

1/1 Howardsville, P.O. Alle' Co' Va!  
December 28<sup>th</sup> 1903

Wm O'Keefe

My Dear Anna

Oh! my child! I had to tell  
you of a misfortune which has befallen that can come  
to poor human flesh; that is it has had so to become,  
I am almost blind; on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December I worked  
with a film over my eyes which is  
awful and has used left; I can barely see to write  
out of the corner of my eye and I know not the  
moment when I will be wholly blind and again  
I had since that date suffered awfully with  
headache, I don't know how to describe  
that misery; what it will do I do not know -  
"Tell Tom," I wish to see and talk with him; I love  
him just as though he was my own son; I know  
that he will sympathize with me in my dreadful affliction  
Please do not let it be (wholly) hidden and tell  
my eyes really are; I can still write and what is  
simpler I can write better than I can read. I can see the white of  
corner (the left corner of my left eye) but I cannot see the <sup>white</sup> <sup>which</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>white</sup>  
except with great dimness; the suffering of my mind is almost  
intolerable. With my right eye I can barely distinguish  
myself from day; that is I can tell with it a window from  
a door and I suppose I could walk with it from the  
house to the road, though I would not see over the yard before

me and I can barely distinguish the form of a paper at that small distance; still as small as it is, when the light is of great value. With my left eye I can read with great trouble large print of about ten numbers at a time the dreadful black film continually changing, moving and flitting before it - This is the best sign about it as it probably comes from my stomach in part. I pray strongly for God that this is true because if it is true there is a possible chance of partial recovery: my bad eye in 1900 would change; there was nothing that would help it; but maybe no longer that it is possible that the present deplorable vision comes in great part from my stomach which if in a dreadful condition I did have for ten days suffered greatly with nausea and difficulty of the liver and if I should get better in that respect my eye might get better. Oh! my child I pray my Heavenly Father through the medium of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ that none of my children shall ever suffer in this manner. Adieu I bid; because on Wednesday before 4 and will leave tomorrow: he is as kind and loving and attentive as he can be and so all Mary Ann and Ella: bless their dear health and I trust that you and Topsy will sympathize with me and all of my children I have - I expect to go to Richmond next Monday week the fourth to see Doctor Small in just four days before the Senate meets. I still can travel by myself and I have great confidence in Doctor Small in just; I will also count an eminent oculist as soon as I get to Richmond Adieu! Adieu! I have very little

hope that he can improve my wretched condition. There is a man  
 an eminent oculist Doctor Henry F. Gary whose office is  
 in New York City who cured several of my eyes by the use of  
 a similar application. If I can raise the money I wish  
 to go to New York City from Providence to consult him; he  
 uses electricity in the eyes by the medium of an electrical  
 machine and I learn that made some  
 astonishing cures but he wants of money of a great  
 deal more. I want if possible to come  
 by Lynchburg and spend Monday night with  
 your folks and the dear little men  
 and do I find that I can do it I will let you know  
 how the little men got me. Tell little Jim but in all  
 Mrs Williams is sick and fat and is waiting for  
 him. Tell Sarah I was pleased with her school report  
 I am delighted to know that he likes his books  
 of the dear little "Baby" that little man got  
 me and tell him that grand Ma has not forgotten him. Ma & her  
 but she only came this morning and will be at home this evening; her husband  
 keeps her closely confined at home - he has not yet but she  
 have been well at during Xmas although he knew  
 Mr. White was here - It has been to me the  
 most dreary and horrible Xmas I have  
 ever had and for years past it has  
 always been a dreadful time. Now that I am old  
 and poor and partly blind I know I cannot expect  
 my children to come to Providence at Christmas

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of when anything was better: & I am natural  
and I do not blame them: I shall try not to be a burden  
to them - I do not know why but I feel sometimes nearer  
to you and Tobe than any of my children and perhaps  
some of these days if I go blind I will live with  
you and get the little men to lead me about - I received  
a letter from my nephew Dr. H. D. Donald, Scott  
stating that he desired to reside with  
me in Richmond: you know he is a member of the  
Virginia State Delegation from Amherst; he is a kind  
and good man and a good physician and I wrote  
him that I would be delighted to board with  
him at the same house and to reside with  
him if we could not get adjoining rooms  
which I think would be best - Tobe knows him very well  
I am sorry that your Aunt Kate did not visit  
you while she was recently in Lynchburg: I regret it  
very much; she and all of her family I hear  
are very well. Doctor Lawrence has a new  
store where John Rappard had formerly a store  
I have lived 27 years in Richmond to live with me for  
another year: he is a good old man and does the  
best in his power. I shall curtail my farming  
operations: I long for the time when you and Tobe and your dear  
little family will come to Sunny Side for the  
summer. I will write this for your encouragement;

My eyes are no worse than they were yesterday and the day before: they are no worse and no better and my agony is suffering is slightly less; I really feel better yesterday and especially the day before that I would wake up to find myself blind: you can well imagine; I cannot adequately describe the feeling: please do not let the world know how really bad is my condition. Tell Tophel I want him to let me know of there is any probability in Richmond which he wants; if of my earnest desire to get him some good place which will pay him well - I want

"Little Jim" to be an Ecclesiastical Engineer: that is the proper profession for him: it has in it both pay, money and reputation. Tell Sybil I think that I will make a physician of him at a large: I have not yet decided but medicine is the hood of the English profession: Mr. Woodhouse has engaged with kindly after you, Tophel and the children. You must write to him for he certainly does not write: he got back so quietly on account of his business. I think that he is perhaps doing middling well. He sends Tophel his love. Please do not trouble yourself to answer this long letter: I am proud to know that I am able to see enough to write it, it is the longest letter I have written since my partial blindness and I am glad to be able to state that I am in a little better spirits than I have been in the past two days time. Tell little Jim that Tophel has greatly improved in his health and sits paddling his boat and is a fine boatman. My dear Comm: health & letters: we had Dyer and Lady but it all looked so faint to me and I had a bill for a week or more. I must in do kindly love  
 Your affectionate Father  
 Comm: father & Co.