



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1879-08-12

## Letter from Louie Strentzel to [John Muir], 1879 Aug 12.

Louie Strentzel

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Mother was very unwell all during the month of July. She was not able to ride, or to take any care of household affairs for over five weeks, and we often felt very anxious about her - but this week she is improving rapidly, has taken two short rides, and begins to look quite like herself again. Of course I could not leave to visit San Francisco; and what with a new Celestial cook; and many friends calling to see mamma, and others to see the century plant, and a few to stay awhile; I have sometimes felt just a little more tired than was good for me.

Little Helen has not yet made the promised visit, but she wrote to me, the most cunning little letter in plain print, and we will send for

00802

Address my letters, Dr. W. Brewster.

Alhambra, August 12, 1879.

Dear John,

What reward think you should be given me for these long weeks wherein I have kept silence and left you untroubled of all wild dread and the restless longing that can be with a foolish woman who has not learned to be brave, who has so many times failed to abide in the clear light of patience! Ah me! and at first I was so happy with thinking of your delight in that fair new world. I dreamed of the grand mountains white and pure forever, of marvelous glaciers, and "fresh hopeful forests" growing up to the rhythm of the

[22]  
wind and the sea, and the  
bonnie wild roses were sweet as the  
first in Eden's garden.

But other days brought only  
the shadow of dim pathless woods,  
with treacherous swamps and low  
lurking Indians, stealthy and cruel—  
O Beloved, I could not bear it!  
save for the thought that God  
loves you. Surely He will  
lead you ever in blessed ways, and  
His angels will guard you with-  
out ceasing, that no evil may  
befall you.

Yet sometimes I lose faith, and  
then Alaska, though infinitely  
better than that "Wilderness of  
shadows," seems so far, so far  
away, and become a part of the  
awful Silence of the North beyond  
reach of voice or prayer.

And now, there is another thing  
that I must tell you, dear, even

[23]  
though I tremble with fear of  
your Scotch pride, but it would  
be wicked of you to be angry  
with me when you know so  
well how sorely it would hurt  
me to think of your suffering  
for need of anything that I could  
give. From what the Bulletin  
has mentioned several times about the  
Clay St. Bank, we have all felt  
worried for fear that you have  
not received so much money as  
you expected, and as may be  
necessary in that country where  
good care and comfort can not  
be neglected without great danger.  
So I beg you to write that I  
can send you whatever may be  
desired, because, you must dinna  
forget that I am indebted to you  
for seven hundred, full value received  
in lessons, lectures, &c., and it's een a' most  
time that I begin repayment.

her and Emily <sup>[5]</sup> just as soon as this house resumes a reasonable quietude. For you remember that after the deluge which came down through our roofs last winter, papa engaged a carpenter to reshingle the whole house, and he came last week saying he was ready for work. As it happened, there had been for several days, more visitors than our rooms were suited for, so papa in a fit of desperation took a notion to build another and the result is the coolest, most pleasant room in the house, with a splendid view of the orchard and hills to the east, and there is a nice garret for storage, so when the painting is at last finished, the whole will be vastly more comfortable for us all.

Helen will be delighted with our humming birds, for there are about two dozen continually hovering near the century plant. And it is worthy of their presence, for the massive shaft

over



with gold-touched <sup>c 63</sup> bloom is really grand.  
At sunrise the wee birdies seem fairly  
delirious with ecstasy over the honied richness.

Those little northern trees seem sadly  
pining away in our August weather, though  
I sheltered them carefully all the time, but  
the dear wee Linnaea is sending out new  
tender leaf-buds. Poor exiles, carried a-  
way from cool, damp, mossy glades to  
a clime that drives thermometers up to 98°!!  
Even papa came in after a dusty ride  
groaning, "O for some Alaska glaciers!"

Mrs. Theobalds who lived five  
years at Union Lake, Seattle, was here  
yesterday and described all with great  
enthusiasm, except the November mists.  
But our German neighbor, Mr. Kaap,  
tells of different experiences and many  
hardships, a wild year as a Fro  
river miner — and when I look over  
newspapers, old or new, all the hunters'  
stories ever written about the northwest,  
seem to come just to my hand.

<sup>c 73</sup>  
So, do you wonder that Indians, and  
panthers, and load trails will trouble me?  
Were it not for them, the thought  
of "Beautiful Columbia" could be  
delicious to me. Now that you are  
coming nearer home where there  
need be no long month unheard,  
maybe I can be good and not  
fred, if only you send me the  
charmed line, Safe and well.

I did not mean to write so  
doleful a letter, dear, and I entreat  
you to remember a Bible transla-  
tion, and give me in return for  
all this gloom, — a beam of light  
from the sunrise glow on the  
glacier-crowned mountains.

May the Heavenly Father  
who rules the storms, hold you  
in his tender mercy now and  
evermore.

Faithfully Yours,  
Louie Strentzel.