

20 March 1948

Dear Eliot---

Honestly, I don't know what to advise about Charles. My chief doubts, as you know, arise from the rumors about his finances; if he can do the book, can he also give it the right publicity, distribution, and so on? He may settle all this himself, plumping strongly for the book pretty much as you see it, ~~and~~ or he may decide he can't really go on with it. Probably the best thing to do is to scrutinize the next letter or two you get, and if you detect signs of hesitancy, then pronto we can send it onto the following four people:

Vaudrin, at Oxford University Press - ~~Trade Editor~~
Walter Freese, at Hastings House - ~~Publisher~~
Helen Everett, at Houghton Mifflin - ~~N.Y. Editor~~
Bryan Holme, at Studio Pubs. - ~~Publisher~~

We doubt very much if anybody can do the color things right now, and it's absurd to go when every magazine you open shrieks with color. Of course, if Eastman makes the plates, or if publisher and Eastman can work out something together, that's another story.

Of the four people listed above, I think my first choice would be Houghton Mifflin. They're a New England firm, solid and old and good. They're doing Ansel's Muir book --- 64 plates at the end, each with a sentence or two from the text on the facing page and a title in small type. They are reputed to have a strong interest in nature. And they have a real literary tradition---beginning way back with Emerson and the boys. Anything they advise about the text I should leap to accomplish. I'm a little less sure about their visual sense. They left the Muir book sequence entirely to Ansel, and he and I worked it out together, selecting the quotes etc. When Ansel showed it to them in Boston, practically the entire staff---stenographers and all---came in and were moved to actual tears! Which speaks well for their response. On the other hand, they thought Paul's photographs both "arty" and "candid", which is hilarious.

If by any chance we should run through the above list without finding an enthusiastic backer, then we'll locate the best agent we can find and let him or her carry on. But I think such a contingency is exceedingly remote!

Charles read me bits of your letter on the phone and I thought it very good and very reasonable. The possibility of more pictures---people, and so on---enthalls me! Why not send them on in any case? Charles will want to see them, and so will any other publisher. And could we have the lovely one of Jonathan laughing?

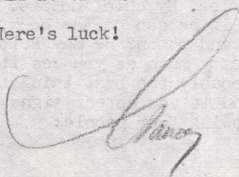
As to coming to New York, it might be well to come as soon as things get to the contract stage. Then you can get advice straight from the best people here, fight with the publisher over any clauses that need it, and get the book and reproductions problems settled at the same time. Of course, publishers have their seasons---spring and fall, and conventions of salesmen that meet twice a year, in January and in June, to whom they give sample pages or dummies, or maybe the finished book, to sell. All these things, together with the publisher's own program of production, will influence just when he'll be ready to start work on plates, layout, and so forth, so better check with him first. But to be here right through from contract to first proofs would be ideal. To say nothing of the fun of seeing you! Even if it should be just during a passage to Boston!

Without even trying I can think of several people who would undoubtedly buy the color prints at \$25 each!

One last word about Charles: he has actually produced more photography books---and of a high quality---than any body else. Whatever his failings or finances, that is

true. And he has kept them in print and never dumped them on the remainder pile---all of which speaks well for him. He has not, to my knowledge, done any really superlative rare-book kind of thing in photography. His output is on the high type of commercial publishing---good plaques, good paper, good printing. Sometimes he falls down, but usually due to things like war conditions. And Weegee, at any rate, actually made money with him, somewhere between \$15,000 to \$20,000. So you see why I hesitate, even though I--and many others--get annoyed with certain aspects of him at times.

Here's luck!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Stanley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial 'S'.