



The Imperial Palace —

[Image of palace]

St. Petersburg, Russia

Jan. 10th (N.S.) 1856.

Palais d'Hiver ("Winter Palace.")

My Dear Parents,

My last letter to you was a very long one, giving a detailed account of my journey to this place, and was mailed on the 20th or 27th of December ult. —

of Dec. 17th

Your welcome letter ^, enclosing George's, John's & Eva's, arrived here day before yesterday. The steamship which leaves Boston on Wednesday usually arrives in Liverpool on the next Sunday but one, and in about eight or nine days from then we receive here our mails by her — and send our letters for America from here on Thursdays so that they are carried in the steamer which sails from Liverpool on a week from the following Saturday — The mails, and all business transactions in fact, between England & Russia, are as regular as if peace existed —

Since I last wrote to you I have, without seeking, witnessed scenes and had adventures of

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MMN #31792

Date: Jan. 10, 1856

Description: Josiah Pierce description of Russia

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now give you; but I will write a brief ^{story} ~~diary~~ of my
occupations, and enlarge upon such points as present
themselves most vividly at present in recollection —

The weather has been very variable — During the last
week of December, a very disagreeable thaw spoiled
the sledging, and made the air damp and dangerous —

Then it began to freeze a little, and is now quite
comfortable, being about fifteen degrees (Fahrenheit) below
Zero — The houses are so thoroughly warmed that
one has no occasion while in them, to think how

cold the weather may be — A thaw in winter is
worse for the poor people than the coldest weather: for
the latter their buildings and clothing are well prepared:
but against a thaw they cannot protect the frozen meats,
which transported from distant provinces, are stored in
vast quantities in the markets, and soon spoil when
the thermometer-mercury ^{fish} rises above the freezing point,
depriving the city at once of food — The markets
of frozen meats & fish are very extensive & curious.

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and I shall attempt some future account of them —

My last letter to you stated, I believe, that I had been duly presented to and received by 1^o Count Nesselrode, the veteran Minister of Foreign Affairs — 2^d. Three days after to the Czar.

A few days subsequently, I was presented to the Empress, who was born a Princess of Hesse Darmstadt, and who is a most charming, excellent woman, not gossiped about, but universally reputed to be a good wife and mother, as well as a highly-educated lady — She is very amiable in appearance, unassuming, gentle, and good-humored — Speaking French, German, English perfectly well (as do also all the Imperial family) she receives foreigners, and converses with them, easily and so that they feel no embarrassment —

These presentations took place in the Palace, which you have represented at the beginning of this note — a building of vast size is this famous "Winter Palace" — It is a town of itself — Six thousand or more persons live in it — No one person is familiar with all its apartments — Some colonies of interlopers ("squatters") are

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said to inhabit its precincts - Families of watchmen
with wives, children, poultry, goats & even cows
are said to have lived on its roof - the goats &
cows being fed by the grass which grew there -

The front which you see in the picture is the
Southern, ~~looking~~ looking toward an enormous square or
"Place" - The Northern front is along the quay
of the river Neva, and measures about 700 feet -
The building is nearly square. It is said to be,
and I believe it, the most splendid and largest
royal edifice in the world = It was burned to
the ground in 1837, and by incredible zeal, expense,
and labor, rebuilt and finished again in two years.
Lofty apartments, ~~and~~ splendid corridors, stately stairways,
grand vaulted halls - magnificently painted or gilded
ceilings, beautiful polished floors, rich furniture,
admirable paintings (mostly of battle scenes) costly
vases, statuary, ^{rare flowers & plants of hot-house growth} works of ornamental art of every
description distract ^{& fatigue} the attention during one's first
visits to this great edifice, but seem well placed
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2.)



Amirauté

NO 2. —
Next ~~easterly~~ westerly of the
Winter Palace, separated from
it by, a broad road, then a
broad mall, then another
broad road, & fronting on
the same great square
with its rear on the same

quay of the Neva, the Admiralty buildings, surrounded by a
Boulevard, stretch along for nearly a half-mile (the guide-
book of Murray says) having a depth or Eastern & Western
fronts of about 650 feet, being built of yellow stone,
in Ionic architecture; with a truly Russian spire, tall
tapering & covered with gold plating over the central
archway of its southerly front — Beyond the Admiralty
~~you see in~~ and divided from it by a large square in
the centre of which is the equestrian statue of Peter the
great, you see in the Western distance the Palace
of the Holy Synod and the Senate, about which
I will say more hereafter —

To return to my visits at Court. &c —

Soon after my presentation to the Empress, I was
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Soon after my presentation to the Empress, I was
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brother of the Czar, and most active and thoroughly

Russian in feeling - He is "Lord High Admiral" and promotes with great ardor the naval and commercial progress of his country - He is three months younger than myself - looks a little like Alex. Longfellow - but as if he might be fierce when angered - He was very kind and affable to me, talked quite a long time with me about our fast vessels &c, told me I ought to be half a sailor myself, coming from the State of Maine, and seemed much pleased with my expression of an inclination to learn the Russian language - He lives in another splendid palace formerly known as the Marble Palace, from the fact that it is within and without built and ornamented with beautiful and various marbles - but now called the Constantine Palace - Its marble mosaic floors, and rich fluted columns reminded me of the finest palaces of Italy to which country it seemed more suited than to this frozen North -

