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Letter from John Muir to Louie [Muir], 1880 Aug 10.

John Muir

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To Mrs. Muir

Sitka, On board the California,
Aug. 10th, 1880,
10:30 P.M. of your time.

My own dear Louie;

I'm now about as far from you as I will be this year — only this wee sail to the North and then to thee, my lassie. And I'm not away at all, you know, for only they who do not love may ever be apart. There is no true separation for those whose hearts and souls are together. So much for love and philosophy. And now I must trace you my way since leaving Nanaimo.

We sailed smoothly through the thousand evergreen isles, and arrived at Fort Wrangell at 4:30 A.M. on the 8th. Left Wrangell at 12M of the same day and arrived here on the 9th at 6 A.M. Spent the day in friend[ly] greetings and saunterings. Found Mr. Vanderbilt and his wife and Johnnie and, not every way least, though last, little Annie, who is grown in stature and grace and beauty since last I kissed her.

Today Mr. Vanderbilt kindly took myself and Mr. Magee and three other fellow passengers on an excursion on his steamer up Peril Strait, about fifty miles. (You can find it on one of the charts that I forgot to bring). We returned to the California about 9:30, completing my way thus far.

And now for my future plans. The California sails tomorrow afternoon some time for Fort Wrangell, and I mean to return on her and from there set out on my canoe trip. I do not expect to be detained at Wrangell inasmuch as I saw Mr. Young, who promised to have a canoe and crew ready. I mean to keep close along the mainland, exploring the deep inlets in turn, at least as far north as the Tarkou, then push across to Cross Sound and follow the northern shore, examining the glaciers that crowd into the deep inlet that puts back northward from near the south extremity of the Sound, where I was last year. Thence I mean to return eastward along the southern shore of the Sound to Chatham Strait, turn southward down the west shore of the Strait to Peril Strait, and follow this Strait to Sitka, where I shall take the California. Possibly, however, I may, should I not be pushed for time, return to Wrangell. Mr. Magee will, I think, go with me, though very unwilling to do so... [He is held only by the definite contract he made with me. Had he requested me to release him from it in the right manly way I should have done so at once. But for his own sake I mean to make him go, as I feel sure that he will be better satisfied, and that his health will be greatly benefited. No other trip that I know of will suit him so well. I let Mr. Vanderbilt have \$300.00, as we proposed.]

Aug. 11th, 12M, at noon

I have just returned from a visit to the Jamestown. The Commander, Beardslee, paid me a visit here last evening, and invited me aboard his ship. Had a pleasant chat, and an invitation to make the Jamestown my home while here.

I also found my friend Koshote, the Chief of the Hoonas, the man who, I told you, had entertained Mr. Young and I so well last year on Cross Sound, and who made so good a speech. He is here trading, and seemed greatly pleased to learn that I was going to pay him another visit; said that meeting me was like meeting his own brother who was dead, his heart felt good, etc....

In case Mr. Magee goes on with me, as I suppose he will, I shall have to be in Sitka or Fort Wrangell by this time or earlier next month, as he [must] certainly return on the September trip of the California, and should I have good luck as to wind and weather I may possibly return with him, though this is not probable. I will not be later, however, than the October trip.

I have been learning all about the death of the brave and good old Totatto. I think that Dr. Corliss, one of the Wrangell missionaries, made a mistake in reference to the seizure of some whisky, which caused the beginning of the trouble.

This is a bright, soft, balmy, day. How you would enjoy it! You must come here some day when you are strong enough... Heaven bless you, my wife. I will write again from Fort Wrangell tomorrow. Love to mother and father. Remember me to Mrs. Hatch -- hope she is recovering health in the invigorating air of the Sierras. For a little while again,

Farewell,

John Muir.

Everybody enquires at first on seeing me, "Have you brought your wife?" and then, "Have you a photograph?" and then pass condemnation for coming alone!...

My hair [is] frizzly, evenly all over like the hair of certain dogs -- some trick you played on it. It will not down.

The mail is about to close, and I must write to mother.

Affectionately your husband,

John Muir,

How eagerly I shall look for news when I reach Fort Wrangell next month.

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