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STATEMENT

OF

MRS. LYDIA B. DENNY,

WIFE OF

REUBEN S. DENNY,

OF BOSTON,

IN REGARD TO HER ALLEGED INSANITY.



## STATEMENT.

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Early in the year 1861, I consulted a lawyer in relation to obtaining a divorce from my husband on the grounds of cruelty and adultery. My married life had been eminently unhappy, and the terms of, at least, indifference on which I had lived with my husband, were notorious. For the few years immediately preceding, I had been constantly subjected to most peculiar and insulting annoyances and outrages. So openly was I insulted that my mother felt it a duty at one time to speak to me on the subject, and my two sons repeatedly urged me to resent the indignities to which I was subjected. Finally, when my expostulations and reproaches were met by personal ill treatment, I resorted, as above stated, to the law for redress. My counsel assured me from the first that I had ample grounds for a divorce on both counts. I made my own investigations, and the information I obtained I imparted to my counsel and to those whom I then considered as my friends. I also showed to many persons the bruises and wounds my husband had inflicted on me, thus giving (as I intended) publicity to a resentment which was excited by the grossest and most public insults. I told Mr. Denny of my intentions, and that I had consulted a lawyer in reference to a divorce. He also knew that I was in the care of an eminent female physician. Under these circumstances, on the 25th of March, 1861, Mr. Denny, assisted by two physicians, kidnapped me in open day, in the streets of Boston, and conveyed me to the McLean "Asylum" (mad house), Somerville, Mass., without consulting or *informing* my friends and relatives, or my physician, though, had I *been* insane, they would have been the first consulted, and he would have been only too glad to have given me into their hands. In this dreadful prison, in spite of the unceasing efforts of my relatives

to obtain my release, and in face of the fact that Mr. Denny is notoriously and persistently guilty of all I ever charged him with, I was kept *eighteen months*; suffering an imprisonment the horrors of which must be endured to be understood, though it would seem that the plainly apparent, outside, inseparable *cruelty* of such an imprisonment must be clear to the understanding of every human being. A woman, a mother, torn from her home, her liberty, her children, and immured in a mad house! without help, and without hope. During this time I was allowed no communication with my friends in any way, nor any knowledge of them, or of anything whatever that it concerned me to know—I was literally “buried alive!” Everything real in relation to my condition was utterly and systematically ignored, and I was constantly told by Dr. Tyler superintendent of the McLean “Asylum”), in reply to my entreaties, arguments, reasonings, &c., to “get well” —to “*get well.*” Dr. Tyler was always unwilling to argue (or converse) with me on the subject of my alleged insanity, or to explain its nature, as I frequently urged him to do,—being, of course, naturally anxious to know what I was to “get well” of. I, however, soon understood that to *accept the fact of my* (alleged) *insanity* was the indispensable first step toward getting “well.” Indeed, Dr. Tyler told me at one time that my insisting so strongly on my sanity was proof to him that I was insane! My alleged insanity has been variously designated as “Moral Insanity,” “Emotional Insanity,” “Earnestness of Mind,” “Morbid state of Feeling,” “Fixed Idea,” “Monomania,” “Spirit of Revenge,” etc. It has never, however, been convenient or agreeable (not to say possible) for Dr. Tyler to explain to me, my friends, or any one else, the manner in which it was developed. Dr. Tyler used often to assure me that “Mr. Denny loved me very dearly.” I gradually learned to understand the system to which I had fallen a victim, and to know that I had no hope from those who placed me there, who kept me there, or who consented to my being there. I managed after a time to throw from the carriage, when I rode, letters, some of which, reaching my friends, incited them to fresh efforts in my behalf. In October, 1861, they obtained a hearing on habeas corpus; but my “counsel was so confident that the whole court would discharge me, on the

ground that my husband, when I was taking steps to obtain a divorce, could have no right to imprison me, whether insane or not, that he introduced no evidence to prove my soundness of mind, and made no argument on the question." My sanity and perfect self-control were, however, so palpably evident that "strangers who were present and heard the proceedings asserted my perfect soundness of mind with great vehemence;" and even Dr. Tyler, after I had gone through a long and severe cross-examination, was forced to admit that I had neither said or done anything incompatible with perfect sanity. Nevertheless, his general statement, that I was "insane," held good, *and on that general statement alone*, in spite of my personal presence, an unimpeachably sane woman, I was remanded back to an imprisonment which every human being capable of reflection must know to be worse than death. The efforts of my friends to release me subjected them, also, to Mr. Denny's persecutions; and as he has always had all the property of the family in his hands, he was enabled to annoy and hinder them most effectually. But they persisted in all lawful efforts, and finally Mr. Denny, finding it impossible longer to stave off a jury trial, *released his wife from her imprisonment* by an agreement with my mother and brother-in-law. By the terms of this agreement, I am under nominal guardianship for six months, yet the guardian has no power to restrain my liberty without the consent of my mother, *who has always asserted my sanity*, and whose only anxiety is in regard to my *personal safety*; and it is expressly stated in the "agreement" that consenting to this appointment "is in no manner to be taken as an admission that she (I) is of unsound mind, or to be used to her (my) prejudice in any legal proceedings which she (I) may hereafter commence." My friends consented to this agreement because they felt that it was of the first importance to obtain my release, it being impossible to gain access to me in any other way, my counsel even not being allowed to see me, thus leaving me without support, information, or advice, pending a trial which involved to me so much more than life. I, myself, was no party to the "agreement," and am not bound by it in any way. I never would have consented to any form of guardianship whatever, having always asserted (confidently and absolutely) my sanity, and my perfect ability to take care of myself and my family, as I always had done, without help

