



1881-05-18

Letter from [John Muir] to [Louie Strentzel Muir], 1881 May 18.

John Muir

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Recommended Citation

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health has been suffering the
 Meanwhile, & today I sent him
 half a dozen bottles of the doctors
 wine to revive him. This notable
 liberality under the circumstances
 was caused by 1st His having
 advised me years ago to take
 good care of my steps on the
 mountains, 2^d, & to get married,
 & 3^d, for his pictures drawn for
 me of the bliss of having children
 4th, for the sake of our mutual
 friends, 5th for his good looks &
 bad health, & half dozenth because
 15 or 20 years ago on a dark night
 while seeking one of his patients
 in the Contra Costa hills he called
 at the house of Doctor Strentzel
 for directions & was invited in &
 got a glass of good wine - a
 half dozen bottles for a half dozen
 reasons, "That's consistent isn't it?"

This is the 5th letter from Conalaska. Will write 2 more & then I must stop.

Conalaska ^{arrived} Wednesday
 May 18th 1881. 6.30 P.M.

Dear Louie, The storm king of
 the north is again up & doing,
 rolling white-capping waves
 through the rugged straits between
 this marvellous chain of islands
 circling them about with beaten
 up-dashing foam & piling yet more
 & more snow on the clustering
 cloud wrapped peaks. But we are
 safe & snug in this landlocked
 haven enjoying the distant storm
 roar of wave & wind. I have
 just been on deck, it is snowing
 still & the deep bass of the gale
 is sounding on through the mountains
 & How weird & wild & fascinating
 all this heaving work of the storm is
 to me. I feel a strange love of it
 all as I gaze thithering up the

I mean to give a bottle to the
 friend of the Captains who is
 stationed at St Michaels. ⁽²⁾
 & save one bottle for our
 first contact with the polar
 ice pack & one with which to
 celebrate the hour of our
 return to home, friends, wives,
 babies.

We had fresh baked, stuffed
 Catfish for breakfast of which
 I ate heartily, stuffing and all
 though the latter was gray & soft
 & much burdened with minced
 onions. & then I held out my
 plate for a spoonful of opaque
 oleaginous gravy. This last
 paragraph is for Grandmother
 as a manifestation of heroic
 all-enduring all-engulfing health

(23)

dim white slopes seen as
through a veil darkly becoming
fainter & fainter as the flakes
thicken & at length hide all
the land.

Last evening I went ashore with
the Captain & saw the few chief
men of the place & the one
white woman & a good many
of the Aleuts. We were kindly &
cordially entertained by the agent
of the Alaska Com. Co Mr
Greenbaum, & while seated in
his elegant parlor could hardly
realize that we were in so
remote & cold & silent a
wilderness. While we were
seated at our ease discussing
Alaskan & Polar affairs a knock

(33)

came to the door & a tall
hoary majestic old man slowly
entered whom I at once took
for the Russian priest - but
to whom I was introduced as
Dr Holman. He shook hands
with me very heartily & said
Mr Muir I am glad to see you
I had the pleasure of knowing
you in San Francisco. Then I
recognized him as the dignified
old gentleman that I first met
3 or 4 years ago at the home
of the Smiths at San Rafael
& we had a pleasant evening
together. He has been in the employ
of the Alaska Com. Co here for a
year caring for the health of
the Company's Aleuts. His own

01002

(63)

To the Honorable Secretary of the Navy
Washington D.C.

My dear Sir,
We have not yet commenced
to coal so that we will
not get off for the north before
Sunday. There is a schooner
here that will sail for Oregon
(Shoalwater Bay) in a few days
by which I will send 4 or 5 letters.
The 3 or 4 more that I intend
writing ere we leave this port
I will give to the Agent of the
Company here to be forwarded
by the next opportunity in
case the first batch should
be lost. Then others will
be sent by St from St Michael
by the Company's steamer
& still others from the Seal
Islands, & from points where
we fall in with any vessel
homeward bound. Good night & all.