New York 14th Sept. 1844

My dear Mother

I am very glad to be able to inform you that I have safely reached this City after a tolerably quick and so far as the weather was concerned very pleasant voyage. We left the River at Liverpool on Tuesday the 13th of August and cast anchor at the mouth of the Hudson about 10 miles from N.Y. on Thursday last the 12th Inst. making the passage in 30 days. A vessel arrived a short time before ours that had been out 43 days, and we should have reached here much sooner but we were more often becalmed for a day or two at a time in the whole so many as ten or twelve when we could make little or no progress, indeed the calmest was the most unpleasant weather we had for we were all rather anxious to get to the place of our destination. We had no storms to encounter; the mighty Atlantic did not rage as it sometimes does, ready to engulf those who appear to be at its mercy; indeed several of the passengers who had crossed before and most of the sailors declared they never witnessed such a pleasant voyage from England to this continent. But we have not been the only favoured persons for three or four lately ships have come over in twenty two days. I will now enter a little into detail about myself, and how I have stood the voyage. I have told you we began to sail on Tuesday the 13th, it was about noon. Tho' I was leaving my native country I cannot say that I was agitated by any particular feeling; I was neither joyful nor sorrowful; indeed I am seldom much elated and but seldom depressed. I try to meet everything in dependence upon God. But I am wandering. The afternoon was fine, and we had a nice view of the retiring hills of England and Wales, they were bold and pleasant to behold as most of their sons are. While I cast my eyes across the curling waves to the rocky shore I thought about home
and those I had left behind, and then I looked forward wondering if I should ever reach the shores of America, and what would become of me if I did. In the Evening towards sunset I began to feel the effect of the motion of the vessel - I was seized with that dreadful malady - Sea Sickness. I soon found that my best plan was to deliver myself up to my tormenter. My only relief was vomiting, and I was glad when I could freely do so. I remained as long as I well could on deck and then retired to my birth in search of rest but I found myself little better, and in this state I continued for a full week, being most of the time in bed, either I believe I never was so ill in my life; I had no disposition, to do anything, say anything think anything or eat anything. For four days I ate nothing and drank only a little soda water, and I began to fear that I should be hungry to death, tho' I had plenty of eatables with me. I had no desire for anything, but quite a loathing of food, indeed the thought of eating used to make me sick. At the end of the week I was a trifle better, and I forced myself to eat, risking its remaining in the stomach. I often thought that if you had been with me you would have made me take something sooner and oftener than I did. But I assure you that eating during the continuance of sea sickness is as unpleasant an employment as any person can engage in. I had also very hard work to drag my body from one place to another. Wherever I was there I wished to remain, not that I was at ease, but I had quite a loathing at everything. At the end of the fortnight I was something better, and from that time matters took a turn in my favour, but for near three weeks I was more or less affected. The last week I began to like my quarters and enjoy my food. Tho' I wished to be on land I was no way anxious about it, for I made myself as comfortable as circumstances would allow. I now feel the benefit of the voyage, I have no doubt but the sickness
has been of much service to me. I eat heartily and with considerable relish. You are aware that when I was at home I had little desire for flesh meat in hot weather, but here and now I can do with it and have meat and potatoes &c three times a day. I used to wonder how I should be able to manage a dinner at breakfast time, now I am ready to wonder how I did without. I can assure you that so far as eating is concerned I am an American already. But I must tell you that besides meat and potatoes, bread & butter and toast, in a morning there is coffee, and in the evening tea. But I must return to the ocean again. You will be wishful to know, or at least Elizabeth will, if I saw anything particular, or if anything particular took place. I will try to gratify her. The second day we were out - Wednesday the 14th - we ran foul of a small schooner and tore away one or two of her sails. Whether this coalition could or could not have been avoided I am not able to say, it was a wonder our ship did not shiver the other to pieces, as they were so near together that three of the schooners crew got off her on to ours, probably expecting she would go down, but they got clear of each other, the smaller ship escaping with the loss of a mast. Many of the passengers were in a terrible fright. But all this was soon over and soon forgotten, and no other accident of the kind took place during the voyage. I did not see it as I was sick in bed. The last land that was seen, was Cape Clear on the Irish coast, I think it was lost sight of on the Thursday. The next land that was seen was the American Shore after about a months sailing. I was perhaps a little disappointed with the Atlantic, in more respects than one. It had not so formidable and uninviting an appearance as I had been lead to expect it would present; it is true that sometimes it was agitated and manifested its great power, but in general it was pleasant to look upon and sometimes as calm and smooth as a sea
