

9 April 1948

Dear Eliot---

Just opened up the new batch of prints, which arrived in immaculate condition. Some absolute knockouts---I feel like rushing to the telephone and telling everybody I know to come look at them. Charles will gnash his teeth, and if we can't sell this book to somebody, it will be only because world conditions are so bad.

Comment on some of the prints: a few are too dark, and in reproduction would become soot and whitewash. Also--all this is just between you and me---in dodging in some of the more dramatic skies, the subtle relation between land and atmosphere even in thunderlight has been impaired and you lose that conviction a great photograph carries.

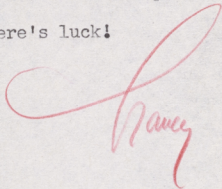
Delighted about Kodak; good for Waters! At any rate, it makes discussion of a few color plates in the book a possible thing instead of a shock.

My only reason for withdrawing as anybody's agent is that I don't think I'm good enough at it. I should be much tougher and shrewder and give publishers a good game of fence, and I should serve authors as a preliminary editor, making them focuss sharply first on what they are really trying to do and second on how this message of theirs can become publishable with a good chance of success. I love people and believe in those I love and hesitate to impair or change their own ways of expressing things, whereas to be of real service, I should be a catalyst of no mean force, with long experience in the market to back me up. And the only reason I continue trying to help is because none of the literary agents handle photographic books unless they have some surefire tie in to a subject like, say, Lincoln.

If I succeed in getting you a good publisher and continue on the present basis of advice--not, say, becoming your collaborator, then we'll consider what I've been worth. Perhaps the best idea will be a straight fee, such as Ansel gave me for helping him with the Muir book introduction and the sequence of photographs and quotations. In any case, some straight and simple arrangement agreeable to us both. The least of my worries at the moment, I assure you!

Think your letter to Charles excellent. When I get the text back, will take a good squint at it in relation to new photographs and write you the result. I shall not, however, hold up the march of things, but get after other publishers right away.

Here's luck!

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Nancy", with a large, flowing loop at the end.