

My dear Son William,

Augusta, Me. March 21, 1825

Let not the colour of the seal alarm you. When I shall have related some of the peculiar circumstances of the catastrophe, you will be reconciled to the death of your sister Mary — Yes, she breathed her last on Tuesday the 15. inst. between the hours of 2 & 3 in the morning!

Susan has doubtless stated to you in her last letter, some outlines of the circumstances which led to her derangement. After returning from Newgloucester, Mary desired to be secluded in the little north chamber with the world

over the kitchen, from all intercourse ^ & to be furnished with nothing but her bible & hymn book, & necessary food. In [page torn] request she [page torn] the last of August. While she remained there, so far as could be [page torn] appeared to be under pungent convictions, & did not come out of her voluntary confinement, until the 16. of September when, after being much distressed & supplicating for mercy during most of the night, she came down into the parlour in the morning & approaching me, took me by the hand & exclaimed, "Pa, I am in a new world!" — Fearing it might be but the effusion of her disordered mind, I checked her by inquiring whether she was not wild? She answered with a [Luke v. chap.]

sober negative & added, "I was reading in my bible ^ & all at once light burst upon my mind — & it appeared all glory-I have a hope." * This state of mind continued without much interruption till towards night, when walking in the garden, a person met her, & suggested that there was danger of being deceived — for that satan could transform himself into an angel of light. This, though well meant, unfortunately checked her comfort, jostled the powers of her intellect, & her mind, already shaken by the great transition through which it had passed, was unable to keep its

who watched with her, equilibrium. That evening & night, however, she exhibited to Mr. Wood ^ satisfactory evidence of genuine love to God & man. — A more entire state of derangement soon came on, & rendered it necessary to confine her by

(& which we obtained for the purpose) day in a crazy chair, so called, (which had been made for the security of deranged persons") & by night in a narrow deep bunk, so constructed as to keep her safe & warm. During her confinement, Dr. Snell was called, about the her on

middle of October, to examine her case; he prescribed for ^ put a seton ^ the back of her neck, & gave encouragement, that by a process of low diet & keeping the bowels open, she might be gradually restored. We followed his directions; but found it difficult to keep up a proper circulation in the bowels, as her sedentary posture had an unfavourable

effect on that object. By continuing this ^ however, she became so harmless & manageable, that we took her out of the chair of confinement, about the first of December, & permitted her to sit at ease in a common chair, where she would knit & sew, without attempting to quit the chamber, although we did not think it prudent to leave her alone — & would answer some questions in a rational manner, at intervals, though generally devoid of reason. But during this time she was reduced almost to a skeleton. And fearing that she might become so low as to endanger her life, we took medical [page torn], & on the 20. December put her a common diet by way of experiment. This new course seemed to revive her countenance & clothe it with flesh, but did not add anything to the plight of her body or limbs, or produce any alteration in her conduct, until about the first of January, when she broke out into sudden paroxysms of violence, & became so wild, restless, & unmanageable, that it was necessary to confine her again in the chair, to prevent injury to herself & those around her

with a subsequent low diet While under this new confinement, she refused almost every kind of food or physic, for nearly a week. This ^ naturally reduced her again in a short time, as low as ever. And about the middle of February she began to exhibit such marks of general debility, as induced us to take her out of the chair, & lay her for the most of the time in her bunk. Still she appeared to be sound at the vitals, would take liquid food, & rest tolerably quiet by night. But there had been no circulation in her bowels for nearly 3 weeks, notwithstanding every effort to administer physic, which could be done only by such species of deception as could be most successfully devised. At length, (Feb. 26.) we succeeded in inserting into her stomach a power ful

[Note in the margin of page one]

*During the day, she expressed her ardent affec [page torn] brothers & sisters - "I love you all, but William has the greatest share of my love because he loves Christ." She expressed [page torn] love also towards those with whom she had been at the greatest variance. And particula [page torn] in law, against whom she had formerly indulged an implacable prejudice, she now regarded with respectful love & entreated [page torn]. She expressed her anxiety for Charles, in particular.

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Date: March 21, 182
Description: Letter concerning death of Mary Sewall

powerful potion, which was repeated at given intervals, until it operated. But it left her in a state of universal lassitude and debility — her limbs, ^{her} almost useless, particularly the left arm, & she unable to turn herself in bed. The bank & the chair were now dismissed & laid aside, & she placed on a common bed, to await the event which seemed evidently approaching. — she now appeared daily to be sinking, although she craved food, & took broth & other liquors to the last; & this no doubt, served to prolong her life several days. During this helpless state, a little over a fortnight, she appeared more submissive than formerly, & seemed at intervals to have some sense of her condition. She would shew to Susan, that she was a going. And when Sophia called, about a week before her death, & told her she would come & watch with her the next week, she replied, "I shall not be alive next week." And she seemed to be more & more tranquil & serene, at intervals, as she drew nearer to the close of life. The day before her death, she expressed her ardent love to all around & asked their forgiveness — And when she died, it was without a struggle or the contortion of a single feature.

