

To Mrs. Evelina L. Pierce,
Gorham, Maine, U.S. of N. America }
St. Petersburg, Russia, 4/16 April, 1856. }

My dear Mother,

Your long, kind letter of March 9th gave me much pleasure - It seemed to carry me back to those quiet Sunday afternoon talks we have had together so often - and I was not a little rejoiced to learn by it of father's convalescence and your own cheerfulness and health. I know you will not fail to write a few words now and then to me, when you can - Today came also father's letter, with one from John & Eva; and a short note from Lewis, telling me of Uncle Daniel's death - This must have saddened your hearts at home - and I am sure the regret and sympathy of all our kindred will be awakened and expressed for his loss and the bereavement of his family, and many reminiscences will suggest themselves of his generous, honorable nature, and kindly acts - I will write to Aunt Fanny, if I can, by this mail -

Not knowing well how to execute, at present, your little commission about the sprigs of myrtle, &c. - I send instead some flower-seeds which Annette (our housekeeper) has kindly given to me for the purpose - She got them at the Botanical Gardens, - a description of my visit to which was in a recent letter to Aunt Anne. Even the very poor people here keep flowers in their warm, tight rooms, all winter - Little pots are sold at the green-houses of the wealthy noblemen at a very cheap rate -

I also send you some little pictures, on most of which explanations are written - These sketches will tell a story more easily understood, no doubt, than any descriptions I could write of their now familiar subjects.

To Mrs. Evelina L. Pierce. }
Gorham, Maine, U. S. of N. America. } St. Petersburg, Russia, 4/16 April, 1856.

My dear Mother,

Your long, kind letter of March 9th gave me much pleasure - It seemed to carry me back to those quiet Sunday afternoon talks we had together so often = and I was not a little rejoiced to learn by it of father's convalescence and your own cheerfulness and health. I know you will not fail to write a few words now and then to me, when you can - Today came also father's letter, with one from John & Eva; and a short note from Lewis, telling me of Uncle Daniel's death - This must have saddened your hearts at home - and I am sure the regret and sympathy of all our kindred will be awakened and expressed for his loss and the bereavement of his family, and many reminiscences will suggest themselves of his generous, honorable nature, and kindly acts - I will write to Aunt Fanny, if I can, by this mail -

Not knowing well how to execute, at present, your little commission about the sprigs of myrtle, &c. - I send instead some flower-seeds which Annette (our housekeeper) has kindly given to me for the purpose - She got them at the Botanical Gardens, - a description of my visit to which was in a recent letter to Aunt Anne. Even the very poor people here keep flowers in their warm, tight rooms, all winter - Little pots are sold at the green-houses of the wealthy noblemen at a very cheap rate -

I also send you some little pictures, on most of which explanations are written - these sketches will tell a story more easily understood, no doubt, than any descriptions I could write of their now familiar subjects.

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

MMN #31866

Date: April 4-16, 1856

Description: Josiah Pierce on Russian Peace observances

I certainly do feel myself to be "poor" as you suggest, in the society of the many opulent people here — "poor, but not ashamed" — and is with some difficulty that I keep my expenditure within my salary, which is too small for my official position in this very expensive city. I think the cost of the necessary things for such a place are in twice as great here as in Paris.

There have been few great court ceremonies of late, and during Lent no theatrical representations have occurred — but concerts, tableaux vivants, juggler's performances, and such exhibitions have taken the place, meanwhile, of the "legitimate drama" — Upon the news of the conclusion of Peace, a grand Te Deum was sung in the magnificent little chapel of the Winter Palace, before the Imperial family, which all the diplomatic corps attended — The music was almost sublime, rising into high, clear notes of joy, and falling to very deep, bass, solemn tones, in the grand Greek-church chant, performed (as always) by a choir ^{of male singers}, which in this case was one of the best in the world. The Emperor was much affected — it was said, he even shed tears — Up to this epoch, he had worn the aiguilettes of an aide-de-camp ^{upon his} ~~upon his~~ ^(some of whom were very small boys) ~~not a full~~ general's uniform, to signify that he was only, as it were, the aide-de-camp of his illustrious father, and carrying out his plans — The scene in the chapel was a brilliant one. The room is lofty, with richly gilded, painted and stuccoed, arched ceiling, a magnificent screen or "iconostast", and handsome windows & floor. The clergy were in their most superb robes — all green & gold, wearing large caps like crowns — most of them venerable men, with long white beards — The Metropolitan was especially reverend with age and dignity, and was affectionately kissed by the Emperor —

