

Letter from George Sinnock to his wife Sarah Ann Kay

*written over a month period during a return trip to England
to visit his family in Sedlescombe, East Sussex, England*

*transcribed from a xerographic copy of the original handwritten letter
retaining original spelling, capitalization and punctuation as closely as possible
by Scott Sinnock, November 11, 1996*

Sedlescomb, Sussex June 8th, 1851

Dear Sarah,

I think I cannot better employ an hour than to transcribe a few thoughts from my journal it will give you a better idea of my feelings during the voyage than you could get from the letter written the next day after my arrival. The first that I find of this kind is dated May 5th and reads thus. Our company consists of about 18 in first cabin. 2 in second beside myself 40 in steerage and about 35 officers & crew. of the steerage passengers about 15 are Germans most of whom are going back to see their friends. the ballance are Scotch & English. Some going for money others for their families they left behind while they had gone over to see the goodly land alone. others again are going to vist their friends. and lastly strange to say some sick and tired of America are going back to stay & prehaps end their days in the poorhouse. I afterward found that several of the Germans were engage in the Revolutions in Europe & had to flee their country they are now on their way back after their wives & children. One showed me 2 wounds caused by musket balls passing through his leg. Another ball passed through his coat colter I think he come very near to the jumping off place, his is now in Wisconsin. I find some of the passengers have been in the US much longer than myself & are going to see the old country for the last time. Some chose this season so as to see the great fair. Of the 2nd cabin one is a very respectable Swiss going for his wife & family he has been absent from them 2 years. The other rooms with me he is about 50 years old has a wife in N.Y., he is going to London for the benefit of his health he was born in Dublin but went to England at 14 years of age where he learnt his trade which is carpenter he is very agreeable we have a room to ourselves which is calculated for six so you can see we are not crowded. A great deel of Picaune Aristocracy is seen in conduct of the first mate. I think from his appearance he has been elevated from nothing & he is now to big for his breeches he likes to dominere over the passengers and men to well to please me. The Capt has had a daub from the same brush. The second mate is very pleasant but I suppose he will feel his keeping as he gets promoted, put the reins in there hands they will drive. I notice the children are less affected with sea sickness than grown persons & I am sure it is a good thing they are for what could a sick mother do with a sick child. I am now sunning myself in the long boat on the main deck it is very warm and pleasant the sails are flapping two & fro we nearly were we were this morning. Oh for a little more wind. Horses wont pull.

May 6. what a dull melancholy place it is on board ship in a calm I feel solitary like a prisoner shut up in his cell 0 that I had the wings of the Eagle how soon should they be expanded and I on my flight to the bright land of the west in search of that happy little group I have left. I say happy but I can hardly flatter myself that they are happy while the circle is broke, for deep anxiety is pressing heavily upon the mind for the welfare of him who is tossed upon the sea. I can hardly forgive myself for coming away when I think of the care you now have upon you mind. I think I look old for last night in conversation with a German we were speaking of our families when he said his wife & himself were both of an age by 40, he then asked my age. I told him 32, he was surprised he said I looked much older than he did. He was a very young looking man for 40 years. So you may begin to make up your mind to see me come home a gray haired long face old looking chap. I suppose we are now about 1500 miles from London & who can tell when we shall be there. if we had a good wind we should be there in 10 days, but we may be much longer Oh for a pleasant breeze. I have nothing to employ myself about & my time seems running to waste. I am now seated down in the cabin on a big coil of new rope. My old room mate is on another to my right. While the Swiss occupies a chair to my left both reading books more to pass the time than anything else. The Germans are very busy outside jabbering away like so many blackbirds they are the merriest folks on board.

May 7 four weeks this day since I extended the parting hand, and oh what a day was that when the ties that had so long bound us together was to be severed so long for I must say the time seems long when I look forward to the month of September. And now the thought shall I meet all those loved faces again, or are we parted to meet no more below. Alas I cannot tell but this I do know that I have left you all in the hands of my Heavenly Father & he will do all things well for he is to wise to err & to good to be unkind. But I am very anxious to know how you are all getting along. I will try and cultivate the grace of patience for it is very necessary to those that are traveling by sea and are dependent upon the wind for means to move.

Monday May 12th, we have now been making good headway on our journey for the last 4 days & hope one week more will bring us safely in London. If I was as near the American coast on my way home how I should rejoice. My heart is not in England. I realize now that I am an American. That is my home as far as this world is concerned. I love its Prarie & Woodland its Hills & its Vales but most of all those loved ones I have left behind they are entwined around my heart with cords that cannot be broken. We may be separated but yet I am with you, in my dreams & in my imagination I think I see you call your little ones around you to implore the blessing of God upon the little family. I also think I see you retreat to a

secret place to pour out your love in fervent supplication to your Heavenly Father & as you prayed the tears came falling down your cheeks when holding me up in Prayer before a Throne of Grace. The God in whom you trust is able to do far more than you are able to ask or think. May he bless you my dear Sarah the Lord will hear your prayers and we shall meet again. The promises of God are quite precious to me I long to be in some of our old meetings again. I have no christian company but I find God is even here upon the swelling flood.

