

To Hon. Josiah Pierce,
Gorham, Maine.
U. S. of N. America.

In Petersburg, May 2/14, 1856.

My Dear Father,

Your letter of the 7th April reached me on the 29th. The mails from home come very regularly to us in about three weeks time - mine

You have, I suppose, received near this date, ^ which was mailed on the 12/24th ult. The days fly swiftly by with me - more than half-a-year has gone like the wind since I landed in Europe - and just now the time seems to advance more rapidly than usual from the celerity of the daily advances of summer. The snow has all gone - with the ice - the dust whirls through the streets - fogs "brek-ek-ek-co-ax" in the marshes - the women wear gay calico gowns - boats move briskly in the beautiful flowing river - and the wealthy are planning summer tours - or preparing to migrate to suburban villas - The grass is getting green, but the tree-leaves are not yet put forth -

Yesterday the spring was inaugurated in due form, by the annual May-day promenading, driving, or riding, of the whole population, to the pleasure grounds of Ekaterishof, on the shore of the Gulf, two or three versts south-west of the City - Pretty birch woods, intersected by gravel-paths, on each side of the main road were crowded with people - men, women, & children in many colored garments; the sheepskins schooba & fur pelisse had disappeared - calico blouses, mostly pink, parasols & French fashions enlivened the scene - For two miles, the road was filled with a chain of private carriages, driving slowly, as in Hyde Park, for the important and would-be-important occupants to see and be seen. The Imperial family usually appear on this occasion - I saw of them, only the Grand Duke Constantine on horseback. The woods were, on one side, occupied by booths for the sale of beer, gingerbread, nuts, oranges, tea, &c - a stand for flying horses, and several restaurants, and a platform on which a military band was playing were surrounded by joyous masses of burghers let loose - In these Russian crowds, there is very little pushing, and no quarrelling & good-humor seems to prevail universally among the people - and there is also very little enthusiasm or shouting, and a very few policemen suffice to keep a thousand carriages and five thousand men in their proper places. One must however, "beware of pickpockets" -

Stamp 12/15/1856 Nancy's funny letter of the 25th April has just arrived - with Lewis's of the 21st do -

May 3rd/15th Nancy's funny letter of the 25th April has just arrived - with Lewis's of the 21st do

To Hon. Josiah Pierce.
Gorham, Maine.
U. S. of N. America.

St. Petersburg, May 2/14, 1856.

My Dear Father,

Your letter of the 7th April reached me on the 29th

The mails from home come very regularly to us in about three weeks time - mine

You have, I suppose, received near this date, ^ which was mailed on the 12/24th ult. The days fly swiftly by with me - more than half-a-year has gone like the wind since I landed in Europe - and just now the time seems to advance more rapidly than usual from the celerity of the daily advances of summer. The snow has all gone - with the ice - the dust whirls through the streets - fogs "brek-ek-ek-co-ax" in the marshes - the women wear gay calico gowns - boats move briskly in the beautiful flowing river - and the wealthy are planning summer tours - or preparing to migrate to summer villas - The grass is getting green, but the tree-leaves are not yet put forth -

Yesterday the spring was inaugurated in due form, by the annual May-day promenading, driving, or riding, of the whole population, to the pleasure grounds of Ekaterishof, on the shore of the Gulf, two or three versts south-west of the City - Pretty birch woods by gravel-paths, on each side of the main road were crowded with people - men, women, & children in many colored garments; the sheepskins schooba & fur pelisse had disappeared - calico blouses, mostly pink, parasols & French fashions enlivened the scene - For two miles, the road was filled with a chain of private carriages, driving slowly, as in Hyde Park for the important and would-be-important occupants to see and be seen. The Imperial family usually appear on this occasion - I saw of them, only the Grand Duke Constantine on horseback. The woods were, on one side, occupied by booths for the sale of beer, gingerbread, nuts, oranges, tea, &c - A stand for flying horses, and several restaurants, and a platform on which a military band was playing were surrounded by joyous masses of burghers let loose - In these Russian crowds, there is very little pushing, and no quarrelling = good-humor seems to prevail universally among the people - and there is also very little enthusiasm or shouting, and a very few policemen suffice to keep a thousand carriages and five thousand men in their proper places - One must however, "beware of pickpockets" -

Contributed to Maine Memory Network by an individual through
Maine Historical Society

MMN #31869

Date: May 2/14, 1856

Description:

On the preceding day (the 30th April - 12th May) the great annual Parade, review and inspection of the reserve battalions of the Guard, numbering about 50,000 men, took place in the Champ de Mars, before the Emperor. A brilliant staff, numbering more than one hundred, composed of the Grand Dukes, one or two foreign Princes, the Aide-de Camps Generals, several distinguished strangers, among whom were our Minister Mr. Seymour (in his old Colonel's uniform) - the Persian Minister in full Persian military costume, - the Bavarian Attache Comte de Honipeseld - and most notable of all the English General Williams (the hero of Kars) and his Aide-de Camp Major Teesdale, followed His Majesty as he rode on the field and passed from rear to front winding through the long columns on the preliminary tour of inspection - I also should have been in the staff, had my uniform been complete, for I had received an invitation by order of the Emperor among others of the Diplomatic list who wear military coats. I was very sorry to lose such an honor and pleasure; but enjoyed a quiet and perfect view of the whole magnificent scene from the balcony of the excellent Danish Minister, Baron de Plesseu, whose house fronts upon the Champ de Mars - The soldiers of the guard are the finest in uniform and discipline probably of the whole Russian Empire -