or interference from any one, up to the very moment of my seizure; although Mr. Denny and some of his relatives and friends have recently discovered, that, "*if I am not insane,*" I have a "devilish temper," and am quite unfit to take charge of my children; and further, that "if Mr. Denny is a licentious man," my aforesaid peculiarity of "temper" has, by rendering his home unhappy, driven him to seek consolation in the arms of courtesans! which discoveries, *considering the circumstances under which they are made,* will perhaps be considered as remarkable as they are original. As I said, I have always asserted my sanity, and I, my friends, my relatives, my counsel, and my physician, *now* assert that I have never said or done *any* thing to *any* person, at *any* time, which could by *any* (proper) construction be called insane. I have *resented* the most atrocious outrages, the most monstrous abuse; and I *do* resent, and I should be ashamed of myself if I resented in a less degree. But my resentment has never impelled me to seek anything more than such poor redress as Massachusetts law affords to married women. According to the "agreement," Mr. Denny was to pay my board (ten dollars a week) and furnish money for my other reasonable expenses. This he has not done—but on one and another frivolous pretext, has refused to pay one penny toward my support, ALTHOUGH HE PAID WITHOUT HESITATION OR DEMUR, TWENTY DOLLARS A WEEK, AND ANY OTHER EXPENSES DR. TYLER CHOSE TO PRESENT, SO LONG AS I COULD BE KEPT OUT OF THE WAY, AND IN THE ENDURANCE OF WHAT HE KNEW TO BE THE MOST HIDEOUS MISERY. He also persecutes me by circulating industriously, constantly, and persistently the cruel falsehood of my "insanity." He has found newspapers (respectable!) to publish false reports, and the contemptible, petty lies on which his charge was first founded (or, rather, sustained), and he himself and his tools have stories adapted to all latitudes. To persons who have seen me since my release, and know that I am, and always have been, perfectly sane (and who tell him they know it), he says: "The doctors do not say so. Mrs. Denny's lawyers do not think so. They all admit that she is insane, and every physician who has seen Mrs. Denny has pronounced her insane." Now, though several physicians saw me at the "Asylum," no one of them (except those directly implicated in the crime against me)

has ever dared to say I was insane ; but, on the contrary, some of them declared that they saw nothing in me that indicated insanity. Of course, neither I nor my friends recognize the interference or authority of physicians in the matter at all. Yet I shall be infinitely obliged to any one of them who shall have the independence, the manliness, the *humanity* to come forward (as I trust they will at the proper time) and declare, what they all very well know, namely—that I am, and always have been, perfectly sane. To other parties Mr. Denny says : “ Mrs. Denny is very insane, as insane as ever (which to be sure is true), and I shall be obliged to put her back again soon.” Again, that I am “ only out for a short time”—that he “ let me out on his own terms,” &c. He even has not scrupled to say that “ Mrs. Denny’s family and relatives all admit *now*, that she is, and always has been, insane.” But what most excites the anxiety of my friends (and of course my own), is the report that I am considered “ dangerous,” and that I have “ suicidal” as well as “ homicidal propensities.” In the false newspaper reports published at the time of my release this fatal charge was inserted, and it has been so boldly reiterated that my friends have received special cautions not to allow me at any time to venture out alone ; and it was suggested to them, that these reports were preparatory to kidnapping and effectually disposing of me, when they would be brought forward to support the theory of *suicide*. I and my friends know that Mr. Denny and the power behind him are not to be trusted, and we feel that the course I now take is not only my only mode of defence, but an absolutely necessary precaution in reference to my personal safety. By keeping me dependent on the charity of my friends for support, Mr. Denny (besides the inseparable mortifications and embarrassments of such a condition) puts it out of my power to see my children, except at rare intervals. *My* children, for they are *mine*. A woman’s children are *hers* by all laws of humanity, of Nature, and of God. They are *her* flesh and *her* blood, and *my* children are *my* groans, and *my* sighs, and *my* tears. They are my life and my soul. *I long for them unceasingly* ; and this man knows—as have all tyrants, great and *small*, from the beginning of the world—that the most exquisite torture that can be inflicted on a mother

