

Ship Devonshire, Atlantic Ocean, May 11th 1849
Latitude 50°. 11' N. Longitude 16° W.

My Dear Father and Mother,

As this letter will probably be a long one, and as part of the matters to be embraced in it are of a date already past, I may as well begin it now. I hope you received the letter addressed to you which I delivered to the N.Y. Pilot who left us about dark on the evening of April 24th ult. His boat was our last visible connection with America, for when we went on deck next morning, the land was no longer to be seen. Most of the passengers were by that time sea-sick, and in their berths. I was fortunately exempt from that misery, but I really felt a little more than I had anticipated, a sadness at leaving my native land for the first time, and a loneliness at thus entering on my supposed vagrant and solitary journey so far from my kind friends at home.

I knew no one on board, and every one around me seemed wrapped up in their own feelings and unapproachable. Some few old voyagers on business were taking things very differently, and examining and appropriating the best conveniences about them to their own use and benefit, now and then casting a supercilious glance at the greenhorns who were manifesting so much sentiment, and verdant anticipation, and nausea occasionally accompanied by a powerful vomiting &c &c.

The first day or two, there seemed to be a perfect "hodge podge" of emotions and strange scenes on board. Everything seemed marked and striking. The novelty and bustle connected with the management of the ship, the curiosity naturally induced by the strangeness of even trifling circumstances, the recollection of sad partings, and the thousand indescribable phases, in fact, of physical & mental conditions, the Yankee calculations regarding the character, position in life and present object of each other prevented the passengers from "fitting together" well at first, and no one (often of the verdant class, I mean) could tell exactly where he belonged, or what belonged to him. But sea-sickness is a great leveler; it makes a man feel his humanity, purging him of vanity & conceit

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MMN #31740

Date: May 11 - 18, 1849

Description: Josiah Pierce on passage to England

and making him acknowledge his dependence on others; and so as most of the passengers soon became qualmish, they speedily fell on good terms with each other: and we have since lived like a family—

I myself was not really visited by the very disagreeable but somewhat ridiculous malady aforesaid, until the Friday after we left port, when the winds had set quite a rough sea rolling; and then escaped so easily, that I was able to go about the ship as usual & attend meals regularly. Two or three times, however, when the sea "roughened up" pretty strongly I have felt a dullness and loss of appetite, but have otherwise been very well. Some of the passengers were miserably sick, especially the ladies, a portion of them being confined to their berths for a week or ten days.

The ship is very large, (registered at 1250 tons) of an elegant model, rides over the waves like a duck, and has the reputation of being one of the fastest sailers & finest vessels in the U. States, having no superior if any equal among that super class known as "N. York liners." She was built 3 years ago, has made but 6 voyages across the ocean, one of those being in 14 days, and the whole averaging but 21 days a'piece, in length—

She carries a long-boat (now filled with sheep, pigs & poultry) two "quarter boats", and a life-boat at the stern; is well protected against lightning, having a "conductor" attached to each mast. She will carry 52 cabin passengers, 480 steerage passengers, and a number of 2^d cabin passengers, besides the crew. At present there are on board 40 cabin passengers, 3 second cabin, do. (servants,) and 72 steerage passengers; the Captain (Henry R. Hovey), 3 mates, Steward, Stewardess, & 3 or 4 ship hands, cook, carpenter, and a crew of about 30. Of the cabin passengers 14 are ladies, 2 are children, five (including your deponent) Lawyers, 3 Doctors, & 1 clergyman— The latter, Rev. W^m Chapman of N.Y city, (accompanied by his wife & little daughter) is a native of Bethel, Maine, fitted for College at

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Bridgeton Academy, and then boarded at Uncle Crocker's; I acquainted with Mr. Adams of Gorham (Remember me to him, by the way) and with the Prentiss family. Consequently I have become quite well acquainted with him.

My roommate is named J. B. Bröckelmann, a native of Bremen, but now a citizen of the U.S. aged about 29, a thorough German in his character, polite, speaks French, German & English, is a member of a mercantile house in N. Y. City, apparently of good standing and of foreign connections.

I am much reminded of Mr. Elijah Hayes by an old officer of the British army on board, Major Fagan, an Irishman, who has served in British India.