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I was next introduced to the other brothers of the Emperor - the Grand Duke Michael & Nicolas, (Nicolas, aged 24 - Michael aged 23) two very

pleasant, intelligent, modest princes - They received me in another wing of the Winter Palace where they live, in a large room which had been their gymnasium containing besides the usual gymnastic apparatus, all sorts of weapons, artillery &c, from the smallest sizes for babies to handle, to the fully proportioned arms of grown men, with by the discipline of which they had been trained to all the manual exercises of a soldier from boyhood -

After these presentations, I rode about the city and left my cards, according to usage, on the members of the diplomatic corps now here from other countries = of whom I have already met several, and have found them kind, gentlemanly, highly-accomplished, unostentatious, and very willing to oblige or inform each other, and without any exception that I know, much esteemed here, and on very good terms with each other -

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Persian Ambassador, Seif-el Moulk, Mir-Pendj,
Abbas Kouli Khan - whose long name is to be thus
interpreted - Seif-el-Moulk (Sword of State)
Mir-Pendj (Chief of five thousand men) Khan (the
nobleman) Abbas Kouli - (Kouli of the Abbas family)
He is an Ambassador of the highest rank - has a
large retinue - is gorgeously appalled - wears a
fine scimitar - talks in flowery language - and is
the subject of much talk - He could speak only
Persian - He has interpreters however - &c. &c -
eats four breakfasts & does a thousand odd things -
The Empress asked him if the climate was not very
cold to him - He replied that he could not be
cold here, where there are three suns - one (pointing
up) in the heavens above - the two others, the
two eyes of the Empress (pointing at them): by
which the poor Empress, who is a very sincere
person, was quite overcome - I was at a
Masquerade the other evening - the women in domino's
puzzled ^{& teased} the Persian Secretaries most doubly - by their
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3.

No 3.

M^e de Pierre le Grand

The monument to Peter the Great is very spirited - The horse seems in actual motion. The figure of the Czar is life like. Horse and rider are of bronze. The statue is placed on a huge pedestal of granite;

but you will remember or can easily find and read a better and fuller description than I can give of it - One of the first stories a traveller hears about it, however, is of that Yankee sailor who climbed on the horse, and astonished the police, one day, by exhibiting himself mounted behind the figure of the Czar; Capt. Daniel Hood of Portland will tell you all about it -

The large building near the statue is that of the Senate and Holy Synod - that in the distance is across the Neva, being the Russian "Academy", pictured in the note I send herewith to John and Eva -

To return to my official affairs - On Monday last, a great Court ceremony took place, the betrothal according to the forms of the Greek Church of the Grand Duke Nicolas to his cousin the Princess Alexandra, d'Oldenbourg, in the chapel of the Palace -

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The Court were all present in grand costume - the Diplomatic corps in their "best clothes" - Col. Seymour & myself wearing our military uniforms - all the highest nobility, and civil, military & naval officers of Russia in their most brilliant dresses, collected in the magnificently decorated little church, ~~and~~ aligned as the Emperor came in leading his brother & the Princess, followed by the Empress and the rest of the Imperial family up to the steps before the gorgeous Sanctuary - Then the Metropolitan and several others of the high clergy, came out, attired in superbly embroidered robes, and high jewelled crown-like caps, and performed the religious rites of the occasion, prayers, blessings, chants (glorious music), and the Empress placed bet exchanged their betrothal rings, and the Imperial family affectionately embraced & kissed them - About fifty or more beautiful young ladies of honor attended the Empress - All the

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ladies wore the elegant court costume of Russia –
an antique garb, dignified and becoming – which
admits of great ornament with the appearance of
simplicity and little exposure of the person –
A Sarafan (or saraband?) or sort of pelisse is
worn over the ordinary garments, it has short
sleeves – The head dress is red over a high comb,
from which a lace veil falls down the back –
– Cannon were fired, bells were rung, the city
was illuminated in the evening on this occasion,
the particulars of which I regret I cannot give
you an idea of – but I give up all hope of
describing intelligibly the dresses and decorations
of the lords & ladies who helped to make the
display – I enclose the programme of the
ceremony which somebody at home can translate –

I went last evening to a Gipsy Concert –
The Russian Gipsies (Zingaryc) are carefully preserved
specimens of their Ishmaelitish, autocratic race of
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in very picturesque & bright garments ("nary one
alike) sang wild melodies, in the Russian language,
which were very pleasant in sound but seemed to
breathe the true spirit of a strange, untameable
roving life - Some of the women danced also in
a most extraordinary manner, not ungracefully, but
jerking & shaking every limb of their body at once.
These Gipsy exhibitions are as popular here as the
"Ethiopian melodies" with us = the nobles often lure
them to perform at their soireés -

My time, though not my inclination or supply of topics,
for writing gives out - I am much obliged to George
for his letter and hope he, (and many others, Lewis,
Nancy, Ella, Mother,) will write again soon -
Tell George, a sensible person will find "society" and
useful "associates" everywhere -

The questions I intended to enclose for Lewis
in my preceding letter I have sent in another way: they
were as to the use of anthracite coal for smelting iron -
With much love to all, believe me
Your affectionate son Josiah.

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