1915, so we are to set right to work to gather the material for it. Mr. Burroughs is to write something for the first number, and if you will for the April, May or June number, we can announce it ahead in the Prospectus. But if you can't promise that yet, will you consent to your name going down as one of the Contributing editors? And will you let me know right away?

You told me some mighty interesting anecdotes of your early inventions, which I am sure would be of great interest to boys. But anything you would write, and on any topic, would be welcomed. Your early or late adventures, any aspect of them likely to interest boys and girls. Do be good and say yes, for the sake of the boys and girls all over the land whom you love, and who love you, and whom you want to help love the things that you love.

John of Birds has been much stirred up this summer over the terrible war; he has written but little, has read but little else, and talked but little else. His feeling toward the Kaiser has been so strong that he has chopped his head off in every block of wood he split for our kitchen stove all summer, and we burned a good deal of wood. I am so weary of reading of the slaughter and suffering that I turn to this new venture for furnishing wholesome food for the mind of the child with eagerness. Besides, it will furnish me with agreeable work, which I can carry on in my own little home, with my children (brother's children) about me, and with them to teach me in more ways than one, things I need to know. I had three of them with me last winter, and shall soon have two or three with me again. I also have one patient, but I hope to be able to send her home soon, so to be freer for pleasanter duties. I find it harder to care for one mental invalid in my home than it was to care for several hundred in a hospital, for here I am never free of them.

Mrs. Ashley and the Doctor and their two beautiful daughters motored over here one day last July before we left for the mountains. We always speak of you and wish we could show you the beauties of our country hereabouts, as you showed us those of your great noble forests and mountains.

I don't write often to you, so you must forgive me if I inflict a long letter when I do write.

Sincerely and hopefully yours,

Clara Barrus

My book has gone into its  
third edition, only out in March.  
Isn't that jolly?

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