



1880-08-04

Letter from [John Muir] to Louie [Muir], 1880 Aug 4.

John Muir

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stranger dressed in shabby black. He has a kind of unnerved drooping look his shoulders coming together & his toes & his knees & the two ends of his vertebral Column, something like a withering leaf in hot sunshin. Poor fellow he looks at our ship as if he wanted to go again to the Mines to try his luck. And here comes two Indian women & a little girl trotting after them, they seem as if they were coming aboard, but turn aside at the edge of the wharf & descend rickety stairs to their canoe tied to a pile beneath the wharf. Now they reappear with change of toilet & the little girl is carrying a bundle something to eat or sell or sit on.

Gondar comes a typical John Bull Grand in size & style Cowmen in countenance, abdominal & showing a fine tight curve from chin to knee. When seen in profile. Yet benevolent withal

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On board the California 10 A.M.
Aug 4th 1880.

Dear Louis we are still lying along side the wharf at Victoria. It seems a leak in the water tank that had to be mended & the result was that we could not get off on the 7 o'clock tide last night. Victoria seems a dry, dignified half-civilized town supported in great part by government fees. Every erect or more than erect back leaning man has an office & carries himself with that peculiar aplomb that all the Hail Britannia people are so noted for. The wharf & harbor situation is very mild. The steamer Princess Louise lies along side ours getting ready for the trip to New Westminster on Fraser River. The Hudson's Bay Company's steamer Otter, a queer old tubby craft left for the N. last night. A few sloops, plungers & boats are crawling about the harbor or lying at anchor doing or dreaming a business nobody knows. Gondar comes an Indian canoe with its one unique sail calling up memories

+ reliable, confidence-getting.
I have just landed opposite
our ship is a pile of hundreds
of bears. Skins black + brown
from Alaska brought here
~~from~~ by the "Otter". A few
deer skins too + wildcat +
wolverine. The Hudson Bay Co
men are about them showing
their ownership.

Ten minutes to twelve o'clock. "Let go
that line there" etc tells that we
are about to move. Our steam
wings slowly round + head for
Nanaimo. How beautiful the
shores are. How glacial yet
how leafy. The days becomes
calmer, + brighter + everybody
seems happy. Our fellow passengers
are Major Morris + wife, whom I met
last year; Judge Seady. A young
Englishman + dreamy silent old
gray man like a minister.

E. P. M. we are entering Nanaimo harbor.

many of my last winter's rambles
among the tchereps. The water is ruffled
with a slight breeze, scarce enough for
small white caps. Clearer than the
waters of most harbors, though not without
the ordinary drift of old bottles + straw
+ defunct domestic animals.

How rotten the piles of the wharf are, +
how they smell even in this cool climate.

They are taking hundreds of barrels of
molasses aboard. For what purpose
to delight the Alaska youngsters with
cakes bread + smear their happy
chubby cheeks. Or to make cookies
+ gingerbread? No, Whisky, Indian
Whisky. It will be bought by Inds 9/10ths
of it + more, they will give their hard-
earned money for it. + their hard-
-caught furs for it, + take it far away
along many a glacial channel
+ inlet, + make it into crazing poison.
Onions too many a ton are coming aboard
to boil + fry + raise a watery cry.
Alone on the wharf I see a lone