May 14 I long to have a talk with you but the nearest I can come to it is to sit down and pencil my thoughts upon a blank leaf in my book then send them to you after I get on shore for you know the post office avails us nothing out here and we are ignorant of all that is passing in the

world. I do not know when I have been so long without hearing any news. But I care not for that, for the news of the world is of very little consequence to me now. I would give more for a letter from my dear home than for all the gossip in the world. I look upon myself as a prisoner who is anxiously looking forward to the time of his release, or as a bird confined in its cage longs for a place by the side of its mates but it is no use repining, but I learn this lesson that there is no place like home. The weather is very unpleasant cannot stay on deck but my quarters are much better than many of my shipmates for I can sit down in a good dry room while the steerage passengers have stinking dirty water under their feet & sea water in their bunks.

Sunday May 18, This is the 4th Sabbath on board & hope it will be the last we have nothing here to remind us of its being Gods holy day, no preaching or any other religious meeting. This morning in taking my bible to read a chapter I found a leaf turned down at the chapter we read in family worship together at our house. O how my thoughts and heart too flew back to those happy scenes we have witnessed and joys that we have felt when worshipping together so many miles from here. This day while I am seated in my little room pencilling down my few scattering thoughts, "perhaps you are collecting that little group that I have so often knelt with" around you to worship him who has been so very good to us in days and years that are passed away. In a few more days I expect to meet & greet my English friends, those that watched over me in my early days & who have ever felt such an interest in my welfare. I still believe it is my duty to go & see them even if they do not come back with me to my home in the west.

May 20 when in St. Louis I bought me a book of a colpolter it has one or two passages of scripture with appropriate remarks for every day of the year. The passages that I lined for the day I left Payson read thus, Put thou my tears into thy bottle are they not in thy book, Psalms 56.8 again. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weeping, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him. Psalms 126.5.6 Although we are parted for a season & that may be a season of weeping to us yet it will soon be past and our mourning shall be turned into joy when I return again and see that our heavenly Father has kept us-all from harm during our separation. Let us, my dear Sarah, have strong confidence in him and cast all our care upon him for he careth for us. He will be with us to the end.

May 21 I am once more in sight of old England and we are now sailing along the Isle of Wight. O it is quite cheering after the dull monotony of a sea voyage to again see the beautiful hills as they rise majestically above the pale green waters of the channel that continually lash her chalky sides & yet she stands as she has stood for ages unharmed & now I must again bid you adieu you lovely Isle for I can hardly distinguish you from the clouds that fly in the horizon. How many passengers and seamen have thought of the pious life & happy death of Elizabeth Walbridge, the Dairymans daughter for it was from this Island her spirit took its flight to the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. O may our end be as calm and happy as hers.

Now you have all that I scribbled down during the voyage & hope you will excuse all faults.

I received your very kind and welcome letter June 3 it seems as though it hurried along on purpose to relieve me from my fears it was only 23 days in getting to me after it was mailed in

Quincy did you tell it to make haste when you sent it away or did the letter know I was so impatient to hear from you.

Never mind now how it was. I kissed the little letter for coming so quick & I hope the one I sent you the day after I reached here will deserve as much from you. It is 2 weeks today since I arrived in Sedlescomb & I have not been to Lewes Hailsham or London Mary Ann has written 4 letters but has not been able to come down yet. they have so much company now the Fair is in progress I think I shall get another letter from her tomorrow morning then I can tell you when I can see her. Father and mother have been hesitating some time about coming to America but they have now decided not to come.

They think that Mother would never reach land if she started & I am a little of the same opinion I dont know but they have come to a very wise conclusion. They are yet very much in favour of america and will come if things turn favourable I mean if mother and Mary Ann become healthy. The boys are very anxious to come and I don't know but James will come back with me but I cannot tell yet. I will write again after I come back from London then I can tell you when I shall start back & wether he comes or not If he does not come I think I shall take a steamer but cannot tell yet. Sarah Ann I am so sorry you have let the ague get hold of you do try and cure it as fast as you can. I was so in hopes you would be well and enjoy yourself by visiting and seeing your friends that when I come home I should find you much improved in health.