In a retrospect of this peculiar providence, we have ample occasion to behold the goodness of God. He [unreadable] seen the divine displeasure manifested against sin, by all the sufferings he has inflicted, & the riches of his mercy in affording us any ground to hope that a work of sanctification was begun in the soul of the deceased, however obscurely discerned through the derangement of intellectual powers. In all probability, we have had as much evidence as the nature of the case could afford. For besides what I have already stated, detached sentences of a religious nature, would frequently escape from her, at intervals, during her derangement. And when asked if she loved God, she replied, "I don't love him half enough!" and burst into tears, & sob & weep for some time. She has also when taken out of the chair & while we have been preparing her bed, thrown her arms around me, as an expression of her love, & has also done the like to her mother & to Susan, occasionally, & acknowledged with tears, that she has been a naughty wicked girl, & hoped we should forgive her. But these intervals have been transient, & would soon be obliterated by wild incoherent ideas — sometimes profane language. One thing is worthy of remark, that during the whole of her confinement her mother was regarded by her with more confidence & complacency than any other person who attended upon her. — The course of divine providence is mysterious. "The way is in the sea, his path in the great waters, & his footsteps are not known." "He knows not the way of the all-creating Spirit, who in the old or new process of his operation — when he created the world, or when he now creates a sinner. But we are assured, that wherever he begins a good work," whether in the infant, the idiot, the insane, or the intelligent sinner, he is able to perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed — & death shall be swallowed up of victory." When Manasseh, & Mary Magdalene, & the crucified thief, with all the ten thousand times ten thousand & thousands of thousands, of the redeemed out of every kindred & tongue & people & nation, who have been washed from their sins in Christ's own blood — shall ascribe blessing & honor & glory & wisdom & riches & strength — unto him that sitteth upon the throne & unto the Lamb forever & ever!

On Thursday the 17. we followed the remains of our dear Child to the narrow "house appointed for all living" — [page torn] [page torn] until awakened to immortality by the trump of God in the morning [torn page] You [torn page] & wife were providentially with us, which circumstance could not fail to administer consolation to us on the mournful [page torn] Our minds have been prepared for this event by the gradual manner in which it was produced. But although clearly anticipated, yet when actually realized, it seemed to exceed all that was known by anticipation. By this event we are solemnly admonished of our own frailty & mortality. And we must not cease to pray, that it may be sanctified to those of the family, in particular, who are yet unconvinced to God. Susan has had a heavy burden laid upon her, throughout the whole scene, & she has borne with uncommon fortitude & perseverance. How desirable that she should find that good in Christ, which would compensate her a hundred fold for all the tender anxieties & labours of love which she exercised towards her deceased sister! Nor has Abby been wanting in her cheerful assistance & voluntary contribution to the comfort of her dying sister.

We are all in tolerable health. Our love to Eliza. Your mother, Susan, & Abby, unite with me in affectionate salutations. Susan has received your letter of the 29. Jan^r. but I find therein no mention of the receipt of mine of June last, by D. Sewall

Yours most affectionately H. Sewall

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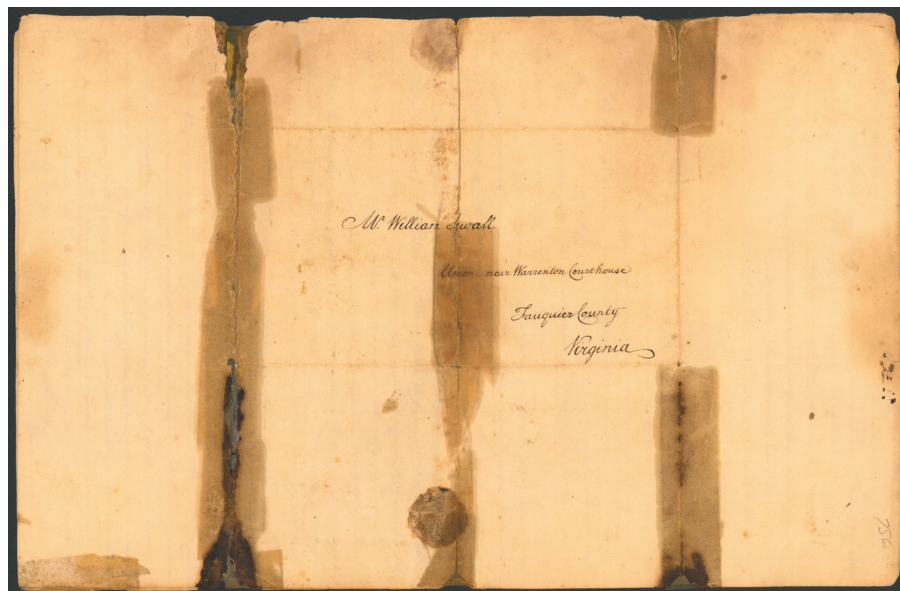
[Note in the margin of page two]

I know not whether you have been informed of the [page torn] M^r. Dutch's family have occupied a part of our house more than two years.



General Henry Sewall

March 21, 1825.



Mr. William Sewall

Union near Warrenton Courthouse

Fauquier County
Virginia