

[From Samuel to his Father]

New York, Friday, 11th October, 1833

My Dear Father:

Last night I heard of a young lady going to sail this morning for Liverpool and I snatch time to drop you a hasty line. I received a few days since, the most continuous and full intelligence from home from a number of letters by Belfast packets. If friends knew the value of such communications in a foreign land how often would they be exchanged. Though the perusal of your and Matthew's and my noble Jos.'s [Joshua's] letters caused me to shed 10,000 tears and brought back to my heart in all its original bitterness a grief which never can be healed, yet still I found them to be the most delightful letters I ever received. Above all, how shall I describe the effect which my dearer than ever Mother's produced on me, with its precious relics and its full maternal melancholy information. I had left this city on a visit to the new-found James¹ and was staying there when I received them, they being forwarded from New York.

James teaches school in a small house situated in a deserted burying ground, near what in this part of the world is a great rarity, an old and ruined church. When the large packet was brought to me, I was seated with a number of ladies, in a gentleman's parlour, where I had been asked to dine. With characteristic eagerness, I opened the first. It was my Mother's, all traced with her own dear hand, and the first object that struck my eye, was the enclosure. At first, I thought it had been Thomas, or some one who had been married. My heart choked when I discovered in an instant glance that it was the last earthly relic of the beloved of human beings by me, once and forever, above all others, and could hardly support myself with firmness as I retired hastily into the church. There, surrounded by the dead, and reading of the dead, I found relief to my heart in those delicious tears, which agony had — to my frozen feelings when the news of that appalling bereavement deprived me first and forever of full happiness for life. I must drop this subject. To me at least, it never flits across my memory but it wraps my feelings in a shroud of unhealed and unhealable emotions. You saw him linger day by day and the last sad duties of humanity which you paid to his remains brought at least a relieving consolation, which seared with the saddest of human duties the very grief which they inspired. But to me, who last saw the one and the dearest, in all the buoyancy of his noble heart, and the other one throbbing to exalted hopes, there is no comfort which can seal the calamity with resignation.

You must forgive me for what I have written on this subject. Though it be much, it is yet but a dropping from the fullness of my divided heart, for I feel as if the half, and that the better half, has been laid forever in the grave.

I will now tell you about other things. As soon as ever Mr. Flint,² our new editor came to New York, I availed myself of the opportunity to pay a visit to James and Caleb.³ I soon found out the

¹ - James Hope Langtree, my 2x great grandfather.

² - Timothy Flint, Editor of *The Knickerbocker* 1833-34.

³ - Caleb Lanktree, who immigrated with Samuel but soon moved to Maryland to take a teaching position. He eventually moved to Arkansas, where he was a prominent engineer and government employee, dying there.

latter; though he is situated 170 miles from this place, yet steamers and rail roads⁴ have made the traveling so expeditious that he can be reached in a day. I was never more charmed with any visit in my life, than to these brothers.

Caleb has a school in the midst of a secluded but delightful neighborhood where he is much respected and very comfortable. The population is thin, consisting of farmers' families, each occupying from 3 to 500 acres. They are all wealthy and enjoy all the comforts of life with very little of its cares. They are so hospitable that if a stranger enters a house, he must not think of leaving that night and he will fare sumptuously on every thing they possess. For me, it was a rarity I fully appreciated, cramped up in cities as I was for such a length of time, to get cream, fruit and other country rarities, and though I lived among them for a month like a prince, I could not get one of them to accept a cent. It is a lovely country covered with beautiful trees, and washed by navigable rivers. This is a farm of 130 acres, with offices, outhouses complete with a large orchard of peach, apple and grape trees. Can be purchased for about 8 Dollars an acre, or rented for a half. There is one at present empty, which I have half made up my mind to take for you. It contains everything you could wish for and you have only to go one mile across a river to the railroad which will bring you to Baltimore, Philadelphia, or New York in less than a day. But more of this again.

