Portland January 19th 17 1800

I will try and see if I can write. If I do produce a letter to my Papa I shall be very glad, and if I do not I shall not be much disappointed. I have really so lost the habit of writing this winter that sometimes the thought of it is a task. Can you account for it that I, who used to consider writing as one of my greatest private amusements should have been quite indifferent about it, and without any apparent cause? I seriously lament that this is true, but I believe it to be. Instead of the sheets I used to write to Nancy Doane I have not sent her one this winter. Can there be in nature a cause for these changes? If there be, I may hope in due time to get back to my old love of writing.

When I wrote you last I was alone, wait-
ing for Mrs. Bartlett and Zilpah to come from the assembly. I am now alone. The family are at meeting, but excepted John. He has just returned from a walk to horse tavern. It is a long walk for an invalid,¹ such a windy day and on sheets of glass, almost. - But I was going on to say— you may think it not very flattering that when I have no one else to engage myself with, I apply to you, as the only companion within my reach. But let us see if this be not the greatest compliment I could give you. When one is in entire solitude and the mind left at liberty to choose its object, does it not naturally fix on what is dearest to them? I believe so. - And – to carry the thought still farther – when one is in affliction, and all surrounding objects fail to give consolation, how readily do the thoughts turn to that being who alone is capable of engaging the heart that is oppressed with grief, and alleviating its sorrows. I have thought that this was a proof that love and veneration for the deity was natural in every human being. Education or circumstances

(Footnotes)

¹. This may be a reference to Eliza herself who had begun her decline with consumption, from which she died in 1802, age 22.
may for a while totally obscure, and seem to have destroyed this instinct—that is, confidence in, and love of a supreme power, to which nothing can prevent from flying a soul that is in trouble, and can find nothing here to amuse its grief. As well may a man learn to hate food. many things may for the present make him disregard it, but nothing can effectually destroy the love of it, because to all who breathe it is natural. -- I am sure I did not think of writing this when I began, but by chance got hold of one end of an idea, and thought I would follow it and find out what it was.

Papa I will tell you what I want—more than any thing I think of at present—it is a scrap of General Washington’s hand writing, perhaps his name. I should think you might obtain it without any difficulty, and I should value it very highly. Papa had he hair? A lock of that if I could—be sure I should value more highly still; but this I
suppose impracticable, -the first I hope for

Papa I have wondered that you have not filled a sheet or two with the thoughts that would naturally arise on the death of General Washington. I have anxiously waited, but find I have waited in vain.

And now I have thought of another thing I want most, -in this request my sisters join me. It is the Dead march and Monady [?] performed at the funeral of General Washington in Philadelphia, composed for the occasion, and sold by B. Carr, No 36 South Second Street – price thirty two cents

I have one request more—that you will think me your affectionate daughter

Eliza Wadsworth

I will thank you to give my love to Mrs Green and the misses Wallaces.