



1878-09-28

Letter from John Muir to [John] Strentzel, 1878 Sep 28.

John Muir

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence>

Recommended Citation

Muir, John, "Letter from John Muir to [John] Strentzel, 1878 Sep 28." (1878). *John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)*. 447.

<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/447>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the John Muir Correspondence 1856-1914 at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in John Muir Correspondence (PDFs) by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.

Wanderer

Saturday morning

Sep 28th 1886

Dear Doctor, Your kind letter of the 8th ult. reached me yesterday. having been forwarded from Hamilton. This is a little three year old mining town where we are making a few days halt to transact some business with the weary animals. We arrived late when it was too dark to set the tents & we recklessly camped in a corral on a breezy hill top. I have a great horror of sleeping upon any trodden ground near human settlements - not to say ammoniaal pens but the Captain had his blankets spread alongside the wagon & I dared the worst & lay down beside him. A wild equinoctial gale roared & tumbled down the mountainside all thro' the night lifting the dry fragrant snuff about our eyes & ears notwithstanding all our care in tucking & rolling our ample blankets. The situation was not exactly distressing but most absurdly & dammiedly ludicrous. Our camp traps - basins, bowls, bags went speeding wildly past in screeching rumbling discord with the earnest wind-thrums. A heavy mill-frame was blown down, but we suffered no great damage. Most of our runaway gear having been found in fence corners. But how terribly we stunk in mud of deodorizers - not de-alkalizers as you suggest. Next morning we rented a couple of rooms in town where we now are & washed rubbed dusted & combed ourselves back again into countenance. Half an hour ago after reading your letter a second time I tumbled out my pine tails tassels & hairs & was down on my knees on the floor making a selection for you according to your wishes & was casting about as to the chances of finding a suitable box when the Captain

C27

returning from the Post Office handed me your
richly laden grape box & now the grapes are out &
the berries are in. Now this was a coincidence worth
noting, was it not? better than most peoples special
providences. The fruit was in perfect condition
every individual specimen of them all fresh & bright
& as tightly bent as drums with their stored up juices
the big bunch is hung up for the benefit of eyes
most of the others have already vanished causing as
they filed a series of the finest & generous nose-irresistible
imaginable.

The weather is now much cooler - the nights almost
bracingly cold & all goes well. not a thistle trace left
we were weather bound a week in a canon of the
Golden Gate Range not by storms but by soft
balmy happy Indian summer. in which the mountain
appears ripened to flaming yellow. While the sky was
too opaque for observations upon the distant peaks

Since leaving Hamilton have obtained more
glacial facts of great interest. very telling in the
history of the Great Basin. also many charming additions
to the thousand thousand pictures of Nations mountain
beauty. I understand perfectly your criticism
on the blind pursuit of every scientific pebble wasting
a life in microscopic examinations of every grain of wheat
in a field, but I am not so doing. The history of this
vast wonderland is scarce at all known & no amount
of study in other fields will develop it to the light.
As to that special Ninth affair I was in no way responsible
I was fully awake to the danger but I was not in a position
to prevent it.

Our work goes on hopefully towards a satisfactory termination
will soon be in Utah. All the Mountains yet to be climbed
have been seen from other summits. Some two on
the watch of Mt. Nebo & a peak back of Beavers. Our next
object will be Wheelers peak 40 miles east of here.

The fir I send you is remarkably like the Sierra grandis, but much smaller, seldom attaining a greater height than fifty feet. In going East from the Sierra it was first met on the Hot Creek Range & afterwards on all the higher ranges thus far. It also occurs on the Wasatch & ~~Quinn's mountains~~. Of the two pines that with the Carrizo cones is called "White Pine" by the settlers. It was first met on Camp Peak west of Walker Lake. & afterwards on all the mountains thus far that reached an elevation of 10,000 feet or more. This I have no doubt is the species so rare on the Sierra & which I found on the Eastern slope opposite the head of Owens Valley. Two years ago I saw it on the Wasatch above Salt Lake. I mean to send specimens to Gray & Harker as they doubtless observed it on the Rocky mountains.

The other species is the aristata of the Southern portion of the Sierra above the Kern & Kings rivers. Is but little known though exceedingly interesting. First met on the Hot Creek Range & more abundantly

on the White Pine mountains - Called
Fox-Tail pine by the miners on account of
its long bushy tassels. It is by far
the most picturesque of all pines, &
those of these Basin ranges far surpass
those of the Sierra in extravagant &
unusual beauty of the picturesque kind.

These three species & the Fremont or
nut pine, ^{+ Juniper} are the only coniferous trees
I have thus far met in the ~~Basin~~ State.
Possibly the Yellow Pine (Ponderosa) may
be found on the Snake Range. I observed
it last year on the Wasatch, together with
one Abies. Of course that small
portion of Nevada which extends into the
Sierra about Lake Tahoe is not
considered in this connection for
it is naturally a portion of California.

Cordially Yrs,

Next address, Pioche Nevada }

John Muir

008/4

Bulletin Third.

Portage Wis.

Oct 10th 78.

Dear brother Dan.

Tonight Father
wishes me to tell you that
this is the best day he has
had since he was sick
that he has eaten a baked
sweet apple and relished
it very much, the barley tea
he likes very much also,
all to the praise and glory
of God. he says,
He sends his warmest love
to you and Emma,
Annie and I have been