James lives at North East, a small village about 5 miles from Caleb. Mary Jane is at Charleston, about 4 again from him. Notwithstanding his magniloquent descriptions, he is in a very poor way. The first glimpse I had of him I cannot easily forget. I had rode from the place where I stopped, and as the day was very sultry, I had off my coat and waistcoat and was proceeding leisurely down the village street when I recognized a tall, gaunt figure with high cheek bones and sunken eyes, dressed in an old slouch hat, nankeen jacket and Fustian⁵ trousers, smoking, among a parcel of Yankees, his countenance had too many traits to be forgotten. It was James! I called out his name and the rustics all stared, for a person dressed like a gentleman is a phenomenon they rarely see, and he bounded out to meet me. We reserved our emotions till we got into the stable where we both, by a common impulse, burst into tears and rushed into each others' arms. That meeting was long and tender. The memory of brothers departed since we met before, gushed into our hearts and hallowed our meeting with a deep and touching emotion no other circumstances could have created.

That evening we rowed down the river to see Mary Jane. With her and her lovely little Johnny near me, and James sitting beside me twisting his hair in the old accustomed manner, with Caleb standing at the window, I seemed to get into a second home and fancy supplied the spirit of all the other Langtree's hovering near us. On this happy occasion, sacred remembrances made tears the first recourse of all. James earns a livelihood and no more. He still retains all his warm generosity of heart, but despite his entreaties, I could not consent to stay long in his house when I knew I was depriving himself and Mary Jane of their only bed. The greatest mercy of all is that he is thoroughly sober, and though he is wretchedly poor, he has no want. I am sorry he is no

⁴ - By 1833 a series of connected railroad lines could carry passengers from just across the Hudson River from New York City to Baltimore, on a route that passed closely in proximity to North East, Maryland, where James and his wife Mary Ann were living. See map at the Library of Congress, reproduced at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701p.rr00002a/>.

⁵ - A thick, durable twilled cloth with a short nap, usually dyed in dark colors.

Methodist. The whole population for 20 miles round are of that sect, he and Caleb being very nearly solitary exceptions.

Respecting the latter (Caleb) I have given up all hopes of his becoming a preacher, and unless his heart is touched among this warmhearted people, he will not be acceptable. There are many kind preachers who would take him by the hand, were he so disposed, but what I am very sorry for, though he is serious and pious, he neither seeks their intimacy, nor goes near their meetings. I now take entirely the same view of the case as you do, and leave the matter at rest until his brothers' mantle fall upon him. If you write to him, do not, for the sake of charity, mention anything derogatory as coming from me. I have nothing to say of him but what is good. Since he came to this country he has shown an ardent though somewhat unyielding spirit to earn his bread with a noble firmness under adversity. I need not be angry because he does not come into my views about the Methodist ministry. Nothing ever annoyed and grieved me so much as to think that the first bad word which was ever whispered against me in America, came across the Atlantic from my own brother in a letter from John to James, which till he was undeceived by Caleb, gave him the impression that I was a reprobate and an out cast in New York. "Let nothing come from home to distrust our honour here." If for my own part I had been half as good at home, I would never have seen this country.

I will tell you of myself. Mr. Flint is the nominal and I will be the acting Editor of *The Knickerbocker* until May next at the same salary, 10 Dollars a week. After that, I have a better resource. It was since my return that the proprietor of one of the daily evening papers sent me a note to come to see him and told me that he considered my literary notices in the *Knickerbocker* so excellent that he wished to engage me as literary Editor of his paper when my engagements with the *Knickerbocker* would allow of it. I immediately agreed with him. My duties are to review all the books and translate from the French papers. My remuneration at present is conditional. After May, it will be 20 Dollars a week, thus opening a better before the present door is closed. I shall ever regard it as strange that talents which at home would be of such little avail and of which I ever thought so little, should in this country be destined to secure me a very handsome sustenance. This second situation will raise me out of all trouble. I got into an unfortunate lawsuit here for libel for cutting up an Editor in the newspapers, who had reviled my "Life of Fanny Kemble."⁶ Though I had best of the paper war, he beat me at the legal campaign, recovering 500 Dollars of which 130 I had to pay, which very nearly would have crushed me but for the increased means this second situation affords of paying. In fact, I was in such despair that I was going to fly out of the country by the advice and assistance of the publishers. It will not now be worth while as I shall soon recover it.