is to separate and *estrangle* her children from her. It is not by any means a *new* device—only a comparatively new mode of executing it. I am suffering especial anxiety in regard to my youngest child (my only daughter), who is living with strangers, and entirely isolated from all her relatives. Her health is delicate and precarious; and I am assured by an eminent physician, who visited her at my request, that she cannot be properly cared for in her present situation; that her health for life, if not her very life, depends on the care she now receives, and that she ought to be with her mother. I understand my child's constitution, and I understand my child as no one else can; though I am sure no one can help understanding the anguish I must endure in being separated from her in such a manner, at such a time; and I PROTEST against the CRUELTY of such treatment. When a woman is robbed of her liberty, as I have been—that is to say of her humanity, that is to say of her responsibility, that is to say of her soul—she is considered—no, not considered, but treated, like the “thing” she is represented. I have been, I am, robbed of everything; of my liberty (that includes all); of my property; of my children. I was taken to my prison on a cold winter night, without bonnet, or shawl, or wrapping of any kind. Afterward, at different times, portions of my wardrobe (not the choicest) were sent me; and these articles, with what was obtained for me during my imprisonment, and what my friends have since obtained for me, constitute my entire worldly possessions. The remainder of my wardrobe, my personal and other ornaments, my money, my books and pictures, letters and papers, the *presents of friends*, all the souvenirs, memorials, and relics which are so invaluable to their owners—miniatures of my children and curls of their hair—this man refuses to restore to me; and he withholds the property I inherited from my father, with much valuable personal property, bought with my money and marked with my name; all of which, and much more, I claim and demand.

Before closing this defence, this protest, this appeal, I submit—that the pretense of my insanity is a falsehood, so monstrous, and so *patent*, that any *man* would hesitate to echo it. The terrible ordeal I have endured, so far from developing any weakness or infirmity of mind, has,



in the opinion of my friends, shown me to possess courage and endurance, energy and strength, not often surpassed. Gentlemen, lawyers, physicians, conversing with me, express their amazement that I did not *become* insane. They say to me, "Mrs. Denny, I wonder you did not *become* insane." "I think I should have become insane." "I am sure I should have become insane." But as I did not, and would not, become insane, and as I am partially escaped out of the hands of my enemies, I am persecuted with slanders the foulest, the cruelest, the most malignant, the *most injurious*. I appeal to human hearts; I am driven to this last extremity. Every one must understand how desperate is my condition, when, to preserve, not my life only, but my liberty (without which life is worthless, yea, intolerable), I am compelled to a course, not less painful than unprecedented, and which is as utterly opposed to all the habits of my life as it is to the customs of society. But though my own immediate personal safety compels this course, I cannot forget nor neglect to warn all women to beware of a like fate,—for there is not one who is not liable to all that has befallen me, with the added horror of its continuance for life.

It remains to be seen if, in the "freest country in the world," in this "boasted nineteenth century," public opinion—"society"—indorses an outrage (not to say a system) for which the annals of the darkest ages of feudal tyranny could hardly furnish a parallel.

LYDIA B. DENNY.

ROXBURY, DEC. 23, 1862.

The letters appended (and to which I refer in my statement) are a few of the many written by me during my imprisonment. These were picked up by different persons and sent to Mr. Sewall in the first year. For the last four months or more *all* fell into the hands of the spies and keepers by whom I was constantly watched and guarded. I was never allowed pen, ink, or paper, but I had secured some bits of pencil before I was suspected, and I saved the scraps of paper that came around my parcels, and sometimes ventured to appropriate a blank leaf from a book. With such materials—in terror, haste, and secrecy—I tried to give some little idea of the cruel misery

I was enduring. My friends made several copies of the letters, which were read by many persons, *and they were also read in open court*, at the different times when my friends were endeavoring to obtain my release. For these reasons I print the letters, and also because every person of ordinary common sense or intelligence who reads them, must know that they were not written by an insane person; although *the circumstances of my case* are alone sufficient to prove, *absolutely*, that I was never insane. Of course, I utterly repudiate the modern theory of insanity, popularized by physicians and other interested persons—a theory which, wherever it prevails, holds under its monstrous ban, subject to its hideous penalties, every human being! It should be constantly remembered that during my whole imprisonment I was kept in entire ignorance of all that it concerned me to know; that every thing *real* in my condition was absolutely ignored, while I was simply the insane wife of a tender and devoted husband! And I trust that the circumstances under which these letters were written, with the loss of many intervening, will explain any seeming incoherence.

LYDIA B. DENNY.

The first six letters were written before the habeas corpus—the others after.

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### LETTER I.

