

**Letter from George Anderson to his brother and sister concerning his life in Patagonia, Mata Grande, San Julian, 2 September 1897. Reproduced by kind permission of Mr George Anderson (NLS reference: Acc. 9002/14)**

[Transcription]

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Mata Grande

San Julian

September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1897

Dear Sister & Brother

I received your letter & was sorry to see by it the anxiety I had caused you by not writing & the only excuse I have to offer is, that I had built up so many castles in the air as to how I was going to get on. I was going to get rich in less than no time & be able to send home money to help father; but I have found that these airy castles are built on very shakey foundations which are easily swept from under them, & that in reality the wheel of fortune grinds very slow. When I was working in the falklands serving a master I had always money at my command & was able to send home occassionally a little for father, but now since I have started for myself, I can never get hold of anything & it made me so ashamed of

of myself that I never wrote. I cant say that I am in debt to anybody but wool is so very low that I can barely get as much money as pay for eatables & dip, without talking about a shepherd to help, but I hope still to soon overcome the pressure of difficultes.

I see by the wool sales an account of some I sent home that it sold at  $4\frac{3}{4}$  d per lb when freight, insurance, comission & other expences are paid out of that, it goes away with a good portion of it. The wool is the only thing you get from the sheep here to pay their expences, there is no market for wethers or anything about here to raise money on, it is only the wool that is to be depended upon. The sheep are always increasing, it is true. I have now about 1300 between ewes & wethers & now when they have come to that they will soon mount up to something, providing that the puma or South American lion does'nt do too much damage amongst them, it is nothing for him to come in a night

& kill 10 or 15 & I have known him to kill in one night, between sheep & lambs as many as 150, about 2 years ago he killed that number to a neighbour of mine in one night so it isnt all play sheepfarming here. Still we mustnt allways look on the shady side of things, "live in hope although you should die in despair" is the best motto to follow up. I havent the least doubt "if spared", that things will come all right in the end.

There have been a few changes with me since last I wrote. My partners have all sold out & I am now alone, they got disgusted with the slowness of the proceedings they thought they would be million-heirs in less than no time, but they found they had made a mistake & sold out, but I mean to stick to it, now that I have started; I will follow it up to the end, if a person does'nt persevere he cannot expect that things will come to his hands themselves. When I received your letter I was just starting away up north to look for a piece of camp to settle

on (I have my animals where I am stopping on another man's camp) & didnt write just then, as I was intending going the length of Chubut & writing from there, but didnt go that far so could not write untill I returned, else you would have had a letter sooner. It took me about 3 months to go & come. I left on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. of June & returned on the 30<sup>th</sup>. of August. There were four of us started & it took us six weeks to to go up & we got caught in a snow storm it snowed for 3 days & 3 nights & we got stuck untill it cleared up, then we shifted camp down nearer the coast on to clearer ground; & stopped there for a week to give the horses a rest. We had nothing to eat for about a couple of days, then we had a hare amongst four of us untill at last we killed a mare then we lived like lords. From the time we left San Julian untill we got to Cameron's Bay north of the gulf of St. George "a distance of about 450 miles" we never saw a living soul except ourselves & we never were under a roof, just sleeping behind a bush. So you can

picture for yourselves the jolly life we lead here. One of my companions went to Chuput & the other two stopped in Cameron's Bay to wait on him coming back, & I came back alone to Port Desire within 100 miles of home, my provisions were running short so I called in there for a fresh supply, then from there I got company home. I came down in less than a month. I left Cameron Bay on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. of August & arrived in San Julian on the 27<sup>th</sup> after a very good passage only a little wearisome. In all the passage down I only saw 2 pumas or lions; the one I shot dead & wounded the other but he got away from me, he was shot through behind the fore leg, so he wouldnt go far before he stretched out also. I may add that on the way back a found a piece of camp that I will go & settle on if nothing happens to stop me, it is within 50 miles of where I am staying at present. I am thinking about moving there in the month of March or April, but it is not far to move & will not give much trouble

I think I have given you all the news about myself that would be of any interest to you except that I am in perfect health & have always been so in this country which is a good thing as doctors are few & far between.

I was happy to see by your letter that you were all well & that you had joined together again & doing well, which I hope sincerely that you may long continue to do so.

I was happy to see that father was still in good health & looking fresh. I should like very much to get the photographs of you all now with your families to see how you all look. I suppose if I was to get amongst you now with all your children round you it would make me feel old & lonesome, as it seems I am to be the bachelor of the family. I think I will have to apply to you to get a wife for me yet, else marry an old squaw out here as there is nothing else & she would not be a pretty ornament in a house.

Adam is still in Glentress, he is stopping well there, they have a good size of a family now.

I was sorry to hear about Jeena's boy being dead. I am also sorry to hear that she is not strong & it is a good job that she & her husband get on well together.

I wish I could afford to come home & see you all once more. I often weary & wish to be home to have a turn amongst you, but it is no good I must submit to the inevitable & await with patience the time that I may be able to do so; which I hope may not be far distant.

You seem to think that Mary & her husband dont get on very well together. It must have been a mercy to her to have her boy taken away when he was'nt right. She has only 2 girls living it is a good job for her that she hasnt more, "as in my opinion" it is plenty in a house where husband & wife dont agree.

I dont think I have any more remarks to make, only that I hope I may hear from you soon again with a little news of the country.

Hoping this may find you all well as it leaves me in good health & in pretty fair

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spirits, so wishing you all health & happiness I will remain ever your loving brother

George Anderson

Mata Grande

Port San Julian

Via Punta Arenas

South America

P.S. Please write to Jeen & Mary & ask them to write & give me their adress as I should like very much to hear from them. I have never had a letter from them since I came to this country, but I suppose that the fault is mine.

Good bye, write soon