Respecting your coming out here – it is a business which the more I think of it the more convinced I am it would be for the future comfort of your declining years. I am intimately acquainted with Dr. Banos,⁷ the leading man of the body and at the head of their vast book

⁶ - Wikipedia: "Frances Anne "Fanny" Kemble (27 November 1809 – 15 January 1893) was a notable British actress from a theatre family in the early and mid-19th century. She was a well-known and popular writer, whose published works included plays, poetry, eleven volumes of memoirs, travel writing and works about the theatre. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanny_Kemble. Although her acting career had already given her notoriety by 1833, her greater fame was as an early abolitionist, which came about after her marriage in 1834 to a Georgia slaveholder, Pierce Butler.

I can find no reference to Samuel's writings about Fanny.

⁷ - Or "Banes"? The typescript contains a strikeover that makes the fourth letter illegible.

establishment in this city. I spoke to him seriously on the subject when I came back to town. He was kind enough to enter warmly into my views. He says the way would be for you to be regularly accredited from the English or Irish conference. Could you be appointed delegate, so much the better. In that case, you will be immediately appointed by the conference of whatever State you choose to reside in to a rank equal to what you held at home, and every pulpit in the Union will be open to you, in fact every privilege, as if you had labored all your life among them. Now for the manner in which it can be accomplished. I know you have many kind brethren in the ministry in Ireland who knowing such to be your intention, would assist you by every means in their power. The Conference will not refuse you such an office, or such a vote, as will ensure you the reception I have mentioned here, and they might even be disposed to make a noble effort to make the means necessarily ample. Let us see the means you have. You must appeal to the generosity of your main creditors. Forbearance on their part for a few years will be their surest policy. Your annuity you can sell for 3 or 400 Pounds. The sum I think might be raised to 500. For 200 Pounds you will get such a farm as I have mentioned, forever, where every necessity and comfort of life will be furnished in abundance. Jos. could look after it and you might bring a man or two to till it. Labourers are scarce and dear here and you will find them very necessary. Should this scheme not be practicable, we will rent a farm. This I can do myself. Whatever money you can get will help to stock it and in a very short time we can purchase it in perpetuity. You can not conceive how much you would be liked by the people here. Their primitive simplicity of manner, their warm heartedness, their strong religious feelings and habits would all be a new life to you, and your preaching and familiar conversation would secure you unbounded respect and veneration. Cannot the train be laid immediately so as to have all in readiness at the next Conference? I will write to Mr. Ward and Mr. McAfee. Their influence and best exertions will not be wanting. The Rev. Geo. Marsden⁸ is here now upon a mission to the Canadas. When he comes to this city, I will mention the whole subject to him. He will be able to give you much useful advice. Matthew's life, if it can be made interesting, as it can be, could be sold to the book committee for something handsome, which would throw another, atom in the heap. Ireland, with the many bitter stings she has received in it, and above all, with two of her most cherished offspring buried in it, can have but weak ties for my dear and honoured Mother now, and here, we children, a home, happiness, plenty and a comfortable and respectable asylum for her honoured age. Think of it. Talk of it. Set about it.