George, you are deceived; believe nothing, but see me; and O, do not wait too long, till I am dead with despair and sorrow, but if I never see you again, I shall not think you have forsaken me. I know you are deceived. I have not much hope that you will get this, but if you do, it is best for me that you keep it to yourself. Did you get any letters from me after I left New York?

I have written you once before from here, hoping you may get one or the other, for I must have some hope. It does not seem to me I can bear it much longer.

I ask the finder of this to inclose it—mail it—directed to Mr. George Kinney, No. 1 Henry Street, Brooklyn, N.

Y. I put in money for envelope and stamp, and beseech you to send it; and so may God send you help in your sorest need!

[Picked up in Maplewood, Malden, 22d April, 1861, by J. Brown, Jr.]

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## LETTER II.

A gentleman of Boston keeps his wife confined, because, after enduring years of neglect and cruelty, she finally exposed his brutality, by showing to a number of persons the bruises he had inflicted on her person, and telling the outrages he had committed against her. To cover this, and prevent her obtaining a divorce, she is shut up—to be cured, she is told, of the “nervousness” which makes her fancy she was ill-treated. Her desire to be released from captivity and obtain justice is called a spirit of revenge, which is insanity. For four months she has not looked on a face she ever saw before, and only knows she has children and friends from the assurance (given when she asks) that her “friends are all well.” Her health is giving way, and she fears she cannot endure till she is rescued. If the finder of this will send it to Hon. Samuel E. Sewall, Boston, he will know if anything can be done for her relief; or to Mr. George Kinney, No. 1 Henry Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Money enclosed to pay for stamp and envelope.

Mr. Sewall knows her story. He advised her what to do; but she thought she might take a little time to make up her mind, not knowing that what has happened to her was possible. She was taken from home by force, without a moment’s notice. She desires to act as Mr. Sewall advised. Expressing that desire and intention where she is, she knows is fatal to her unless she is rescued, and she feels or fears she cannot much longer endure her cruel captivity and the more cruel injustice that causes it. The finder is again earnestly entreated to send this paper to Mr. Sewall.

## LETTER III.

Reuben S. Denny resides at No. 5 Union Park, Boston. His wife, after enduring years of neglect and unkindness, was finally rendered desperate by his cruelty, and exposed him by showing to a number of persons the bruises he had inflicted on her, and telling the outrages he had committed against her. To cover this, and to prevent her obtaining a divorce, which would further expose him, he keeps her confined in the McLean Asylum, Somerville, to be cured, she is told, of the nervousness which makes her fancy she was ill-treated. For more than four months she has not looked on a face she ever saw before, and only knows that she has children, a mother, brother, sister, by being told (when she asks) that they are well. She was taken from her home by force, without a moment's warning. The cruel separation from her children and friends, and the more cruel injustice that compels it, she feels is killing her, and she fears soon. She has no appetite, but forces herself to take as much as she possibly can, hoping to endure till she is rescued. The finder of this is entreated to take or send it to the Hon. Samuel E. Sewall, Boston, who knows her story, and she hopes will interpose to save her before it is too late. Mr. Sewall was her lawyer, and advised her what to do; but she thought she might take a little time to make up her mind, not knowing that this which has happened to her was possible.

She desires to assure Mr. Sewall that she has no story to tell but the one she told him, and she demands an investigation. She wishes to see him, and her mother and brother, who are entirely deceived in regard to her condition.

Her mother, Mrs. D. Kinney, and her brother, Mr. George Kinney, resided at No. 1 Henry Street, Brooklyn, New York.

She begs Mr. Sewall to see her, as he can know nothing of her unless he does; and, O, let it be soon, for she has no other hope.

## LETTER IV.

Reuben S. Denny resides at No. 5 Union Park, Boston. His wife, after enduring years of neglect and unkindness, was finally rendered desperate by his cruelty, and exposed him by showing the bruises he had inflicted on her person, and telling the outrages he had committed against her. To cover this, and to prevent her obtaining a divorce, which would further expose him, he keeps her confined in the McLean Asylum, Somerville, to be cured, she is told, of the nervousness which makes her "fancy" she was ill-treated. For more than four months she has not seen a face she ever saw before, and only knows she has children, a mother, brother, and sister, from being told (when she asks) that her "friends are all well." This cruel captivity and separation from all she loves, with the more cruel injustice that compels it, she fears she cannot much longer endure, as her health is much impaired, and her appetite entirely fails.

