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Letter from John Muir to [Louie Muir], 1880 Aug 2.

John Muir

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Off Cape Flattery.

Monday, August 2^d 1880.

10 - A. M.

My dear wife.

All goes well. In a few hours we will be in Victoria. The voyage thus far has been singularly calm & uneventful. Leaving you is the only event that has marked the trip & it is marked sorely but I shall make haste to you & reach you as you have time to give & many. If you will only be calm & cheery all will be better for my short spell of sea-sickness.

The sea has been very smooth, nevertheless Mr. Magee has been very sick now he is better. As for me I have made no sign though I have had some headache & heartache. We are now past the Flattery rocks where we were so roughly storm-tossed last winter & reach Bay where we shall stop 30 hrs. Now peace it seems now the water black & gray with reflections from the cloudy sky. fur seals popping their heads up here & there, ducks & gulls dotting the small waves, & Indian fishing-boats towards the shore, each with a small glaring red flag flying from the masthead.

Behind the group of white-houses nestled in the deepest heart of the bay.

³ & the small waves are tipped with white. mild white caps, almost the only ones we have seen since leaving San Francisco. The Captain & first officer have been very attentive to us, giving us the use of their rooms & books etc besides answering all our questions about the sea & ships.

We will reach Victoria about 2 or 3 o'clock. The California will not sail before tomorrow sometime so that we shall have plenty of time to get the charts & odd ends we need before leaving. Mr. Magee will undoubtedly go on to Wrangell but will not be likely to stop over.

10 minutes past 2 in your clock.

We are just rounding the Esquimaux light house & in a few minutes more will be tied up at the wharf. Quite a land breeze is blowing from the island & the strait is ruffled with small shiny ripples - glowing in the distance like silver. Hereabouts many lofty mountain rock bosses rise above the forest-bare of trees but brown looking from the mosses that cover them. Since entering the strait the heavy swell up & down, up & down has vanished

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of honest green woods jagged toothed wolves & wild cats here = move smoothly enough but engines for the destruction of human beings are only devilish though they carry preachers & prayers & open up views of sad sad tears, now we are making fast "make fast that line these make fast" let go there, "give away".

We will go on to Victoria this afternoon taking our baggage with us & stay there until setting out on the Cal. The ride of 3 mos through the woods & round the glacial bosses is very fine, this you would enjoy. I shall look for the wares. Will mail this at once, & write again before leaving this grand old ice rubbed island. & how my dear

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rise rounded ice swept hills with
mountains beyond them folding
in & in in beautiful braids & all
densely forested. We are so near the
shore that with the mates glasses
I can readily make out some of
the species of the trees. The forest is
in the main scarce at all different
from those of the Alaska Coast
Now the Cape Light House is out
of sight & we are fairly into the
strait, Vancouver Island on one left
in fine clear view with forests
densely packed in every hollow & over
every hill & into How beautiful it is
how deep & shadowy its Canons,
how eloquently it tells the story
of its sculpture during the Age of Ice.
How perfectly virgin it is. Ships loaded
with Kamano Coal & Puget Sound Coal
& lumber, a half dozen of them are
about us beating their way down
the strait & here & there a pilot boat
to represent Civilization but not
one scar on the virgin shore nor
the smoke of a hob or Camp.

I have just been speaking with a man
who has spent a good deal of time on the
island he says that so impenetrable is the
underbrush his party could seldom
make more than two miles a day through
assisted by eight Indians. Only the
shores are known.
Now the wind is beginning to freshen

4
& all the sick have got well
& are out in full force
gazing at the harbor with the
excitement one always feels
after a voyage whether the future
offers much brightness or no.

The new Capt of the California
is sent to be good & careful &
the pilot & purser I know well.
So that we will feel at home
during the rest of our trip as
we have thus far, & as for
the main objects all nature
is unchangeable - loves us all
& grants generous welcome
to every honest votary.

I hope you do not feel
that I am away at all
any real separation is
not possible. I have been
alone, as far as the isolation
that distance makes, so much
of my lifetime that separation
seems more natural than
absolute contact which seems
too good & indulgent to be true.

Her Majesty's Ironclad Triumph
is lying close alongside. How
huge she seems & impertinently
strong & defiant with a background

[6]
Linn keep a good heart
& do the bits of work
I request you to do
& the days in Alaska
will go away fast enough
& I will be with you again
as if I had been gone
but one day.

Ever your affectionate husband

John Muir.

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