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SELECTIONS FROM ACHSA W.
SPRAGUE'S DIARY AND
JOURNAL

Edited

By LEONARD TWYNHAM

Achsa W. Sprague is one of the forgotten but significant Vermonters whom we intend in the future to rescue from the past. A charming woman of wide influence, an author, a lecturer, a militant and intelligent reformer opposed to slavery, an early advocate of women's rights, one of the first to plead for better prisons and penal systems—she deserves more general recognition than limited paragraphs in a few reference works. She was born in Plymouth Notch, probably in 1828, began to teach in a country school when twelve years old, and taught eight years until she was crippled by a scrofulous disease of the joints. In 1854, she was cured, as she believed, by supernatural powers. After recovery, she became a medium, and lectured widely on spiritualism, later winning serious attention and some fame as an able advocate of mental healing. As an author she wrote voluminously. Few of her works have been published; and her unpublished writings include poetry, essays, journals, a play, and a long autobiographical poem which was composed in six days. In 1861, she was again afflicted with her earlier disease and died July 6, 1862. Mr. Twynham, who has made the following selections from the diary and journal in his possession, is the author of a

sketch of Miss Sprague in the Dictionary of American Biography; and he is contemplating the publication of a volume which will include her prose and verse and a long biographical sketch. Editor.

[THESE SELECTIONS ARE TAKEN FROM THE DIARY OF JUNE
1849, JULY 1850, AND FEBRUARY 1853. THE
ORIGINAL SPELLING HAS BEEN
RETAINED.]

JUNE 1st, 1849—Once more I am unable to walk or do anything else; have not been a step without crutches since Sunday and see no prospect of being any better; see nothing before me but a life of miserable helplessness. Ephraim has come home from Boston very slim; am afraid he will be worse than he has been.

2d—Ollia goes to her school today. I almost envy her the privilege while I am obliged to do nothing. I am trying to be reconciled but find it impossible. It is vain to hope longer, it is folly.

3d—A miserable day to me at least. E. unable to go to meeting. Nathan about as usual and as for myself, miserable both in mind and body. Wrote "Despair."

4th—Reading *Jane Eyre*, find it a very interesting work and just fascinating enough to suit me at this time.

5th—Sally came home today to stay awhile and I am glad for Mother's sake, for she has so many invalids to wait upon she would soon be sick herself. E. is getting worse instead of better and we are seriously alarmed about him.

6th—E. called in Dr. Spencer of Clarendon to see him today. He thinks he can make him more comfortable. He has also examined my case, and thinks he can cure me. I shall take his medicine but scarce expect to receive any benefit. I have hoped until there is no chance for hope.

8th—Reading Willis's *Sacred Poems* like them very much. E. is not well, begins to cough considerably.

11th—Wrote "Spells of Music" and have been trying to amuse myself in some way, but still can only think of what I had hoped and planned for the future.

13th—The Dr. came today. E. not as well as when he came before. The Dr. thinks he has the Consumption and cannot live through the summer. Wrote "Bury me there."

24th—Mrs. Billings died today after a very severe illness. Dr.

here; E. about the same. I do not begin to improve any yet and fear I shan't, am not able to sew or write but very little my only amusement being reading and riding horseback. I am thankful I can even have those, and doubly thankful for the ability to enjoy myself in the world of books when the works of action seem shut from me. 25th—Celia went back to her school. E. rather more comfortable than he was a week ago. 30th—Wrote "Goodbye to Anne."

July 1st—Rode horseback two or three times this week and have also today. My horse is rather contrary, though perfectly gentle every other way. Don't begin to improve any yet. The Dr. tells me I must have faith; that he thinks my health is better and that I shall soon begin to walk. Oh! that it might be so.

10th—Riding horseback yet, enjoy it better than anything else. I can enjoy nothing as I am now. I cannot look back upon the past, for the present seems more gloomy by contrast, neither can I look forward to the future for 'tis shrouded still darker than the present, and I can but shut my eyes to everything in life and try to forget. In vain. Thought after thought of all I wish to be and to do, come back again and again, until I forget everything save that which I try to forget—my own misery.

22d—At last I am here at Dr. Spencer's; came yesterday with William, who has gone to Weston and find I am alive yet. I like it better than I expected. There is a small family consisting of the Dr., his wife and two sons; everything is quiet about, and I like it better. Feel very tired today, fear I have exercised too much.

24th—Not as well, have over exercised, have much more of the bad feeling in the joint. Feel bad enough today, as though I would gladly shut my eyes to everything, and pass away. Wrote "The Last Hope."

25th—Begin to feel a little better, but am afraid it will be a long time before I shall feel as well as I did before. The Dr. has gone over to see E. today. I feel impatient to have him return and yet I dread to hear.

31st—The Dr. has been to see E. who is not as well. I am almost sorry I left home, but the Dr. says he may be better the next time I hear.

