



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

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Address my letter, B. H. Chittenden.

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

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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

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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 Emily²⁵, 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

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with gold-touched 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 Linnæa is sending out new tender leaf-buds. Poor exiles, carried away 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.

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So, do you wonder that Indians, and panthers, and load trails will trouble me? Were it not for them, the thought of "Beautiful Colombia" 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 fret, 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 translation, 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.