About 30,000 Infantry were drawn up, by four battalions, closed in mass - in three lines - behind them were the 15,000 splendid Cavalry troops, and the remainder were mounted artillery - They passed in review before the Emperor & his staff, in the usual order of review - first in common time - then in quick time - An hour and an half was occupied by the first march -

The Emperor & some of the Grand Dukes were on the field in a carriage and drove along the lines before the review began - The Infantry had on short dark green frock-coats, mostly faced with red, but varying, in facings only, according to their regiments, and all wore white pantaloons - There were about 20,000 Infantry of the Guard, all of whom wore a sort of modern French Infantry Cap surmounted by a tall waving horsehair plume - The remaining 10,000

On the preceding day (the 30th April - 12th May) the great annual Parade, review and the inspection of the reserve battalions of the Guard, numbering about 50,000 men, took place in the Champ de Mars, before the Emperor. A brilliant staff, numbering more than one hundred, composed of the Grand Dukes, one or two foreign Princes, the Aide-de Camps Generals, several distinguished strangers, among whom were our Minister Mr. Seymour (in his old Colonel's uniform) - the Persian Minister in full Persian military costume, the Bavarian Attache Comte de Honipeseld[?] - and most noticed of all the English General Williams (the hero of Kars) and his Aide-de Camp Major Teesdale, followed His Majesty as he rode on the field and passed from rear to front winding through the long columns on the preliminary tour of inspection - I also should have been in the staff, had my uniform been complete, for I had received an invitation by order of the Emperor among others of the Diplomatic list who wear military coats, I was sorry to lose such an honor and pleasure; but enjoyed a quiet and perfect view of the whole magnificent scene from the balcony of the excellent Danish Minister, Baron de Plesseu, whose house fronts upon the Champs de Mars - The soldiers of the guard are the finest in uniform and discipline probably of the whole Russian Empire -

About 30,000 infantry were drawn up, by front of battalions, closed in mass - in three lines - behind them were 15,000 splendid Cavalry troops, and the remainder were mounted artillery - They passed in review before the Emperor & his staff, in the usual order of review - first in common time - then in quick time - An hour and an half was occupied by the first march -

The Empress & wives of the Grand Dukes were on the field in a carriage and drove along the lines before the review began - The Infantry had on short dark green frock-coats mostly faced with red, but varying, in facings only, according to their regiments, and all wore white pantaloons - There were about 20,000 Infantry of the Guard, all of whom wore a sort of modern French Infantry Cap surmounted by a tall waving horsehair plume - The remaining 10,000

infantry of the line wore helmets the brass plates & spikes of which glittered in the sun - and I never saw anything so fine and grand as when the heavy columns, closed in mass, with the front of whole battalions, with waving banners, and stirring martial music, with evenly sloped bayonets glittering in the bright sunlight of the charming day, changed direction and marched heavily forward in review from right to left like a moving wall, down towards where I was placed - Then the dancing plumes of cavalry, and the gilded & silver plated helmets surmounted by eagles with outstretched wings of the Chevalier guards & Horseguards, the pennant tipped lances & jaunty caps of the Cossacks, the wild red dressed lancers of Asia Tartary - the Polish lancers - the heavy dragoons - the carabiniers - the cuirassiers - the gend'armes, moved with a grand sweep past - and last the heavy cannon and multitude of artillery horses came thundering by - but the cavalry & artillery of course made the greatest display when they galloped past in rapid movements at the close of the review -

But all this military talk will I suppose be of little interest to you - I would describe as more entertaining, if I could well do it, the grand farewell dinner which Count Nesselrode gave to the Diplomatic Corps on the 22 April (4th May.) The old Count felt very happy, for he had received the kindest expressions of esteem and recognition of his high and honorable services during his long & eminent career, on laying aside the functions of Minister of Foreign Affairs, from his Imperial Master & from all persons, high & low, officially connected with him -

His dinners and his cook are of great fame throughout Europe - I certainly have not tasted, even at the Emperor's table, better wine, or dishes more attractive to the palate - There was a simplicity also, apparently, in each, which was the result of high culinary art or genius - To say there were roast beef or partridges or Volga Sterlet, as the chief dishes would give but little idea of

infantry of the line wore helmets the brass plates & spikes of which glittered in the sun - and I never saw anything so fine and grand as when the heavy columns, closed in mass, with the front of whole battalions, with waving banners, and stirring martial music, with evenly sloped bayonets glittering in the bright daylight of the charming day, changed directions and marched heavily forward in review from right to left like a moving wall, down towards where I was placed - Then the dancing plumes of cavalry, and the gilded & silver plated helmets surmounted by eagles with outstretched wings of the Chevalier guards & Horseguards, the pennant tipped lances & jaunty caps of the Cossacks, the wild red dressed lancers of Asian Tartary - the Polish lancers - the heavy dragoons - the carabiniers - the cuirassiers - the gend'armes, moved with a grand sweep past - and last the heavy cannon and multitude of artillery horses came thundering by - but the cavalry & artillery made the greatest display when they galloped past in rapid movements at the close of the review -