Opposite me at table, sits an old Scotchman, a Surgeon of Edinburgh, More recently of Paris, named Mackenzie, who, with his wife & two daughters is returning to Europe after a visit of 10 months or so to the U.S. He is what is called a Radical in English politics, advocates Free trade & universal suffrage, and yet will not hear one word against the omnipotence, the justice & the overwhelming grandeur of England; and asserts the utter insignificance of the U.S. in comparison with Great Britain & as he has, fully developed, a trait which is said to be quite common among his countrymen, that of disputatiousness, we have some amusing discussions but I believe shall part, the better friends therefor.

Sitting opposite to him at table, I can't well avoid such arguments. For several days after we left New York light winds and head winds prevailed, as indeed, they have during the greater part of the voyage. It has too, been unusually rainy for this month.

Two or three days after our departure we fell into the Gulf Stream. And it was easy to observe even at that distance from its rise, the movement of the current (about 3 miles per hour) and the warmth of the air induced by the temperature of the water -

We have not met with any very unusual incidents; have seen shoals of black-fish, two or three whales, the usual numbers of Mother Carey's chickens have followed in the wake of the ship. Seamen are or have been very superstitious about these birds;

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believing that in them were embodied the departed spirits of old sailors, (so they say) and that to kill them would bring bad luck.

We have seen several vessels; and one day passed within a half mile of the packet-ship Garrick bound to N. York, her decks covered with people, probably emigrants. We gave her several hearty cheers; and as the cheers of her passengers came faintly answering back we felt a deep excitement and a real human sympathy.

One must have been cruising over the wide ocean for days as we had been, with no land or trace of our fellow men beyond the narrow limits of the ship to understand fully the feeling at such a moment. It is very interesting to observe the interchange of signals, when vessels pass each other. By the code invented by the late Capt. Marryat, the names of the vessels are quickly told, and indeed almost every question or answer conceivable may readily be expressed.

The 10 Arabic numerals are represented by different numbers; and of course, as many different ideas can be represented as there are different permutations of these numbers.

The passengers have amused themselves by reading, writing, walking and playing the games of checkers, chess, cards, shovel board, and the school boy games of "Tag" and "Hop-Scotch" - but a very considerable portion of the time we have been confined by the rain to the cabin -

On the two last Sundays we have had divine service, twice each day; Mr. Chapman preaching -

Some few evenings it has been clear; and then we have remained long on deck, the moon being large, and shining beautifully through the lattice-work of sails and rigging, seemingly, with a purer and clearer light than on the land - On the dark evenings, too, it has been very interesting to lean over the side of the ship, and watch the phosphorescent sparkling of the waves, as the ship glided through them.

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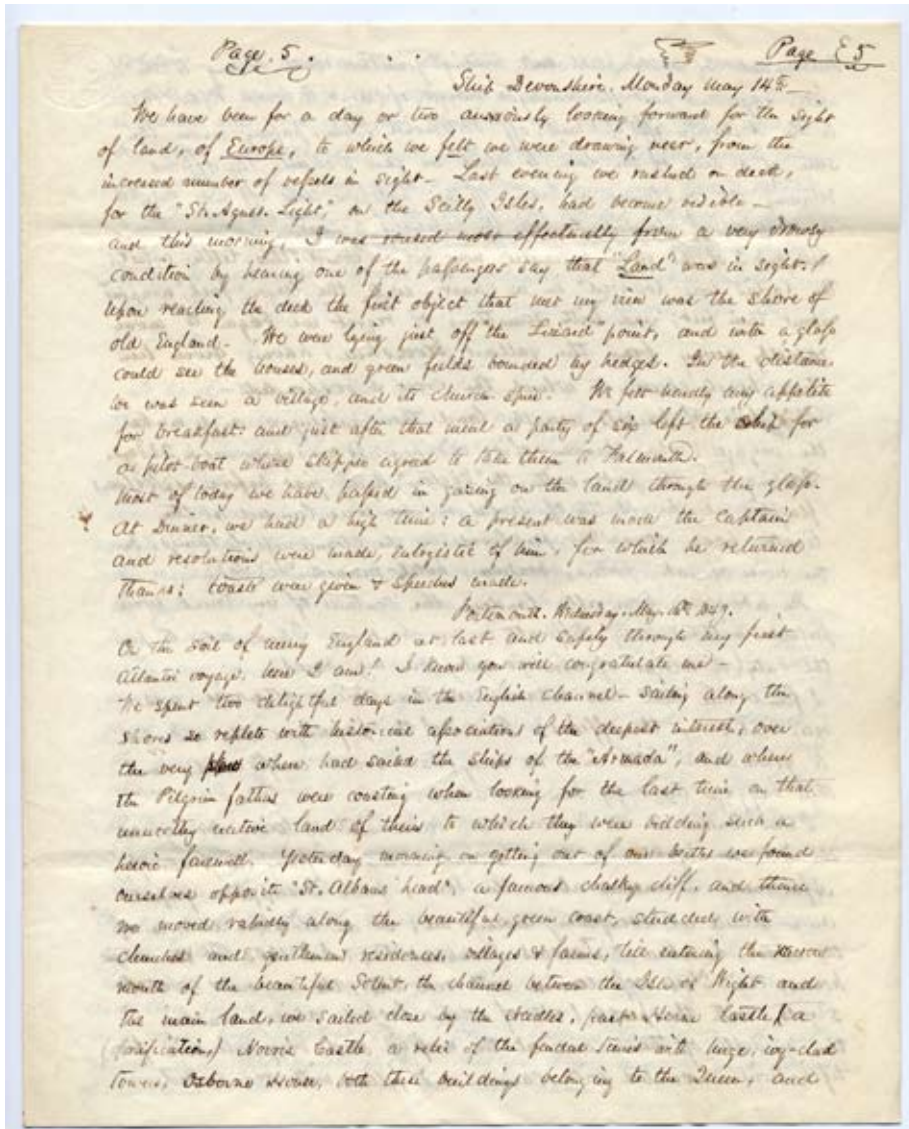
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Ship Devonshire, Monday May 14th—

