



1881-08-16

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

John Muir

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U. S. Revenue Marine,

Point Barrow,

Aug. 16th, 1881.

10.45 P.M.

Dear John Muir.
Point Barrow Aug 18th.
We are still here will
leave today for the Southwest
Have written two Bulletin
letters to go down by the
Legal Tender, These will
give you particulars of
our ice-battles.
My blood wife. Heaven only knows my joy this night
in hearing that you were well. Old as the letter is
& great as the number of the days & nights that have
passed since your love was written, it yet seems
as if I had once more been up stairs & held you
& Wanda in my arms. Ah you little know the long
icy days so strangely restless that I have longed &
longed for one word from you. The dangers great as
they were while groping & groping among the vast
immeasurable icefields about that mysterious
wreathed Land would have seemed as nothing
before I knew you. But most of the special dangers
are past & I have good news for you my love
for we have succeeded in landing on that strange
ice-girt country & our work is nearly all done
& I am coming home by the middle of October
No thought of wintering now & attempting to cross the
frozen ocean from Siberia. We will take no more
risks. All is well with our staunch little ship, she is

I shall soon be home & my wife & children
 I leave at all injured by the pounding & gathering
 she has undergone, & sailing home seems nothing
 more than crossing San Francisco Bay.
 We have added a large territory to the domain of
 the United States & amassed a grand lot of
 knowledge of one earth & another.
 Now we sail from here tomorrow for Cape Lisburne
 or if stormy to Plover Bay to coal & repair our
 rudder which is a little weak. Thence we will go
 again around the margin of the main Polar pack
 about Wrangel Land but not into it, & possibly
 discover a clear way to land upon it again
 & obtain more of its geography. Then leave the
 Arctic about the 10th of Sep. Call at St Michaels
 & at Oonalaska & then straight home.
 I shall not write at length now as this is to go down
 by the Legal Tender who sails in a few days & expects
 to reach S. F. by the 20th of Sep, but we may reach home
 nearly as soon as she. I have to dash off a letter for
 the Bulletin tonight yet, though I ought to go to bed.
 Not a word of it is yet written.
 We came poking & feeling our way along this icy shore
 a few hrs ago through the fog little thinking that a letter from
 you was just ahead. Then the fog lifted & we saw four
 whalers at anchor & a strange vessel. When the Captain
 of the Belvidere shouted "Letters for you Captain" by the Legal
 Tender" it was the strange vessel. Our hearts leaped, & a boat
 was speedily sent along side. I got the letter package & handed
 them round, & yours love was the very last in the package & I
 dreaded there was none. The Rodgers had not yet been heard from.

One of the whale ships was caught here & crushed in the ice & sunk in 20 minutes & months ago.