The finder of this is earnestly entreated to take or send it to the Hon. Samuel E. Sewall, Boston, who knows her story, and she trusts will interpose in her behalf before it is too late. Mr. Sewall was her lawyer, and advised her what to do, but she thought she might take time to make up her mind—not knowing that this which has happened to her was possible. She was taken from her home by force, without a moment's warning. She desires Mr. Sewall to act for her—she thinks with his knowledge of her case he can demand an investigation. She has, and has had, no story but the one she told him. She is sure that if her case was investigated, or if her friends had knowledge of her real condition, she could not be detained here one hour. She submits that her friends ought to understand that any distress of mind they might have seen her exhibit was the legitimate and natural (immediate) result of the treatment to which she had been subjected—at least with her—and they ought to believe nothing from the man who was so careful to put her effectually out of the way before he made his explanations. If she dies here, they will probably never see her alive, as they would not

be sent for till too late. Women, mothers of young children, have been kept here years, and finally died here, without once being allowed to see their children, not even at the last—not insane women—except with the peculiar insanity which only the husband and the physician can discern, or perhaps a friend or two who has the “reputation of the family at heart.” Her mother and brother, Mrs. D. Kinney and Mr. George Kinney, reside at No. 1 Henry Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. She appeals to any one possessing a human heart to pity her in her extremity, and send this to Mr. Sewall, her mother, or brother.

[The greater part, indeed almost the whole, of this letter (D) is a literal copy of the above,—the variations so slight, it has not been thought necessary to make a copy.]

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## LETTER V.

I am obliged to write in secrecy and haste. I hope the ordinary allowance will be made for incoherence. I think I need medical treatment (I beg not to distress my friends), but I will never ask or receive it from any person here—not because I am insane or obstinate, for I suppose it is only natural that I should prefer to choose my own physician, that I should desire to be treated by those in whom I can feel confidence, and that I object to placing myself in the hands of those toward whom circumstances compel me to feel some degree of distrust. I do not say this because I am anxious about my health (for if I cannot have liberty I desire death, which, being a patriotic sentiment, can't be insane); but if I die here (I say again), it is murder, and I will never by word or act so much as imply consent, but, as from the first so to the last, I will protest; and I hereby take to witness the person or persons finding and reading this paper, that I, Lydia B. Denny, of sound mind, declare I am unjustly and illegally imprisoned in the McLean Asylum, Somerville, and that I appeal to the laws of my country for redress, and demand my liberty, and an open, legal investigation, that I may establish the truth of what I here assert.

The accompanying paper was written some time ago. I have neither opportunity or paper to rewrite it, and so

will add a few lines. Since writing it, I have taken such opportunity as I have, and spoken (appealed) to the Trustees, and with precisely the result I anticipated. The business of the Trustees is to indorse Dr. Tyler; not, by any means, to entertain complaints or redress grievances, which might possibly implicate him, the institution, or themselves. Of course this is merely my opinion, but it seems to me quite warranted by my experience. I finally asked one of the gentlemen, a lawyer, if, knowing or declaring myself sane, and my imprisonment cruel, unjust, and illegal—my friends, deceived as to my condition (or for any other reason), consenting—thus leaving me without help or hope—there was for me no redress—no resource. He said I could “appeal to the laws of my country.” I waited another week, and, at the next visit, told him I desired to appeal to the law, through you, and with your advice. I said, however, I should prefer to be released without resorting to the law. The answer was: “I will tell Mr. Sewall what you say.” I have waited two weeks longer, without result, and am forced again to try the forlorn hope. Sir, if there is any law for me, I appeal to it; and I submit that (sane or insane) the circumstances of my case give me a right to demand a legal investigation. I demand, first, my liberty, and shall authorize or consent to no investigation where that is not the first step. I assert confidently that my friends have no idea of my real condition. I assure them they would not find me troublesome. I am neither restless, nervous, or sad; on the contrary, I am calm, quiet, cheerful, and withal industrious. I never before preserved so equal a demeanor, for there was never before a time when I *dared* not act as I felt, and speak what I thought. Now, if I feel indignation, contempt, terror, disgust, pity, sorrow, longing, I endure, and am silent, and I wait. I have waited six months and in all that time, I have had no word, message, or greeting from any person outside these walls, except, sir, your visit; nor have I sent any except as I send this.

L. B. DENNY.

To the Hon. SAML. E. SEWALL, Boston.

Dr. Tyler says your visit was a matter of courtesy to you.

## LETTER VI.

I am compelled to write secretly and in haste, and cannot choose my words. I make as many copies as I can, hoping some one of them may reach you. I think I need medical treatment (I hope my friends will not be too anxious), but I will never ask or receive it from any person here, not because I am insane or obstinate—for I suppose it is only natural that I should prefer to choose my own physician—that I should desire to be treated by those in whom I can feel confidence, and that I object to placing myself in the hands of those toward whom circumstances compel me to feel some degree of distrust. I say again, if I die here, it is murder, and I will never, by word or act, so much as imply consent, but, as from the first so to the last, I will protest; and I hereby take to witness the person or persons finding and reading this paper that I, Lydia B. Denny, of sound mind, declare that I am unjustly and illegally imprisoned in the McLean Asylum, Somerville; and that I appeal to the laws of my country for redress, and demand an open, legal investigation, that I may establish the truth of what I here assert. When I was forced from my home and brought to this place I had four children. My youngest, a little girl, seven years old, is, I suppose, with her aunt, in Cambridge. Almost every time I ride I go in sight of the back of the house where she lives. I have often asked to be taken past the front, thinking I might get a glimpse of my child. The request seems to be regarded as rather a pleasant joke: it is never granted. Now, such may be excellent discipline for insane people—I can't say, but to me, or any sane mother, it is simply cruelty, cruelty—equally wicked and contemptible. It is an easy thing for Dr. Tyler to say it is his opinion that I am insane; but is Dr. Tyler infallible? I heard him admit that it was possible he might be mistaken. Ought the opinion of one, or two, or twenty men, subject a woman to such an ordeal as I have endured for the last six months, without at least giving her a chance for her life, or, what is of infinitely more value, her liberty?