But all the military talk will I suppose be of little interest to you - I would describe as more entertaining, if I could well do it, the grand farewell dinner which Count Nesselrode gave to the Diplomatic Corps on the 22 April (4th May.) The old Count felt very happy for he had received the kindest expressions of esteem and recognition of his high and honorable services during his long and eminent career, on laying aside the functions of Minister of Foreign Affairs, from his Imperial Master, & from all persons, high & low, officially connected with him -

His dinners and his cook are of great fame throughout Europe - I certainly have not tasted, even at the Emperor's table, better wine, or dishes more attractive to the palate - There was a simplicity also, apparently, in each, which was the result of high culinary art or genius - To say there were roast beef or partridges or Volga Sterlet, as the chief dishes would give but little idea of

the extraordinary transcendental preparation of those well-known articles
of food - Strawberries, cherries, flowers of the richest & rarest kinds, oranges &c
were there in abundance. The dining-room was a lofty beautiful room,
in antique Grecian style, with walls, pillars, cornices & caryatides of a
mottled white-and-blue marble - All the Foreign Ministers & their wives
were present, in plain dress - black, excepting white cravats - & decorations
of stars & ribands. Prince Gortchakoff, also was there - He succeeds
Count Nesselrode - and is disposed to cultivate the hitherto uninterrupted
friendly relations between the United States & Russia - He speaks English
well - is a vigorous, keen-eyed, spectacled, active gentleman, of fifty years.
You may be surprised to learn that there seems to me to be more
similarity in the national wants - prospects - means - & governmental
ideas of Russia, to those than of any other country, to those of the
United States - A much greater degree of communism prevails here
than is possible with us - There is no feudal aristocracy in Russia
proper - and I believe there is a thorough repugnance to that species
means of multiplied tyranny over the mass of the people, both here
and with us, which render the two countries almost peculiar in the
motives ^{which govern direct} of the legislative ^{action} powers of both - I write to you less
perhaps than you wish about great men & politics, for the apparently
good reason that it is unwise to express opinions necessarily so incomplete
& superficial & so likely to change as mine must be - but at
some future day will have long talks with you, by the fireside, of all
such things - I have gained a slight acquaintance with two most
estimable men of high position whom I may write more about at some
time - Professor Struve, the great Astronomer - & Mr. Noroff, the
indefatigable, learned & patriotic Minister of Public Instruction - The
Russian Ministers are, with hardly an exception, men of very great talents.
Mother must consider this letter addressed to her also - as may the others,
if will be so good, of my ^{family} friends, to whom I should like to write, &
to whom I send much love from Your aff. son, Josiah -

the extraordinary transcendental preparation of those well-known articles
of food - Strawberries, cherries, flowers of the richest & rarest kinds, oranges &c
were there in abundance. The dining-room was a lofty beautiful room,
in antique Grecian style, with walls, pillars, cornices & caryatides of a
mottled white-and-blue marble - All the Foreign Ministers & their wives
were present in plain dress - black, excepting white cravats - & decorations
of stars & ribands. Prince Gortchakoff, also was there - He succeeds
Count Nesselrode - and is disposed to cultivate the hitherto uninterrupted
friendly relations between the United States & Russia - He speaks English
well - is a vigorous, keen-eyed, spectacled, active gentleman of fifty years.
You may be surprised to learn that there seems to me to be more
similarity in the national wants - prospects - means - & governmental
ideas of Russia, to those than of any other country, to those of the
United States - A much greater degree of communism prevails here
than is possible with us - There is no feudal aristocracy in Russia
proper = and I believe there is a thorough repugnance to that species
means of multiplied tyranny over the mass of the people, both here
and with us, which render the two countries almost peculiar in the
which [crossed out] direct action
motives ^ of the legislative powers ^ of both - I write to you less
perhaps than you wish about great men & politics, for the apparently
good reason that it is unwise to express opinions necessarily so incomplete
& superficial & so likely to change as mine must be - but at
some future day will have long talks with you, by the fireside, of all
such things - I have gained a slight acquaintance with two most
estimable men of high position whom I may write more about at some
time - Professor Struve, the great Astronomer - & Mr. Noroff, the
indefatigable, learned & patriotic Minister of Public Instruction - The
Russian Ministers are, with hardly an exception, men of very great talents.
Mother must consider this letter addressed to her also - as may the others,
family
if will be so good, of my ^ friends, to whom I should like to write, &
to whom I send much love from Your aff. son, Josiah -