Aug. 1st—Rode out today, keep about so. The Dr. says I am better. I shall believe it when I begin to walk. Wish I knew how E. was today.

2d—Try to amuse myself by reading Pinnock Goldsmith Gruen's

Milton, etc., etc., but find my mind wandering from my book very often.

3d—Rode again today, begin to feel a little more at home. If I could only be getting well I could be contented almost anywhere.

19th—Wrote "Floral Fables No. 1."

21st—Yesterday and today wrote "No. 2 and 3."

24th—Writing "The Fairies Visit."

Sept. 6th—E. still more comfortable. I am reading, *Lalla Rookh* it has beguiled many an otherwise tedious hour. I have read it before but with me it bears reading many times, particularly "The Fire Worshipers." Capt. Pollard very sick, not expected to live.

7th—William came home from Weston and brought Minerva to stay a fortnight. Wrote "The Lovers Soliloquy" suggested by circumstances.

11th—William went to carry Minerva to Pomfret today and I, I hardly know what I have been doing. I am tired to death of taking medicine and never having it do any good and think sometimes I will never try to do anything for myself again. I sometimes wish I was far away from everybody and everything. I am afraid I am getting to be a misanthrope in feeling.

13th—Hear that Mary Johnson is very low with the consumption. If I was only well I should go and see her, as it is I can scarcely endure the thought of never seeing her again. Wrote "Lines to M.S.J."

14th—I have been thinking of a plan this week. Shall I ever carry it out? E. continues better, has a good appetite and enjoys company.

15th—Mr. Adams buried a little child today with the dysentery.

23d—Went home from Uncle T's to see Mr. J. and Orvilla. Had the toothache so I could enjoy nothing.

25th—Rode horseback a short distance. E. taken vomiting we fear he will be much worse.

26th—E. feels better. Nathan and William return from Weston. Nathan is improving. Wrote, "Lines on the Death of Effie May."

Oct. 2d—. . . staid with Mary a short time, found her much better than we expected, though looking very slim and miserable. No one that sees her can think but that her days are numbered and as I looked at her pale face the past came back vividly to my mind. I thought in the bitterness of my heart, how all I have prized is fast fading before my path and the world would soon have nothing left to love. Her fate and E's are too much alike.

7th—. . . This morning it snowed finally. I have just had my tooth extracted that I have had so much trouble with, but not without making so much ado that I feel ashamed every time I think of it: think I shall not be so foolish again, but I believe we are always boldest when there is no occasion to fight.

8th—Rode with William and Clara found it rather cool but the snow had nearly all disappeared. Composed "Estranged from Thee" at the former request of a friend but have not been able to copy it.

18th—Reading *Windsor Castle*, quite interesting, though not wholly so. Talk some of going to Keene to see Dr. Gwitchell but do not know as I shall succeed.

19th—Have been riding horseback this morning. The air was pure and delightful and as I rode along and inhaled its freshness, I seemed to feel new life springing up within me. The many colored leaves whirled past in the breeze telling a tale of decay and death, but it seemed not so to me today, for I felt in an uncommon mood to see beauty in all things. But as fate would have it (which by the way is always playing us pranks) while enjoying all this beauty and paying more attention to it than to my horse, he suddenly whirled the rein slipped and before I could recover myself, I was thrown to the ground. Luckily, however, I was unhurt and being unable to walk I had nothing to do but to wait until assistance offered itself. My horse as if half ashamed of serving me so rude a caper, and willing to do all in his power to repair the mischief stood patiently and humbly beside me now and then tossing his head as if he hardly knew what to make of it. Looking around I espied a man at work in a field at some distance and contrived to make myself heard by him, upon which he speedily came to my relief. I was soon safely on my horse's back again where I took care to remain until I was at home once more. Clara and I had a hearty laugh after my return, but feeling a little ashamed of my awkwardness and fearing I should not be trusted hereafter if it became known, I don't think I shall enlighten anyone else on the subject at present and heartily hope the man who helped me will keep his own counsel also.

24th—Yesterday went to Keene, saw Dr. Gwitchell who said he could see nothing to prevent me from getting as well as ever, prescribed for me and said he thought I should be well in the course of a year. Just as every other Dr. has said to me and I have about

the same faith. I cannot hope if I would, I have been disappointed to many times. For the first time I rode in the cars, found it much as I expected and liked it well, but was obliged to walk so much that I am very tired today. It will take me a long time to get rested I am afraid. This morning just began to take my medicine, which the Dr. said he thought I should perceive helped me some in two or three weeks. I am more afraid it will be two or three years.

27th—E. about the same. Dr. Spencer here for the last time to see me; paid him fifteen dollars and now I have really begun with a new Dr. and a new medicine but I fear I shall meet with the same success that I have with the other.