Dr. Tyler says he does not believe what I say of my husband is true; and if he did, he calls my desire to be restored to my friends and to obtain justice a spirit of revenge.

When I say Mr. Sewall advised me to get a divorce from my husband, and that if my condition was understood he could not keep me an hour, he does not wish to argue the question.

L. B. D.

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## LETTER VII.

TO HON. SAMUEL E. SEWALL, Boston:—I am afraid, sir, that you have failed (for the present) in your efforts to release me from this dreadful place; and I am afraid, too, that it is my own fault. I suppose I should have told my story more fully; but I was so absorbed with anxiety and the dread of returning here, that I had scarcely any other thought or feeling. I had no chance. I can have none until I am removed from this place. I think, sir, I told you how I was brought here. On a cold winter night, with snow on the ground, and my feet wet to my ankles, without bonnet or shawl, or wrapping of any kind, I was forced into a carriage and brought here. I asked to be allowed to get some covering and bid good-by to my child; I was refused. I suffered for three weeks with a severe cold then contracted; though I believe the theory here is, that "excited patients" do not take cold. If I am to remain longer here, cannot you visit me again? I wish to tell you some things which I am sure it is important you should know, and there are circumstances I am desirous my friends should know, in case I never have an opportunity of telling them myself. If proofs are now of any importance, I think I can show how they may be obtained. I believe I have never told any one what I learned on my last visit to New York, and I certainly made important discoveries. Perhaps I am unwise in advising you at this time; but this suspense, anxiety, ignorance, dread, is so hard to bear; and yet, since I have seen my friends I bear it better, and, whatever may be the result, I shall continue to.

My insanity here still consists in my thinking I am ill-used, and supposing that those who imprison me here

are not my best friends. The anxiety of my friends and your efforts in my behalf are utterly ignored.

L. B. DENNY.

(Received May 12, 1862.

S. E. S.)

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## LETTER VIII.

Dr. Tyler has represented to (told?) my friends that I was contented and willing to be here. I have never to any person, at any time, said or intimated anything which could by any possibility be so construed; but I have invariably expressed to him and others the most intense and earnest desire to be liberated and restored to my friends. I have said repeatedly to Dr. Tyler, and to my attendant, that I had rather die than to remain here as I was, even for a limited time—that life could offer me nothing to compensate for such terrible endurance—that the separation and estrangement from my children alone was too much to endure. It is but a few days since I endeavored to express to Dr. Tyler the anguish of my mind in the thought that to my younger children I was already as one dead. I have expressed these feelings, and none other, repeatedly, to Dr. Blackman, Miss Barber, and my attendant, telling them it was simply compelled endurance; I have at the same time presented a cheerful and composed exterior—employing myself constantly, and availing myself of every possible resource.

Dr. Tyler said to me that my insisting on my sanity was a proof of insanity—if I were really sane, I should begin to think myself insane. I repeated these remarks to the trustees (Mr. Davis, Mr. Lowell). Mr. Lowell laughed and said, “that is rather strong.” Dr. Tyler made some modifying explanation. One of the trustees said to me that my friends refused to receive me—Mr. Rogers.

I submit that Dr. Tyler can now have no pretext for detaining me, as he must admit that it is impossible I should ever return to my husband.

## LETTER IX.

I wish to be at the Court next Monday morning. I think the law allows me the privilege. I asked Dr. Tyler, in presence of the trustees, if he intended to take me there. He does not. He thinks it is "not good for me to keep this matter stirring; it confirms my peculiar views." I then asked him (and them) if the law did not allow me to decide for myself whether to be present or absent? The question was evaded. Then I stated plainly and fully that I desired to be present in Court next Monday morning (Nov. 25, 1861), and demanded all my rights and privileges under the law. I wish at least for the opportunity it would give me to see my friends once more.

L. B. DENNY.

The finder is requested to take or send this to the Hon. Samuel E. Sewall, Boston. Money inclosed for envelope and postage. The horrors I am compelled to witness and to hear are too dreadful for my endurance.

(Received April 14, 1862.