Angeline thought the letter would cure you but I think it would be to much like breaking it with Quinine it would come back again. I hope when I hear from you again you will have it to say that the ague is gone and you are well. I am very thankful that Angeline, Lucy and Charley have been well if they had been sick to it would be much worse on you. I am glad your neighbors are so kind I hope they may never stand in need of the same favour. You wished me to kiss little mary ann for you that I did, & would like to kiss my little Charley for myself but as I cannot you must kiss him & Lucy & Angeline for me. Try and keep him from forgetting me if you can but I think he is most to young to remember me so long

but he will soon know me again after I come back. Little M A will come to me and go with me anyweres we have taken several walks together. James Sinnock came home the next day after I reached here & staid until Monday of this week when he went back to his work again but he is not satisfied to be away from home now I am here. he wrote home yesterday and I answered it he wanted to know what conclusion Father & Mother had come to about going to America he could not wait until Saturday he will bring his tools home next Saturday and work here until I am gone I think he is not very hearty, but he is a very good boy and quite pious.

Mrs. James Crisford she that was Eliza Tothurst took tea with us this evening she has been to Battle. They live at Brede her youngest child is very sick. I think it will not live long Father myself and Inman went there one day last week and took tea with them. Old Mrs. Crisford lives with them She is 84 years old and confined to her room. This is a very cold day with some rain the weather is much milder here than in America. I should prefer this climate if other things were equal, because I must say this is a very handsome country every thing is in a high state of cultivation here. The roads are very good. Railroads excellent, but people get very low wages from 9 to 12 shillins per week for a day labourer and work quite scarce, but they do not hurt themselves at work. The farmers make a great complaint they rail out wonderfully at the present free trade laws. very many of them are broke. among that number may be classed Spencer Crisford, Joseph Mercer and very many others that Saml knew, but the main trouble with them was that they lived in to grand a style, that when they were called to compete with foreign agriculturists they could not make boath ends meet.

This is Friday morning the mail man has gone and no letter from Mary Ann I know she is in a great way because she cannot get away. I will keep this letter open til tomorrow I think then we shall certainly get a letter from her. When I first come we sent M Ann word of my arrivle. I will now send you an extract or two from her letter so that you may judge of her feelings it is directed to me. She says I am indeed happy to be able to send you a letter addressed Sedlescomb, but far happier shall I be to see you which I hope to very soon I have asked for a holiday this morning and I am to come this day "Tuesday" fortnight. I do so long to see you. I feel the time very long, but it will soon slip away. My thoughts are almost always with you picturing to myself how happy you all are together tracing back the path you have trod, the dangers and deliverance you have experienced. Shurely we may say goodness and mercy has followed us all our journey through. I long to hear about your dear wife & children. I am sure dear mother was almost overcome when she first saw you. I seem to be quite away & you all enjoying the treat to yourselves. I will now give an extract or two from her second letter which was sent to mother, dated May the 30. The other was dated May 27. I am writing these few lines with very low spirits indeed I have been expecting a letter from you or my brother these last 2 days. This morning I felt so hurt when I found there was no letter for me I was obliged to have a good cry before I could go on with my work I felt you were all so happy & I here all alone and quite forgotten. is it so. Yesterday I thought perhaps my brother was coming up to surprise me, but now I feel not. I cannot have my holiday as soon as I expected on account of company from Liverpool. I hope you will think of poor lonely me and write me a letter if you possibly can. I sent the poor lonely girl a letter the evening before we rec'd that so that she got mine about the same time that we got hers. She sent an answer the same day she received it. She was then more composed. I have answered that & am now waiting for an answer. Dear Sarah your (progressive) spirit of improvement has taken possession of many of our (old) neighbors I am very glad to hear Payson is improving I hope that not only the outside of the platter may be made clean but that the hearts of the people may continue to improve until the whole village may be intirely renewed and it be a town devoted to god. I hope James will not get discouraged and give up the business I think Payson ought to furnish money enough to keep two Shoemakers busy tell them to persevere til I come home when I shall go ahead again and if they choose they can work for me as they did before. I hope all the young folks that joined the church are trying to get to Heaven, although I donot expect to be here long enough to get an answer to this letter yet I hope to find them on my return attending regularly the means of grace, and living as christians should live. I very often think of them and the happy very happy meetings we have had together. I am also much rejoiced to learn that you continue to have good meetings and that the power of God is manifest among you 0 may the Lord carry on his work until all enemies are put under his feet. And his children rejoice in his universal dominion. I hope by this time my afflicted and affectionate Sarah is restored to health so that she can again participate in the public worship of god in his house for it is a great privilege to unite with the children of god in praising their Heavenly King. I do not know if I have said anything about my health I am happy to inform you that it is very good they all say I look much better than when I first come I believe myself I am fattening a little but I shall not be here long enough to get very fat & if I should the sea voyage would strip some of it off Uncle Charles was over here from Hailsham last Saturday and Sunday. I wrote a letter to him of my arrival and told him I had a likeness of his Son & Daughter It was the next thing to seeing them. Father & he walked to Hastings in the afternoon where he took the Train for his home. I had though of saying something about Sedlescomb & the improvements made here since I left but I know not where to begin nor how to describe it so as to make myself understood or in any way interesting to you. When I get home I can tell Saml all about it, and about his young associates what I find left of them I have seen but very few that I ever knew those that were our age are mostly grown up and gone away the old ones are dead. those that were little children when we left say they remember us but I cant remember them the only ones that I can recognise are those that were come to years of maturity before I left I find less change in them than in any others. Last night a young man come up and shook hands with me but I could not recognize him his name was Ed Edwards. Sam knows him. Albert Westin then came up I knew him he is now a poor Drunkard his Father has to support him he is married. Ed Butler is also a poor inebriate. people in England could live a get along if they would not spend so much for Liquor. Very few of any class of society but what drink a great deal. People

