



1881-05-15

Letter from [John Muir] to [Louie Strentzel Muir], [1881] May 15.

John Muir

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(40)
would have been in the harbor
by this time had it not been for
a heavy head wind that began to
blow early this morning. It has
been a cold blustering howling
stormy day, with rain hail &
snow beating the deck besides
the waves that are breaking
over the rail. Every movable
thing in the cabin flying from
side to side. The weather has been
cold all the way from California
first an average day temperature
of about 55° , with a gradual
fall to 35° . Still I have been
very comfortable. The cold wind
is bracing & I have the best rest
in the ship in which I sleep 9
hours every night.

There are but three of us in the
cabin, the Captain the Surgeon
& myself. & only the same three at table.

Albano
John Muir.
Steamer Thomas Corwin
Donalaska
Earl Alaskan
= Mercantile Company
San Francisco, Cal.
My beloved wife.

(13)
At Sea,
50 miles from Alaska
Sunday evening,
May 15,
half past 6 o'clock.
half past 9 Alhambra
time.

All goes well on
our little ship, & not all the tossing of
the waves, & the snow & hail on the deck
& being out of sight of land so long can
make me swoly feel that I am not
now with you all as ever, so
sudden was my departure, & so long
have I been accustomed in the old
lonely life to feel the influence of loved
ones as if present in the flesh, while
yet far, and so my dear wife & our
dear child, & self-denying mother & father
I seem to be with you all, so vividly
are you present to the inner eye.

And when after going again & again up the little crooked stairs to look at my beautiful baby I wake to the sad knowledge that I am indeed unable to touch her with my hand as usual then I begin to think of the distance & the time that are separating us. & I can only pray that God our Father will keep you tenderly & bring us again together with the added blessings of work well done.

I was very sea sick for two days, probably because of my sickly wearied condition when I came aboard. I was unable to eat at Swells, felt sea-sick & began to vomit when I awoke the morning before we sailed. But I am well already & look so red & weatherbeaten you would scarce know me, & I sleep well, & eat well eat like a mountaineer let the Carrion toss & tumble as she may.

eat ham, eat bacon, eat onions boiled, onions fried, eat onion-stuffing in chicken, eat onion-hack, & ere I return will no doubt eat polar bears, walrus, seals, whales, gulls, & at least a hundred other rank fishy horrible greasy meats. & mixtures with bland & submissive thankfulness. We have not been in sight of land since we left the vicinity of the Golden Gate, as we made a straight course across the ocean 2000 miles to Bonaslaska. We would see some of the snowey volcanic cones now were they not hidden by clouds, (I'll run up to the pilot-house & see if they have not come to view since I commenced this letter) No, the clouds are still close down to the water, & c

11 (85)
According to the many
variable known & unknown
circumstances of the case.
Of course if De Long is
found we will return at
once. If not, a persistent
effort will be made to force
a way to that mysterious ice,
near Wrangel Land. Since
it was to it that De Long
was directing his efforts
when last heard from.

We will be cautious however;
& we hope to be back to our homes
this fall. Do not allow this
outline of Captain Hoopers plan
to get into print at present.
Good night Love Good night to all
Good night Annie Wanda, it is a wild rough
night.

2 (53) 08998
so that there is no crowding.
We will probably get into
port tomorrow forenoon &
remain about 3 days coaling
taking in more stores, etc.
Then we will call at the
Seal Islands St Paul & St George
Then push on along the
Siberian Coast to about Cape
Serdzfe if the ice will allow
& there send out a party of
four or five, with dogs to draw
provisions, to search the
North Siberian coast as far
to the W. as possible in a month
or two for tidings of the lost
explorers or whalers. This
party I do not intend to join.
I mean to stay on board the

Steamer wh in the meantime
 will return out of the ice
 as far as St Michaels at the
 mouth of the Yukon. & thence
 Northward again to Kotzebue
 Sound when we mean to
 do some little exploring
 up the Buckland River while
 the ice is being melted or driven
 back sufficiently to let us pass
 out of the Straits into the Polar
 Sea. Then after picking up
 our land party we will
 probably push as far East-
 ward as possible around Pt Barrow
 & then towards the Close of the
 season proceed Westward
 along the edge of the ice-pack

opposite the N. Coast of
 Siberia with a view to
 discovering some opening in
 the ice to allow our passing
 on to Wrangel Land.
 Should we be successful
 in reaching Wrangel Land
 we would very likely be
 compelled to winter on it.
 Exploring while the weather
 permitted.

In case we are unsuccess-
 -ful in reaching Wrangel Land.
 we may get caught farther
 West & be able to reach it
 by dog sledges in winter
 while the pack is frozen.
 Or we may winter on the
 Siberian Coast etc etc