We have been for a day or two anxiously looking forward for the sight of land, of Europe, to which we felt we were drawing near, from the increased number of vessels in sight— Last evening we rushed on deck, for the "St. Agnes Light," on the Scilly Isles, had become visible— and this morning, I was roused most effectually from a very drowsy condition by hearing one of the passengers say that "Land" was in sight! Upon reaching the deck the first object that met my view was the shore of old England— We were lying just off "the Lizard" point, and with a glass could see the houses, and green fields bounded by hedges. In the distance too was seen a village, and its church spire— We felt hardly any appetite for breakfast: and just after the meal a party of six left the ship for a pilot-boat whose skipper agreed to take them to Falmouth. Most of today we have passed in gazing at the land through the glass. At Dinner, we had a high time: a present was made the Captain and resolutions were made, eulogistic of him, for which he returned thanks; toasts were given & speeches made.

Portsmouth. Wednesday. May 16th. 1849.

On the soil of merry England at last, and safely through my first Atlantic voyage, here I am! I know you will congratulate me— We spent two delightful days in the English Channel— sailing along the shores so replete with historical associations of the deepest interest, over the very places where had sailed the ships of the "Armada", and where the Pilgrim fathers were coasting when looking for the last time on that unworthy native land of theirs to which they were bidding such a heroic farewell. Yesterday morning, on getting out of our berths we found ourselves opposite "St. Albans head", a famous chalky cliff, and thence we moved rapidly along the beautiful green coast, studded with churches and gentlemen's residences, villages & farms, till entering the narrow mouth of the beautiful Solent, the channel between the Isle of Wight and the main land, we sailed close by the Needles, and past Herne Castle (a (fortification,) Norris Castle, a relic of the feudal times with huge, ivy-clad towers. Osborne House, both these buildings belonging to the Queen, and



Surrounded by noble parks with winding gravelled roads running to the water's edge, and past the beautiful villages of East & W. Cowes, Ryde, &c. to the Anchorage (off Spit-head, off Portsmouth) there, passing near the stern of a ship of the line, (to which we gave 3 cheers, the officers returning the compliment by taking off their hats) we stood off and on, till a sloop came alongside to take the passengers ashore.

All but 3 of the cabin-passengers now got on board this little vessel; the ladies were "lowered" in a chair, with the "Union Jack" wrapped about their feet; and with something of regret we began to move rapidly away from the gallant Devonshire, having given her three hearty cheers, to which the crew &c responded -

This line of packets usually land their passengers, and make the voyage (when speaking of it) and here, so our passage was in 21 days. Sailing in to the port, with the "Victory", lying just before us, Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar, we were landed at the Custom-house, somewhat perplexed by the strangeness of things, by the noise of cabs, porters, boatmen, hotel-runners, &c. &c. -

In about an hour after landing the contents of my trunk were passed; without any difficulty on my part, as I had only to pay the duty (by weight of about 70 cents) on my books.

I found here that one's behavior, whether civil or otherwise, was reciprocated by the officers - Some of the passengers who undertook to grumble a little and be surly, had books confiscated, and their baggage thoroughly tumbled about.

