



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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, some-
thing like a withering leaf in hot
sunshine. Poor fellow he looks
at our ship as if he wanted to
go again to the Muses 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 toleef
& the little girl is carrying a bundle
something to eat or sell or sit on.

Yonder comes a typical John
Bull Grand in size & style Cov-
-men in countenance, abandon-
-ous & 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 Louie we are still lying along side
the wharf at Victoria. It seems a leak was
discovered in one of the water tanks that had to
be mended & the result was that we could
not get off on the 7 o'clock tide last night. The
Victoria seems a dry, dignified half-civil 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
Yonder comes an Indian Canoe with
its one unique sail calling up memories

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 + 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
 swings slowly round + heads for
 Kamama. 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 Kamama harbor

many of my last winter's rambles
 among the icebergs. 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
 less 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-
 -earned 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