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1869

Friday night. Apr. 9 -

Dear mother -

I am so happy tonight and I hope you are. I'd like to [pop?] in & see [what?] you have - & to give you my first flowers - for I have had the great privilege of finding the first spring flowers the white [Hepatica's?] - Miss Folsom & I went off a long way, about 2 miles, & I saw the first blossom [there?] [we] gathered quite a little quantity & we were so delighted we were gone only 1 hour from the college - we sent a delicate bouquet to your old Prof Mitchel who will never see the spring flowers again & I carried a cluster to Miss Avery who was pleased & to Miss Lyman who is sick - I unwittingly got into her presence & she was as delighted as a child. & thanked us very much - she was in bed but better -

Miss Shattuck said "It was so sweet of you to remember me" Miss Small said she should be as proud as a queen and kissed me for them -- so I think I've made a good many hearts happy today consequently feel happy myself.

The frogs are peeping - the yellow & blue crocus

in bloom the hillsides green.

Yesterday I thought of dear old New England. Later Miss Folsom & I were quite noted once in our lives - the President heard of our treasures before 2 hours - as I learned from his daughters & now you must have a fair sketch of the closing delights of the day - Rev J.P. Thompson lecture on Moscow - I can't hope to do it justice. First I was quite charmed with the man - He reminds me much of [...] Harwood - with - a fully developed head & minus the [abrupt?] murmur - His voice was to say the least perfectly agreeable. I would [attract?]. He had an easy air of assurance, which I like - did not rise with apologies or expressions of embarrassment at appearing before us as so many of our lecturers have done - but his first words were "[To?] be dropped into Moscow in mid winter gives a curious sensation" & he went on in the most modest way I ever heard any [traveller?] speak in - he kept himself in the back ground & only now & then did he speak of himself & then often when he was in a ridiculous fix - Everything impressed me favorably & I was completely satisfied with one lecture at least -

In other cities of Europe you see something familiar in some department - a sign over a shop or a rail way or something to remind of home but in Moscow all is strange - at times you fancy it is Damascus now Constantinople now you never saw the like - no streets are straight all kinds of buildings are mingled If you could see it of a clear winter

morning ^as I did with the [innumerable?] domes & spires & the magnificent buildings stretching to the hills all on the background of glistening snow - you must wait till you get to the New Jerusalem before your eyes, behold another [crossed out: sight] picture so bewitching so lovely & withall so strange - you see strange houses strange women & stranger men till you feel a stranger to yourself - you see a sign "bath." you think it is some enterprising American but the h turns out to be the Russian n - & its no bath - even the sun seems strange rising so late & running so low - the language is strange I called a conveyance late one night to take me to my Hotel. I knew but one word of Russian - Gostentsi meaning Hotel - & the name of the landlord Billo - so I said Gostentsi Billo & away we whirld soon I saw we were crossing the foot of the street I knew the Hotel was on - I rose up & seizing the driver by the shoulder shouted "Gostentsi Billo" - He turned & drove rapidly in another direction - again I shouted repeatedly Gostentsi Billo as I saw we were approaching a dangerous part of the city - I saw a lantern of a watchman & I stopped the driver & tried the effect of my magical words on him - he soon set my driver right - it seems he was a peasant who had come into the city for the winter & knew the city no better than I did - but he charged me 3 [fares?] for

the ride - Moscow is the typical city of Russia Petersburg is European next next to Paris & Vienna in in magnificence the grand place is more imposing than the Place de la Concord in Paris 5 wide streets miles long radiate from it - Moscow although three times burned is the crystalizing center of the Empire - she is naturally jealous of Petersburg - the coronation ceremony is still held in Moscow & an attempt to place [that?] at Petersburg would cause a revolution.