of glass; during the calms we had it did not appear to have any motion. We could see but a short distance around us, I suppose only 6 or 7 miles, the sails of a vessel might be seen at the distance of ten miles but I suppose not farther. We had pleasant company nearly all the way, a bird very much resembling a swallow called the Petril or Stormy Petril kept close to the vessel nearly from shore to shore, there would be from fifty to one hundred and frequently more, two or three were caught. And frequently we had near to us a bird not unlike a Duck when on the water sometimes one or two were seen and sometimes forty or fifty. One day when we were two or three hundred miles from the American shore a fine young Hawk paid us a visit, but his voyage had nearly expended his physical strength as he was very glad to take up his abode on the rigging. But tho' he had probably found a new situation he did not forget his old habits, taking a fancy to a petril he pursued one on to the quarter deck and was there taken prisoner by the Captain casting his hat over him, a passenger in attempting to secure him got his thumb bit, and was glad to relinquish his hold so Mr Hawk was once more the enjoyer of liberty. But soon after while taking a nap aloft he was secured by one of the sailors, and imprisoned in a cage. We did not see many fish, two or three times a few small ones resembling herring, sometimes a few porpoises, and now and then a species of whale I think of the rampus kind, and one day we were treated with the sight of the fish known as the Whale. Only one was seen during the whole voyage and he came very near to us, so that we had some idea of his size he appeared to be an immense fellow. His proximity to us was first known by the column of water he threw up in breathing. We never saw many vessels at a time, but scarcely a day passed without one or more being in sight, and once and only once we spoke with one. I must not pass over the ships crew and passengers. With regard to the former I have not much to say, from the Captain to the Cooks boy they were very much given to cursing and
swearing two or three of them at times were truly dreadful, they could scarcely speak without an oath, this practice was the most unpleasant thing I met with on shipboard. There was one regulation I quite approved of and think it quite necessary that it should be attended to by all ship owners and Captains—viz—there was no drink allowed to the crew. I think we had about 260 passengers of all sorts and sizes, indeed there was over many to be comfortable especially below decks. We managed very well in the place I was in as it was airy and not over crowded. Imagine to yourself a place rather larger than our kitchen (I do not mean the back kitchen) with ten small lodging or sleeping rooms around three of its sides the centre being taken up with boxes, and hampers, and barrels as substitutes for chairs and tables, and you have a tolerably correct idea of our place of abode. I must not omit to tell you that the outside of the sleeping apartments was papered and the children amused themselves with pulling it off. There were two births or places for beds in each room one above the other, the one next to mine (I secured the upper) was occupied by a Yorkshire man from near Hull, a medical gentleman who appears to be travelling about for pleasure. He was once in America before. The next room on the right hand was occupied by a Butcher his wife and three children from Dudly. He has a brother in America— at Pittsburgh—who sent for him. Then we had other three women without their children but without their husband's. One of them had five little ones. She gave birth to the fifth in a Canal Boat while on her journey to Liverpool, she had to be tossed about, and attend to her baby and the other four as tho' nothing had happened. The infant thro' well and slept nearly all the time. So much for the lot that falls to the share of some. Her Husband came to this country about 6 months ago I suppose he had not the means to bring his family
with him at the time. Another woman had two children, she also was left behind for want of the needful. The third had lived in America for some years, and had gone to England to see her friends, so that she was coming home. She also had a little girl. Then we had two Irishmen, six Germans and another Englishman. We could have done very well, and might have been as comfortable as persons can be on shipboard in our situation but for the young ones. Think of eleven children from a few days to nine years old belonging to four different families. We had noise and disturbance day and night. The greater part of the passengers were Irish. And taking the emigrants all together the ages were tolerably equalised. Several children and several young men and women, some middle aged people and a few old ones.

I find that I am not able to tell you all I intended for want of room. I fear you will not receive this as soon as you have expected a letter. The Steamer left here for England the day after I arrived and before I could prepare anything worth sending, and I was told that if I sent a paper it would cost as much as a letter. I have much more to say but I must try to embrace another opportunity. This will satisfy you that at present I am safe and well. I continue to look to Him who is obeyed by winds and Seas, I look to the past and am thankful, the future is veiled but there is the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. I must not forget to tell you that I had no trouble whatever at the Customs House, my luggage was just looked at and not a word said. You must excuse me for not having said more, but you must expect another letter from me in which I think of saying a little which may be useful to those who think of emigrating.

I remain my dear Mother your affectionate Son

Matthew Dinsdale