S. E. S.

Left at my office with three other papers, I am told, April 12, by some person unknown.

S. E. S.)

## LETTER X.

I was so closely watched, it was impossible for me to throw out the accompanying paper before the time specified, nor is the vigilance since relaxed; but I shall keep the paper by me, and if opportunity ever comes, trust to the chance that before befriended me. Of course I know nothing about law, but it would seem that there is none for me—that the insane (those to whom insanity is imputed) have no rights that the sane are bound to respect. I have not heard a word of my friends, or anything that concerns me, since I left them in the court-house, nearly two months ago. I ask no questions. I could only hear they were well or ill, alive or dead; and as I do not wish to know if they are ill or dead, I know nothing. None can realize

what such a life is, except they have experienced it; but it is not so bad, nor ever can be again, as before I saw my friends. My friends understand they can know nothing of my real condition, except as they know me, for the truth cannot be told by those who keep me here—who have kept me here already nearly nine months, when there has never been the shadow of a reason for keeping me one hour, as every person here well knows.

In the very enormity of the deed is its safety. But I am not in the least blinded or confused. I know just what has been (and is) done to me, and why; and I know also that I am helpless, and, from those who keep me here, hopeless. I complain to no one here, nor mention my affairs in any way. I never intend to again. I maintain a demeanor perfectly tranquil, equal, and cheerful. I long for my children with unutterable anguish. For my mother and my brother I am most anxious, for I know they will suffer much for me. I wish them to know that I bear it as well as any one could; but it is bitter, it is cruel. The knowledge of their dear love and sympathy is my great support, my strong consolation; and may I not say to you, dear sir, that I know and feel (if I cannot express) what I owe to you. You said you would not forsake me, and I know you will not. But, sir, if you cannot save me, do not give up my cause. Save others. Truth (if you could get at it) and justice ought to be strong enough to break down even this monstrous "refuge of lies."

Sir, this place is ruled by terror.

(Received April 14th, 1862. Left at office April 12, 1862.

S. E. S.)

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## LETTER XI.

I have now endured this imprisonment for nearly a year. At times I am weak and tired, and able to sit up but part of the day. I have no exercise, and that, I suppose, with the wearing anguish of my imprisonment and separation from all I love, wastes my strength. I suppose, too, that I need medical treatment, as Miss Z. will understand. Of my own affairs I know absolutely nothing. I ask no questions; I make no complaints; I am at all times cheerful, serene, equal; but my life is a burden. To every honorable mind, degradation is worse than death—and this life (of mine) is, besides its anguished longings, a daily

and deadly humiliation. Dr. Tyler has told me repeatedly, within the last three months, that I am "much better;" but to be "well" I am to *acknowledge* that I have labored under a delusion, and that the charges I brought against my husband (especially those in relation to his cruelty) were the result of said delusion. *I shall never make any such acknowledgment.* I feel that I take my life in my hand when I risk having it known here that I have again attempted to communicate with my friends; but, because I do not wish to live, here, I take the risk—not that I desire to die; except as a release from this fearful imprisonment, wherein I am environed with miseries and terrors that sicken the soul and curdle the blood; but I dare not say so here. Sir, no one can form an idea of the system here maintained—a very "system of terror"—and such terror as can compel its victims to appear cheerful. Can there be greater, except it produce death? And that many do die here from terror and despair, is unquestionable. It may be called the "crushing-out" system, perfected. Such things as I have heard and known, seen and felt! And my experience is the experience of all here—modified and varied, of course, by intelligence, temperament, circumstances, and, above all, the sanity or insanity of the victim. Every one who knows anything of my case knows, of course, that I am not and never have been insane; and let not my friends ever for a moment admit the deadly lie—a lie that entails not only on my innocent children, but on theirs also, its blighting curse. I have been represented as an insanely jealous woman, a liar, and a murderess (in heart). *I was* jealous of my rights, my honor, and my dignity, as a woman, a wife, and a mother (for my sons were fully cognizant of my wrongs); but that I was ever jealous of that man, I disdain to admit. I was insulted, outraged, maltreated, bruised; and, in my desperate, but perfectly legitimate, grief and anger, I told the truth; and not all the truth even then. I did also at times express in tolerably strong language the hatred and contempt I felt, always have felt, and always shall feel, for cruelty and meanness. To cloak these exposures, and to prevent my obtaining a divorce, which would give them still further publicity, I was kidnapped and brought here, with circumstances of barbarous cruelty; and here, for nearly a year, I have been imprisoned, suffering terrors and anguish that cannot be described; and here, unless

my friends can rescue me, I shall die (not, alas! the first victim), for I am in the hands of those who are as cruel as guilt, and cowardice, and power, can make men, and, withal, as relentless and secret as the grave.