I certainly do feel myself to be "poor" as you suggest, in the society of the many opulent people here — "poor, but not ashamed" — and is with some difficulty that I keep my expenditure within my salary, which is too small for my official position in this very expensive city. I think the cost of the necessary things for such a place are in twice as great here as in Paris.

There have been few great court ceremonies of late, and during Lent no theatrical representations have occurred — but concerts, tableaux vivants, juggler's performances, and such exhibitions have taken the place, meanwhile, of the "legitimate drama" — Upon the news of the conclusion of Peace, a grand Te Deum was sung in the magnificent little chapel of the Winter Palace, before the Imperial family, which all the diplomatic corps attended — The music was almost sublime, rising into high, clear notes of joy, and falling to very deep, bass, solemn tones, in the grand Greek-church chant, entirely (some of whom were very small boys)

performed (as always) by a choir ^ of male singers ^, which in this case was one of the best in the world. The Emperor was very much affected — it was said, he even shed tears — Up to this epoch, he had worn the upon his

aiguilettes of an aide-de-camp only and not ^ a full general's uniform, to signify that he was only, as it were, the aide-de-camp of his illustrious father, and carrying out his plans — The scene in the chapel was a brilliant one. The room is lofty, with richly gilded, painted and stuccoed, arched ceiling, a magnificent screen or "iconostast", and handsome windows & floor. The clergy were in their most superb robes — all green & gold, wearing large caps like crowns — most of them venerable men, with long white beards — The Metropolitan was especially reverend with age and dignity, and was affectionately kissed by the Emperor —

The Imperial family occupied the front places. The dowager Empress, pale and ill, attracted much attention, and had evident kindness shown towards her by her sons - The present Empress is a most excellent, pious, sensible, highly respected woman, above reproach or calumny - The Emperor has four boys. The Grand Duke Constantine (whose Duchess is very handsome) has two or three children, and there are many other members of the Imperial family, all of whom seem to live on excellent friendly terms with others, and to have plain social manners, like those of any family in common life -

Behind them, on the right were the ladies of honor, in full dress; on the left the diplomatic corps and highest dignitaries of the Empire, also in brilliant full costume - The diplomats always have the first place, next to the sovereign family, on these great occasions, which certainly is very agreeable in affording them the best view of the whole -

I have been at several similar religious ceremonies in the Imperial Chapel where the same personages were similarly placed - at funeral services (most solemn & impressive) on the anniversary of the death of the late Emperor Nicolas - at the betrothal ceremony - and at the marriage rites of the young Grand Duke Nicolas - During these occurrences all the audience remain standing (as is ever the case in the Greek churches, where are no pews or seats) except during the short prayers, when everybody must kneel - a process quite perplexing to individuals in tightly-strapped diplomatic pantaloons.

The burden of the chants are sung in heavy bass by the priests, and a sort of thrilling chorus is sung at intervals by the choir; no responses are made by the congregation but individuals often accompany the chorus.

The Imperial family occupied the front places. The dowager Empress, pale and ill, attracted much attention, and had evident kindness shown towards her by her sons - the present Empress is a most excellent, pious, sensible, highly respected woman, above reproach or calumny - The Emperor has four boys, The Grand Duke Constantine (whose Duchess is very handsome) has two or three children, and there are many other members of the Imperial family, all of whom seem to live on excellent friendly terms with others, and to have plain social manners like those of any family in common life -

Behind them, on the right were the ladies of honor, in full dress: on the left the diplomatic corps and highest dignitaries of the Empire, also in brilliant full costume - The diplomats always have the first place, next to the sovereign family, on these great occasions, which certainly is very agreeable in affording them the best view of the whole -

I have been at several similar religious ceremonies in the Imperial Chapel where the same personages were similarly placed - At funeral services (most solemn & impressive) on the anniversary of the death of the late Emperor Nicolas - at the betrothal ceremony - and at the marriage rites of the young Grand Duke Nicolas - During these occurrences all the audience remain standing (as is ever the case in the Greek churches, where are no pews or seats) except during the short prayers, when everybody must kneel - a process quite perplexing to individuals in tightly-strapped diplomatic pantaloons.

