



1881-05-19

Letter from John Muir to Mother [Ann G. Muir], 1881 May 19.

John Muir

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to me the steamship
winter. I am sorry that
this will still longer delay
my long looked for & prayed
for visit to you, but the
joy will be all the greater
when a kind providence
does bring us together once
more. In the meantime
try to be patient & to believe
that things will be so arranged
for the best. Write to Louie
her trial was very hard
& Heaven only knows how
soon was the parting from
my little girl & her. But we
are driven on. - Men must
work & women must weep.

I had a very exciting & instructive
excursion up one of the snow
peaks near the harbor yesterday.
Love to all. Farewell, I will write

safely with the Agent of the
Alaska Commercial Company to
be forwarded by some other vessel.
I have been greatly interested for
a long time in the glaciation of the
Pacific Coast, & I felt that I
must make a trip of this sort to
the far north some time, & no better
chance could in any probability
offer. I am acquainted with our
Captain & have every comfort the
ship can afford, & every facility
to pursue my studies.

As I told you in my first letter we
mean to proceed from here past the
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then on northward & along the
Siberian Coast to about Cape Serdze
where a Sledge party with dogs will
be sent out to search the North Siberian
Coast. While the steamer the Meanwhile

[Original letter in possession of Mrs. Mary Muir Hand].

On board the steamer "Thomas Corwin,"
At Oonalaska harbor, Alaska,
May 19th, 1881.

Dear Mother:

I wrote you from San Francisco that I had suddenly made up my mind to avail myself of the opportunity offered to visit the Arctic region on the steamer Thomas Corwin sent to seek the Jeanette and the missing whalers that were lost in the ice two years ago off Point Barrow. We left San Francisco May 4th and arrived here on the 18th where we are taking on coal and additional supplies for our long cruise up through Behrings Strait. We will probably leave this port on the 22d. I will send this by the schooner H. L. Tiernan which sails from here for Shoalwater Bay, Oregon, tomorrow, and a copy of this I will leave for greater safety with the agent of the Alaska Commercial Company to be forwarded by some other vessel.

I have been greatly interested for a long time in the glaciation of the Pacific Coast, and I felt that I must make a trip of this sort to the far north sometime, and no better chance could in any probability offer. I am acquainted with our Captain and have every comfort the ship can afford, and every facility to pursue my studies.

As I told you in my first letter, we mean to proceed from here past the seal islands St. Paul and St. George, then on northward along the Siberian coast to about Cape Serdze where a sledge party with dogs will be sent out to search the north Siberian coast, while the steamer the meanwhile will cross to the American shore and call at St. Michael, Kotzebue Sound and other points, making short journeys inland. Then as the ice pack melts and breaks up we will probably push eastward around Point Barrow, then return to the Siberian side to pick up our land party, then endeavor to push through the ice to the mysterious unexplored Wrangel Land. We hope to return to San Francisco by October or November, but may possibly be compelled to winter in the Arctic somewhere.

I feel sure that I will be amply repaid for whatever I am called on to endure. We will be well provided with fur clothing and all requisite supplies for an Arctic winter.

I am sorry that this will still longer delay my long looked for and prayed for visit to you, but the joy will be all the greater when a kind providence does bring us together once more. In the meantime try to be patient and to believe that things will be governed for the best. Write to Louie. Her trial was very hard, and Heaven only knows how sore was the parting from my little girl and her. But we are driven on. Man must work and woman must weep.

I had a very exciting and instructive excursion up one of the snow peaks near the harbor yesterday. Love to all. Farewell. I will write by every chance. Direct your letters to me thus: John Muir, on board Steamer Thomas Corwin, Oonalaska, Care Alaska Commercial Company, San Francisco, Cal.

[John Muir]

[Envelope addressed Mrs. Daniel Muir, Portage City, Wisconsin. Postmarked San Francisco, Aug. 15, '81].