

Th: Jefferson

MONTICELLO

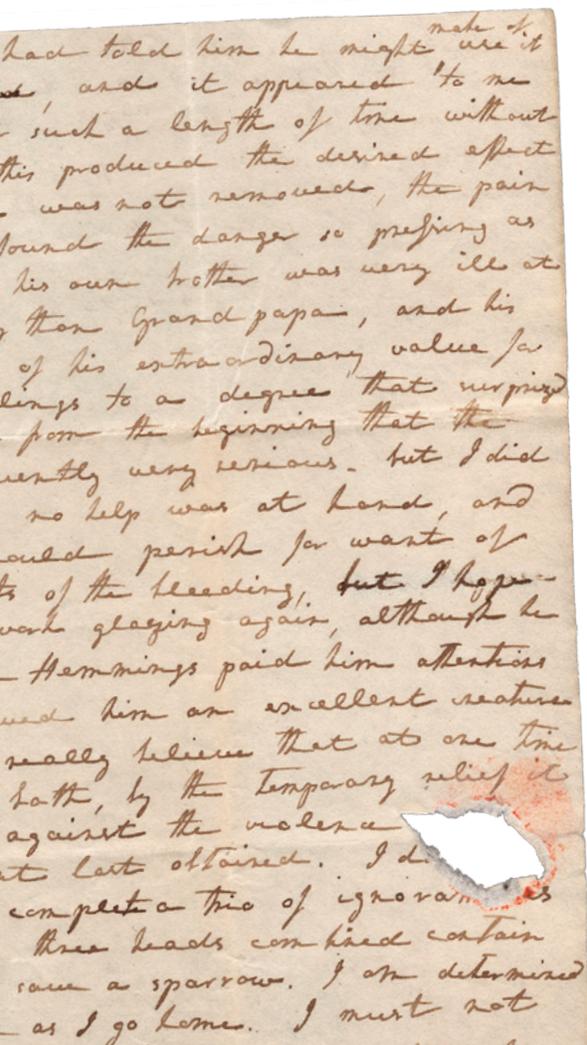
WINTER 2014

www.monticello.org

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 2

Previously Unpublished Family Letters Now Available Online with New Jefferson Quote Database

“Grandpapa, Cornelia and myself make as complete a trio of ignoram[us]es as I do know. and I do not believe our three heads combined contain as much medical knowledge as would save a sparrow.”



had told him he might ^{make it} ~~be~~ and it appeared to me such a length of time without this produced the desired effect was not removed, the pain found the danger so pressing as his own brother was very ill at then Grandpapa, and his of his extraordinary value for things to a degree that surprised from the beginning that the mostly very serious. but I did no help was at hand, and could perish for want of ts of the bleeding, but I hoped work gleazing again, although he Hemmings paid him attentions and him an smallest reature really believe that at one time bath, by the temporary relief it against the violence to last obtained. I do complete a trio of ignoram[us]es three heads combined contain save a sparrow. I am determined as I go home. I must not

In July 1819, while Jefferson and his granddaughters Ellen and Cornelia were visiting his Poplar Forest retreat, Burwell Colbert became terribly ill. Colbert was the enslaved grandson of Betty Hemings. He was also Jefferson's most trusted personal servant and butler. But at the end of Jefferson's letter to Martha on the 28th of July, he noted only that "we have been near losing Burwell by a stricture of the upper bowels; but he has got about again and is now only very weak." It is instead Ellen's letter of the same date that describes Burwell's "dreadful illness," Jefferson's distress at the possibility of losing him, his efforts on Burwell's behalf, and his relief once Burwell was recovering.

The newly launched website, *Jefferson Quotes & Family Letters* (tjrs.monticello.org) brings to light a rich collection of correspondence to and between Thomas Jefferson's children, grandchildren and extended family members, most never before published. The letters

illuminate aspects of Jefferson's life seldom touched on in his own writing and provide vivid accounts of life at Monticello and Poplar Forest. The archive, from which these materials are drawn, has been praised by scholars including Cynthia A. Kierner, Annette Gordon-Reed and Virginia Scharff, and is relied upon for accessible and reliably transcribed primary sources by K-12 teachers and students.

The archive also puts hundreds of quotes by and about Thomas Jefferson at your fingertips. Interested in what Jefferson had to say about Liberty, Government, Architecture, Women or Family? Simply select that term and verified quotes with citations will appear. A companion to the *Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, produced under the auspices of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation's Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies, the *Jefferson Quotes & Family Letters* archive adheres to the same high standards that are central to the *Retirement Series*.

Ellen W. Randolph Coolidge to Martha Jefferson Randolph, 28 July 1819

University of Virginia: *Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge Correspondence*, page 3