My time is so nearly expired that I will not be able, as I contemplated, to write to John, Thomas, Jos. and dearest Mother. I will thank her on my knees for her delightful letter, written all by her

⁸ - Rev. George Marsden was born in 1772 in Manchester, England, of Methodist parentage. He entered the Wesleyan ministry in 1793 and served as a circuit minister for nearly fifty years, mainly in the northwest of England. <https://krassoc.wordpress.com/2012/10/08/george-marsden-wesleyan-methodist-minister/>. Further:

Great Britain – Rev. George Marsden of London, Representative of the British to the Methodist conference in Upper Canada, arrived at New York Harbour from Liverpool. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette* Sept. 14, 1833 p. 2, col. 3;

Methodist Episcopal Church – Union of this church and the British Wesleyan Methodists. Egerton Ryerson of the Episcopalians and George Marsden of the British Wesleyans supported union but some of the latter group did not. The reporter stated that the Episcopalians are too closely connected with the American Methodist groups. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette* Oct. 12, 1833 p. 2, col. 5

British Wesleyan Methodist Society – Rev. George Marsden of London, representative of the British to the Methodist Conference in Upper Canada, arrived at New York Harbour from Liverpool. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette* Sept. 14, 1833 p. 2, col. 3

own hand. Oh, it was inestimable kindness. The poor little girls. For God's sake, don't put them to any infernal straw bonnets. I can't write, I am so mad. They, the only glory of the family, are they to be the degraded members in it? I am in a rage when I think of it. Oh, that they were here! Their support would be no inconvenience to me, in a boarding school. For God's sake, don't think of it. What! My darling Catharine and my noble little Martha. There's a fury in the thought.⁹

Thomas honoured me with a few lines enclosing a prospectus and a large letter for Caleb, which cost me 2½ Dollars postage. I will write to him at large by Mr. Marsden. He wants advice about coming out here. I say Come. He has a home in New York and a brother to whom his presence will give 10,000 joys, a situation for life. Let him come. Have him provide himself with respectable clothes. They are the dearest and most looked to things in this republican country. A suit here costs 50 Dollars. At home, 3 or 4 Pounds. I have paid 150 Dollars for clothes which at home I could have got for 40.

To Jos., I give until I write to him, the same advice and the same directions. Let him but make up his mind to come here and inform me of it and I will send what money I can spare to make his way plain. I could put him into my heart for the noble letter he wrote to me.

Respecting the presents, I have got the most of them back again. I am provoked beyond measure that the splendid album and annual I sent to Catharine did not reach her. You got nothing but the refuse of what I sent. It was the most provoking thing ever occurred to me.

I am sorry you attended so little to my directions about the *Ulster Magazines*. I am now publishing all my tales in one volume and want the November number for 1830, and January 1831 to complete the set. Get these numbers, if you can. Either cut out my pieces, or get them copied literally and let me have them. I am anxious to deprive the B.S.¹⁰ of its poison and to embody it with the rest. They would be worth a good deal to me now. Did you send my letter to Telling? Let Jos. write to him for an answer. I mentioned his name favorably in the March number of the magazine in a review of the *History of Ireland*, which I want him to see. Let Jos. tell me all news. Not one of you ever mentioned my little dog Smolloff of which George was so fond. Give my love to Eliza and dear Aunt, to Arabella and Mr. Wilson.¹¹ I send you with this, all the numbers of the *Knickerbocker*, directed to the care of Mr. Furness, Druggist, 34 Scotland Road, Liverpool, which I hope no sharks will seize. I have marked my pieces. In Philadelphia, I saw R. Ferguson. He and his wife remember you affectionately. He lives a private gentleman, opposite the U.S. Mint, No. 33 Juniper St. He is wealthy and owns a good many houses. Robert Lutton lives there. He married a woman enormously rich and left the ministry. R.F. wishes you to write to him. I cannot tell how much I am obliged by your condescensions about the G-.¹² Little as it may seem, it is a matter of some importance in my present public situation.

⁹ - The reason for Samuel's rage is obscure. Something to do with "straw bonnets," which may be idiomatic to the times or a euphemism for some degradation known in Ireland at the time but now lost to time?

¹⁰ - Obscure reference.

¹¹ - Matthew Lanktree's daughter Arabella, married in Belfast to John Stethem Wilson 5 Jul 1831, died in Arkansas in 1866.

¹² - A reference to Samuel changing his last name from "Lanktree" to "Langtree."

I remain, dear Father,

Your affectionate son,

Samuel Daly Langtree