seem very glad to see me but I have not been to many places yet. I have worked some in the shop I have (walked) through Esqr Sharps Park and garden. Sam would not know the place nothing like it used to be. I called on Mrs. Sellen at the College they were very glad to see me I have promise to go there to Tea. I have taken tea with Rob Mercer & I should have said dinner too for I went in the founnoon and he would not consent to have me go until after dark he had many things to amuse me among which were maps of all the world he even had our little Payson there & Sams Newark. I spent an hour in looking through his Telescope he says he can see the rings around Saturn with it. he has books by the waggon load. But the most interesting part of my visit was spent around his table. The good lady was quite talkative and tried to amuse me by showing every curiosity of the house. She has a pair of regular genuine Indian Mogasons. Mr. Mercer has 2 Hickery trees in his Park & some american live oaks he admires his Trees. he thinks the Americans are great Hypocrates to pretend to be republicans when they keep so many slaves I find a general detestation of Slavery. I have visited the graves of my brothers & sister the lay in Westfield Church yard. I have also visited John Weller's Tomb he has a very neat stone over his grave. he is buried by the side of his Father & Mother in Sedlescomb Church Yard. I have been to battle they are very busy making rail road between here and there running from Hastings to London. I have been to Brede to see the Crisfords. I went to Robertsbridge last Sunday to the Sunday School Anniversary. Inman and myself went together we took Tea in the Chapple with about 50 persons we went to Hurstgreen and Saw Mr. Smith, James Weller's old master, he was here since.

since writing the foregoing part of this letter I have thought it might interest Saml and yourself to see a drawing although very rough of my Fathers house. James Inman and myself have hatched up what you now see. It is intended to represent the scene when I first arrived at my Fathers house Samuel will readily recognise the old shop and the grape vine that runs over it and along the front of the house You have a view of Joseph Eldridge and his horse and cart as he stoped in front of the house you see he has set my Trunk in the little yard in front of my mother, who is shaking me by the hand. dont you see Father peeping out of the shop over the lower door, with what eagerness does he watch to see if it realy his long lost George & then you see the Hedge, the gate and brick pavements leading to the Shop and house. The room that I now occupy for writing is marked on the window with the figure one. The room that I sleep is marked 2. Father and Mother occupy 3. No 4 is a little apple Tree along the pavement in front of the shop and along the pavement leading to the gate it is about 3 feet high. No 5 is planted in potatoes. No 6 is a nice peice of sod grass. No 7 is a garden with Flowers, cabbage, & a little tree, a lot of very nice stocks may be seen on the side of the pavement & smell very sweet indeed. No 8 paygate. No 9 a new stable in Henwards garden. No 10 a wood house & lumber room Henward has just put up. Samuel will soon recognise No 1 as being the room we used to sleep in although the window is less than when he see it yet it lights the very identicle room The road is about 3 feet above the pavement you see mother & me stand upon dont you think Father will soon be out of that shop. You ought to have seen him as he looked at me over the top of his spectacles and then how he cracked up his face as if he was about to cry. never mind Father & Mother had a perfect right to make crooked faces at that time if they felt like it. They looked at first as though they had some doubts about whether it was their very George or not but they very soon become satisfied upon that point. Dear girl I have kept this letter open until this "Sunday" morning in hopes of getting another letter from M A but no letter yet & I shall send it away when thee mail man comes along back presently. I think I shall go up to London this week. The peace convention commence July 22. if I stay to that I shall leave for America as soon as it over, but I am not certain of staying that long yet. the wind blows very cold today. James and Ths is gone to the S School I was there 2 weeks ago. Father & Myself are going to Lion Chapple today. I got a letter today from one of Bucklands friends, desiring me to take charge of a grandson who wants to go to St. Louis to Bucklands. Sarah Aim give my love to those kind friends who desired to be remembered to me. Father Mother Brothers & Sister send love to you all. Yesterday a very little girl come with a present of very large goosberries she said they are for Mr. Sinnock from America we thought it would be such a treat to him. this is goosberry pudding day being Witsun Sunday. tomorrow is Battle fair. Esqr Sharpe called to see me yesterday my Sheet is now full so I must bid you goodbye for a short time again.