

Sis. April 5<sup>th</sup>

This Kennebec air, my dear is one of the beautifullest things in the world - It has made me quite a poet and as "brack as a fire coal" - Lord I wish you could see me! clad like a "beautiful mister" (as a sweet child used to call me at Augusta) for Sabbathday - my phir glowing with rubies & sapphires and carbuncles - my chin propp up like a fellows ears in a pillory with a delicious bundle of filth and wood & splinters with a taring fine yellow waistcoat and - pray be attentive - a pair of olive colored corduroy pantalouns - yes by Gosh! tis true as the bible I have on me at this moment such an article of dress - have worn th\_ and calld this moment with a cry of "The Ice is going!!" - much damage is expected to be done - we are dissapointed! the ice is not going yet - at least tis not an alarming "Breaking up" - Now for my pantalouns & there for the River - these Beauties I have now worn just one week & they are now completely Bepattered - with spots mostly caused by laughing or coughing with my mouth full of cider a few evenings since - the cider spilld in a shower on them! - and not suspecting the very droll apperance they would wear - the very Queer Ideas these spots might suggest, neglected

Contributed to Maine Memory Network by Maine Historical Society  
(Coll. 2125, Ser. 1 Box 1/2)  
Date: April 5, 1814  
Description: John Neal letter to his sister concerning ice on the Kennebec River

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wiping them untill the cedar was dry —  
when Lo' — Huzza! for OE coutry — Join  
in the Shout<sup>ye</sup> Patriotic Throng — a few  
days since Uncle James wrote me — advised  
me to be prudent — in Reply I sent him a  
piece of these olive Corduroys! about as big  
as a g<sup>d</sup> — — — — — d-n this Ice! If it  
dont go time enough for me to give a description  
of it before I flush this, or upset some of the  
Stores, I shall wish the devil had it —

For a whole week of alternate rain & sunshine  
exactly calculated to make a Beautiful freshet —  
have I been anticipating a charming assemblage  
of Horrors to record — & for a whole week have I  
met nothing but dissatisfaction — hurra! there  
it goes! — Bless my soul & what a tumult —

Immense masses of snow and ice consolidated  
are tumbling down this river directly beneath my  
observation — the Kennebec, always rapid is  
now wonderfully so — Black & turbid its waters  
are now tumbling & frothing along in such  
a kind of tumultuous & terrific grandeur as  
would appal the stoutest hearted observer  
— as man may be accustomed from his youth  
to inundations & freshets — yet if he can view the  
rise & threatening aspect of this river he must be  
a hero — at this moment the water is up to the  
floor in this very house — hark! a tremendous  
crash! — a body of ice has just struck an

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ancient building about 3 rods from me &  
it has totally disappeared — I should remove —  
but Smith with whom I board, maintained all  
the morning there was but little danger and  
it is now too late — it rains terribly — the  
fog too obscures every object at the distance  
of the water — yet all the house tops are covered  
now with men women & children — my dear sister I  
cannot paint to you the consternation their  
countenances express — none feel alarmed tis true,  
on account of their lives, but if the water con-  
tinues rising half an hour longer much prop-  
erty will be lost — what a sublime spectacle  
I having no property at stake can view it calmly  
— the water has already risen so as to overflow  
the first stories in this street — this moment a  
floating mass of snow struck the window of our  
parlour & burst it in — they have removed the  
carpet & furniture up here — viz the chambers  
in this street we realize all I have read of  
inundations — the people are filling all the boats  
they can obtain and are ~~at~~ at this instant pushing  
& rowing them in all directions to places of safety —  
The river, roars and foams so as to resemble  
a cataract in its impetuosity — You may won-  
der at my calmness, but I am in the upper  
story of a high building and the present alarm  
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Powers of Heaven! two more buildings are  
just swept a way — one partly brick — the  
Ice from the river above has loosend and  
came round a point of Land <sup>as to</sup> so be distinctly  
seen — the fog has cleared away — & it does indeed  
present a Sublime Spectacle — figure to yourself  
a whole river mingled with snow — suddenly  
stiffened and its course obstructed! — the alarm  
increases to terrible height! should this last  
body of Ice meet with any opposition the water  
will overflow all the surrounding country —  
Adieu! I must finish this some other time  
good bye! my mother! — the house totters —  
good bye Rachel — I'm going —  
Thank heaven the danger is over! — the water  
is now running off! and the sun begins to  
appear — the rain has ceased — twas as we  
feard a small Island about 1/4 of a mile below  
this prevented the passage of the ice — which  
continued heaping itself up till <sup>it</sup> oertopd compleatly  
the highest banks of the river — it presented an  
awfull Barrier to this world of waters — the river  
continued rising for about twenty minutes — and a  
contest seemed taking place when it mustered all  
its strength — between it and this immense dam  
which for grandeur & majesty would surpass all  
the imagination could conceive — swollen — exasperated  
& frothing with rage it rose in the fullness of its strength  
— rolled back a few rods — & then tumbling forward

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[remainder missing]