Russia is 10 000 by 2500 miles in extent contains 8000 miles [...] coast - 9000 land [...arder?] 80 millions people -

The cabin that Peter the Great built with his own hands on a little island in the river is still standing protected by an enclosing building - the table at which he sat & wrote his [...es?] I could look out upon the Capital & glory of his empire - there is not the great display of other [...] the Cathedral where all the sovereigns are buried has only plain marble steps with only the words "Peter" "Ann" "Katherine" & c

The Russians took to the religious when it was introduced as a part of their duty to the government. A scene is described by one of the histories - a whole city were baptized at once some [...] in

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the water - some sitting on the stones while the priest read the mass for all - that was the way Christianity was introduced in Russia - the Emperor recognizes not power above him - so he always kneeling by the altar places the crown upon his own head - then passing behind the screen takes the holy bread & wine - no Archbishop is worthy to crown an Emperor of Russia.

The Russians have a great deal of religiosity - if I may use that word - at the main entrance to the Kremlin hangs the celebrated picture that winked or nodded or did something that sent away the French & no matter what the [temperature?] all must enter bare headed I tried it at 20° below zero - even the Emperor would not dare to wear his hat - Moscow is a city of churches - by actual count look which way you will - you see 100 domes without turning - the bells are many of them very fine in tune on the eve of Good Friday all of them are silent till Easter morning - when as a signal fire is lighted all the innumerable bells ring out in merry chime & every one as they hurry thro the streets to the early High Mass is at liberty to salute whoever he meets

with the holy kiss & the salutation "Christ is risen" on an evening of the year perhaps corresponding to our Hallow Eve the young ladies gather in a room at night and [then?] [...] on the floor a ring in the dark. each has a dish with a few grains of corn in it. - after a time spent in silent meditation a rooster who has been kept some time without food is introduced and after taking a little time to recover himself as other bipeds do under similar circumstances - he advances & helps himself to the corn - from whose dish he first picks will surely be married.

The riding school is the largest building in the world without [obstructions?] or pillars of any kind - 960x160 - 2 regiments can [maneuver?] with ease -

Tea is the universal beverage - sugar or lemon or milk at the little eating places - tea with the inevitable piece of lemon by the cup -

Of all places in winter a Russian House is the most comfortable you are sure of being warm - a servant ushers you into an ante room where all outer garments are laid aside they never [...] [...] with them on -

The inside of a Russian house is charming no display but much comfort -- Many ladies are acquainted with

4 languages - one I visited conversed with me in English concerning our war as intelligently as if she had been here - turned to my companion & spoke in his native tongue German of the war just [closed?] - chatted with a French lady - gave her orders to servants in Russian - with no [affectation?] or hesitancy -

But one thing you would notice that strikes one painfully is the free use of the name of God - they do not mean to swear it is a native habit = to say as this lady did "God how little tea you take." "Lord how you Americans travel" - She did not mean any more than young ladies outside the walls of Vassar College do when they say "goodness," "gracious" [c?]. I was once told by a French teacher in New York - who was teaching in a boarding school when she first came here of an [experience?] of hers in this [...] - This you know was not a College only a boarding school - The Principal was a very [dignified] lady - & the French Mademoiselle was picking up all the English she could & one day when she wished the Principal to stop speaking she said "goodness gracious hold your tongue" the horrified lady demanded where in the world she got such language - the poor teacher had heard one of the young ladies use it - & supposed it was good English: this is a [bad?] [...] & -
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They have great churches no seats $\frac{2}{3}$ are men no female voices in the choir no instruments - men's voices very fine & when they are on a low key effect is weird thrilling -

All go togeth the country people in sheep skin, filthy as possible, side my side with the rich furs. I said to my wife who was with me - what a pity that we must come to despotic Russia to find all [warshing?] together I was making what I thought a very effective reflection - my wife interrupted me as we were passing the steps - with "If you know the Russians for [...] I wish you'd step in and get one [me?] the [close?] [...] was rather [suggest...?] -

For a 1000 years Russia has been steadily advancing [never?] going back - its policy is persisting devotion to one idea -

Russia will never own the world - America will never be the ruler - happily they [strike?] hands & go on together in our darkest day when those we expected to be our friends failed Russia was by us - the Czar has just purchased a [picture?] a [y...arra...n...?] to be hung with Russia's heros showing the undying hundred of heroic souls"

Thi is a very poor sketch but perhaps you will get a few ideas ---