The burden of the chants are sung in heavy bass by the priests, and
taken up
a sort of thrilling chorus is sung at intervals by the choir; no responses are made by the congregation but individuals often accompany the chorus.

The days now lengthen, |but the cold does not strengthen| and spring or summer
certainly approaches - By the days I mean the daylight - the sun rose today at 42
minutes past 4 and set at 18 minutes past seven = gaining three minutes every day
in earlier rising & three in later retiring - It was dawn this morning about one
o'clock; and in about ten days there will be twilight all night -

The weather is not unlike ours at home during the same month, rather damp
with ebullitions from melting snow: The streets are quite clear of snow; it was
broken up and carted away from the principal thoroughfares as it became hardened
into dirty ice - The ice still remains firm in the Neva - and is not expected
to break up for a fortnight - Long cuts or ditches have been made in it however
to facilitate its sundering - Beautiful, great, glassy, cakes ^(about 2 1/2 or 3 feet thick) have been taken out, one
by one, during the winter, to store for summer luxuries - but at a great waste
of labor compared with that used by the Yankees on their ice-ponds -

The wheels of Time "fly swift around" - the third of a year I have passed
here seems very short - I am, of course, very comfortably lodged & boarded with
Gov. Seymour, and the only circumstance annoying to me in that respect is that
I have no ^{apartment} rooms to my own use, where I can be solitary if I wish, except
my small bed-room - The Governor's family is not quite large for a bachelor -
Mrs. Ward & her daughter Mrs. De Guerbel (whose curious history, I will tell by
& by) & Mr. Ward's son Robert - with Mr. Prince, of the mercantile house of
Ropes & Co - with myself, all Americans, assemble at the board, and live
in the house - It is certainly better than a solitude, for a bachelor's hall.

Make my peace with my friends who don't receive expected letters from me:
and with love to all, believe me ever

Your affectionate Son,
Josiah.

The days now lengthen, |but the cold does not strengthen| and spring or summer
evidently approaches - By the days I mean the daylight - the sun rose today at 42
minutes past 4 and set at 18 minutes past seven = gaining three minutes every day
in earlier rising & three in later retiring - It was dawn this morning about one
o'clock; and in about ten days there will be twilight all night -

The weather is not unlike ours at home during the same month, rather damp
with exhalation from melting snow: The streets are quite clear of snow; it was
broken up and carted away from the principal thoroughfares as it became hardened
into dirty ice - The ice still remains firm in the Neva - and is not expected
to break up for a fortnight - Long cuts or ditches have been made in it however
(about 2 1/2 or 3 feet thick)

to facilitate its sundering - Beautiful, great glassy cakes ^ have been taken out, one
by one, during the winter, to store for summer luxuries - but at great waste
of labor compared with that used by the Yankees on their ice-ponds -

The wheels of Time "fly swift around" - the third of a year I have passed
here seems very short - I am, of course, very comfortably lodged & boarded with
Gov. Seymour, and the only circumstance annoying to me in that respect is that
apartment

I have no ^ rooms to my own uses, where I can be solitary if I wish, except
my small bed-room - The Governor's family is now quite large for a bachelor -
Mrs. Ward & her daughter Mrs. De Guerbel (whose curious history I will tell by
& by) & Mrs. Ward's son Robert - with Mr. Prince, of the mercantile house of
Ropes & Co - with myself, all Americans, assemble at the board, and live
in the house - It is certainly better than a solitude, for a bachelor's hall.

Make my peace with my friends who don't receive expected letters from me:
and with love to all, believe me ever

Your affectionate Son,
Josiah.