



1881-05-16

Letter from [John Muir] to [Louie Strentzel Muir], 1881 May 16.

John Muir

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After going back about ten miles we discovered a good anchorage in 15 fathom water in the lee of a great bluff of lava about 2000 ft high. & here we ride in comfort while the blast drives past overhead. If we do not get off tomorrow I will go ashore & see what I can learn.

Have learned already since the snow ceased falling that all the region hereabouts has been glaciated just like that 1000 miles to the Eastward. All the sculpture shows this clearly.

How pleasant it seems to be able to walk once more without holding on & to have your plate lie still on the table.

It is clearing up. The mountains are seen in groups rising back of one another all pure white. The sailors are catching cod fish.

Monday May 16, 4. P. M.

Then on the waterfalls opposite the mountain range

Dear Louie, Since writing this forenoon we reached the mouth of the strait that separates Kodiak Island from the next to the Eastward against a strong head wind & through rough snow squalls, when the Captain told me that he thought he would not venture through the Strait today because the swift flood tide setting through the strait against the wind was surely raising a dangerously rough sea but rather seek an anchorage somewhere in the lee of the bluffs, & wait the fall of the wind. As he approached the mouth of the Strait however he changed his mind & determined to try it. When the vessel began to pitch & heavily & the hatches & skylights were that I could touch my body & then

This has been a very stormy morning, having been
 closed then I knew that we
 were in the strait & made haste
 to get on my overcoat & get up
 into the Pilot house to enjoy the
 view of the waves. The view proved
 to be far wilder & exciting than I ex-
 pected, indeed I never before saw
 water in so hearty a storm of hissing
 & blinding foam. It was all one
 leaping clashing roaring mass
 of white mingling with the air
 by means of the long hissing
 streamers dragged from the
 wave tops, & the biting sea.
 Our little vessel swept onward by
 the flood pouring into Behaim's Sea
 & by her machinery was being
 buffeted by the head gale & the huge
 white overcombing waves. That made

her reel & tremble though she
 stood it bravely & obeyed the helm
 as if in calm water. After pro-
 ceeding about 5 or 6 miles into the
 heart of this grand uproar it seemed
 to grow yet wilder & began to bid
 defiance to any farther headway
 against it. At length when we
 had nearly lost our boats ^{in danger of} & having
 our decks swept, we turned &
 fled for refuge before the gale.
 The giant waves exulting in
 their strength seemed to be chasing
 us & threatening to swallow us
 at a gulp but we finally made
 our escape & were perhaps in
 no great danger farther than
 the risk of losing our 4 boats &
 having the decks swept.