Before I was brought here, I asked only such reparation as the law would give me. Since, I have asked only my liberty and a fair and open investigation. Now I know nothing about law, but I do know what is just and right; and I know that any act, any system, any institution which shuns investigation when accused or suspected, shuns it because it cannot bear it; but I do not think law keeps me here—it is money, and power, and influence.

Patients sometimes die suddenly here. Of course, I know what would be said of this remark here, but the statement is, nevertheless, true; and if I die here, I say to my friends (to you, sir), do not let this matter rest. Try to save others. Let no consideration deter you from giving publicity to my story, and so exposing, as far as you can, a system which has in its dreadful toils thousands of miserable victims, and which every year murders with torments hundreds of innocent and helpless human beings. Do not my sufferings and my treatment indorse my words? I do not speak of dying because I am alarmed or anxious about my health. I am not; but let my friends bear in mind that I know nothing at all that it concerns me to know, or that I care to know. I do not even know if they are alive or dead, and my only prospect is an indefinite hope. For my children and my friends I long with intolerable longings. My poor heart is so wrung and tortured that I sometimes feel it can endure no more, no longer. God be merciful to me, and grant me the "desire of mine eyes"—my children, my friends!

I am sometimes exhibited to gentlemen, strangers, besides the trustees, possibly that they may testify to my comfort, content, happiness.

Of these papers I make several copies, that there may be the better chance for some one package reaching its destination.

I entreat the person finding these papers to take or send them to the Hon. Samuel E. Sewall, Boston.

I inclose money for postage and envelope.

(Rec'd April 14, 1862.

Left at office April 12, 1861, I am told, with three other papers.

S. E. S.

S. E. S.)

## LETTER XII.

During my imprisonment in this place, the suite of rooms next mine has been occupied by a young lady from Boston. Last Saturday evening, March 29, this young lady was burned to death. She lingered till the next night, about midnight, when she died, *here*. Monday night her body was privately removed. Her death was recorded in the Boston papers, under the usual head, in the usual manner, as "Died in this city," &c. This accident is to be concealed, that the reputation of this institution may remain intact. I think but three of the patients know how she died. It is one of the secrets of this place.

Sir, I know it is not safe for me to be acquainted with their secrets. I do not think I am afraid to die; but this life is too fearful.

Can you do nothing for me?

The Hon. SAMUEL E. SEWALL, Boston.

(Received April 14, 1862.

Left, I am told, at my office, April 12, 1862, with three other papers.

S. E. S.

S. E. S.)

## LETTER XIII.

SIR:—Saturday evening, March 29th, a young lady from Boston, a "patient" here, was so terribly burned as to cause her death. She lingered till the next night, when she died, *here*, about midnight. Monday night her body was privately removed. Her death was recorded in the Boston papers, under the usual head, in the usual manner, as "Died in this city," &c. This accident is concealed, I suppose (I heard as much said), that the reputation of the institution may remain intact. I think (for the subject is not alluded to, and I dare not ask) that but three of the patients are acquainted with the manner of her death. It is one of the secrets of this place. Sir, I am sure it is not safe for me to be cognizant of these secrets. This is a fearful place. You can have no idea of the system here maintained—a "system of terror,"

which has in its cruel toils (here and in other places) thousands of miserable victims, and which every year murders with torments (the torments of fear, anguish, and despair) hundreds of helpless and innocent human beings. It is now more than a year since I was, with cruel violence, torn from my children and brought to this dreadful place. Since then, with the exception of which you are aware, I know absolutely nothing of them, my friends, or anything that it concerns me to know. I still cherish hope, and shall while life remains; but, knowing of this place and those who keep me here, and knowing (I may say) nothing else, I greatly fear. I long for my children and my friends with inexpressible anguish. I think sometimes I cannot bear it; but I do, and better than many others. The miseries and horrors I am compelled to witness and to know add greatly to my sufferings. But I make no complaints here. I am always cheerful and serene—taking care, however, to have it understood that I am simply enduring what is inevitable. No one supposes that I am either happy or contented; and no one has ever supposed that I was insane; but they all understand their business.

O, sir, if you (my friends) cannot rescue me, I shall never leave this place alive. From those who keep me here nothing of my real condition can be known. Facts and realities are utterly and systematically ignored. If it were not so terrible a tragedy, it would be an absurd farce; and it is, if possible, even more contemptible than wicked. No honest, honorable mind can conceive such mean wickedness; it must be known to be believed. I, alas! have had full experience.

The finder of this is entreated to send or take this to the Hon. Samuel E. Sewall, Boston.

I have no money to pay for envelope and postage, and inclose car tickets, hoping they will be deemed equivalent.

HON. SAMUEL E. SEWALL, Boston.

(Received April 11, 1862.

S. E. S.)

[Letter (C) was received April 10, 1862. It is evident that one was copied from the other—I mean (C) from (H), or (H) from (C). The variations are so few and unimportant that no copy is made of it.]