I then walked to the Quebec Hotel, recommended by Capt. Hovey, and the dinner I obtained there seemed delicious, from its freshness - Afterwards I walked about the town, and I suppose gaped and stared at everything around me; at an old stone arch, across the street, labelled "Jacobus Secundus Rex. S.D. 1683, at the antique houses, their steep roofs covered with red tiles, the narrow & crooked streets, with the people (all of whom looked alike) walking in the middle of them, and at the massive and very extensive fortifications, mounted with cannon, and filled with red-coated

surrounded by noble parks with winding gravelled roads running to the water's edge; and past the beautiful villages of East and W. Cowes, Ryde, &c. to the anchorage called Spit-head; off Portsmouth, there, passing under the stern of a ship of the line, (to which we gave 3 cheers, the officers returning the compliment by taking off their hats) we stood off and on, till a sloop came alongside to take the passengers ashore.

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soldiers - The ramparts in the town and the parade grounds are covered with green turf (very refreshing to my eyes after the voyage) and intersected with rows of English elms, (not like ours, tall & graceful, but short and "stubbed") and with gravelled paths along which were promenading & riding men, women & children, & many smart looking soldiers.

This morning when I woke, I had the doleful prospect of a heavy rain & thickly clouded sky; so my object in landing here, to go today to the Isle of Wight & through the dockyards, is defeated unless I should travel about in the mud & rain - I shall take the cars for London.

London, May, 18th 1849.

It hardly seems possible that I am writing a letter to you from this largest city in the world, this vast mass the greatest ever collected by human hands. I almost doubt my identity -

I left Portsmouth on Wednesday morning about half past 8, and arrived here at 3 o'clock perhaps. It was not the express train & got along slowly, which I preferred, on account of the better opportunity given for examining the magnificent country, like an immense garden, through which we passed; the quaint old farmhouses, the beautiful, close & regular hedges, and now and then, the elegant house and grounds of some wealthy person -

The cars ran smoothly, but they are not so well furnished & made as ours; (they are called carriages here) the road was built however, most magnificently, the bridges, all of brick, solid and handsome, the heavy T.rail used, the depots convenient, the sides of the road covered with flowers & cultivated, and partitioned from the fields by beautiful hedges instead of rough wooden fences, the Railroad Servants very numerous & attentive, and wearing a livery -

The trees, the smooth carriage-roads, the low cottages thatched & tiled, the old brick houses, the smooth & highly cultivated fields, the stout and healthy people, all things about me were deeply interesting - The houses began to multiply into villages, the villages into large towns, and these finally grew into London, stretching away as far as the eye could reach, with old "St. Pauls" dome towering through the fog and smoke, and Westminster Abbey's beautiful towers, and the great "Houses of Parliament" looming up on our left hand.

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The railroad runs into the city over the tops of the houses, with which the depot floor is level, and you go down an artificial hill to get into the streets. I took a cab, different from ours (never like a coach) having but one horse, however) and ~~came~~ to Andertors Hotel, 164, Fleet St. whence I am now writing to you. It is much frequented by Americans, is centrally located (about 1/3 of the distance of Fleet St. East of Temple Bar); It has been established about as long as New England has been settled — Dr. Johnson probably walked past it, nearly every day.

My first business was to obtain a Map of London and a guide-book, my next to familiarize myself with the location of the hotel, and my next to look for lodgings.

These objects have occupied me till last night —

If you will look upon the map of London, you may see a street called Essex Street, running from the Strand to the river Thames, just west of the collection of buildings called the Temple, and of Temple Bar. Here I have a bed-room & good sitting-room (the apartments are generally let together) for 10^{shillings} Sterling per week in the house of a Mr. Miller, a confectioner nearly at the head of the street. Lodgings can be obtained in no decent place under 7/- per night or 7/- per week — The location of those I have taken is central as far as the "sights" are concerned and especially so for conveniences — Very near, though hid by buildings are the Temple gardens, and at the foot of the street is a river-steamboat wharf, while at its head, omnibus'es are constantly passing — Please write to me soon; write a long letter, and get every body else who will to add to it —

Address it simply to ^{the care of} "Baring, Brothers & Co, No. 8, Bishops gate Street within"; the addition of the situation of my lodgings ~~would~~ might cause me to lose the letter, as I may change them — With much love & regard to all who will receive it, I remain
Very truly, your affectionate son
Josiah. Pierce.

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

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Gorham. Maine.
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[written sideways across middle of text:]

Hon. Josiah Pierce
Gorham Maine