29th—A dull, cloudy day; fit type of my own feelings only not half as dark, not half as dreary and desolate. Am I wrong, am I unreasonable that I cannot be happy? Is it the result of a complaining spirit that can never be satisfied? Are not poverty and sickness and the almost daily expectancy of death in our circle, enough to crush the hearts first freshness of hope and life, and have I not enough of all this to dwell upon and my own sad fate besides to drive me to despair? Is not this feeling of helplessness, this consciousness of being a burden to everyone, enough to crush the proudest spirit and can mine be proof against it?

30th—E. at times seems better and then worse, we hardly know what to think of him. Wrote "The Invalid's Dream."

Nov. 1st—Snow considerably and looks winter like enough. E. about the same. Wrote "Thou art far away."

3d—E. a little more comfortable. Wrote "Tis a hard life to live."

4th—Four weeks ago today the snow fell very fast and covered the ground, giving a winterlike appearance to everything, but today is as beautiful and springlike as the month of November often affords. Tis the beginning of the Indian Summer, that most beautiful portion of all the year. Four weeks ago today the chill of Adversity was upon my spirit and yet there has come no Indian Summer to my heart. Will it ever come?

6th—William came today E. about the same, rather better, perhaps.

7th—Wrote "The Old Pauper."

10th—Yesterday and today the rain poured down as though the windows of Heaven were open and we were destined to have a second flood, but for my part I liked it far better than the beautiful days of sunshine that seem to call us forth to revel in its brightness; for then I feel like a caged bird that pines once more for its wildwood home

and can only cover my face from the joyous light and wish in bitterness to shut it out forever. Wrote "The Patriot's Death Scene." 13th—. . . Evening. Have just received a letter breathing the spirit of true friendship, a friendship that is true in Adversity and I am grateful, truly grateful for the favor it contained, but it has cost me many a bitter tear. Why is not my heart dead to the bitterness of my lot? Why *must I feel* when the hand of charity is stretched forth to my assistance? What right *have the poor* to feel? Oh that I could crush out every trace of pride in my heart; every germ of feeling and pass along unmindful of all.

14th—Today has passed like all others to me, in an outward show of composure, sometimes of cheerfulness, but thought has been busy, *busy* with the past. With the past, did I say? With the present, with the future also. It seems as though every hour of my past life has come up in review before me, with its few lights and its many shadows, and again and again I have looked with gloomy eyes into the dark mysterious future as though I *could* search out its mysteries and learn my own destiny. Oh! that I could know my own future, no matter how dark, no matter how dreary it stood before me, were better, far better, than this maddning suspense that haunts me continually; at times almost driving me wild with its vague shadows and mocking fancies. And yet they blame me those who know how acutely I feel the bitterness of my lot; *they blame* me that I cannot bear it without a murmur, without a repining word. Perhaps I ought, but is it in poor human nature to do it? Have I not hoped for *years* without giving way to despair and has it not been worse than vain? Who knows the weary days and nights, the lonely hours, the burning thoughts, the maddning visions that came again and again to me in my waking and sleeping hours till my stern self control has given way and I have yielded to despair. If they could but know all I have suffered, they would not, *could* not blame me for I had planned, had hoped so much for the future, and now it is all passed and I am doomed forever to a life of inaction.

16th—William came from Boston. Wrote, "My Beautiful, my Own."

17th—Twenty-two years ago today, a new life sprung into existence; the earth received a new inhabitant; a spirit clothed in the garments of mortality. There was nothing bright or beautiful that met its gaze as it looked for the first time from its clay prison house upon its earthly home, there were no luxuries of wealth scattered

around it, no tones of mirth or music met its ear, but its inheritance was poverty instead and the wild November winds sang its first sad lullaby. Its lot was dreary, very dreary, for it was cradled among the storms of Adversity and nurtured amid a mother's fear and midnight vigils. Years passed on and it began to thirst to drink of the waters of knowledge, but the fountain was far away, so far that the child of poverty may scarcely reach it, unless possessed of a stern spirit that no difficulty can overcome, and no hardship subdue. As it pressed on, the children of wealth passed gaily by, in their golden paths and were soon far away in the distance, and when it saw those who had already reached their destination drinking large draughts from the inexhaustible spring; while it was fain to content itself with a moistening its lips with the spray that fell far off from the dashing waters which was no more to its thirsty soul than a drop of water to the parched earth, it felt lonely and dispirited, but yet it pressed on. And then came disease and laid its hand upon its earthly frame, which grew palsied beneath its touch and it was forced to sit down by the wayside in bitterness and sorrow. Week after week, month after month, nay, year after year passed on and yet it hoped, faintly tis true, but yet twas hope; till the hand was lain still more heavily upon its form, and then it laid it full in the dust and gave way to despair. Twas passed, all passed, every dream of youth; and it mourned in such bitterness of spirit as none may know save those who have watched the last light of hope go out, and feel that tis forever. And this is *my* destiny, *mine*. My own sad history.

18th—. . . Mr. Woods people want me to teach school there this winter, but don't think I shall.

19th—Had eight new scholars this morning, which makes my number eleven, don't know how long they will come, perhaps until there is a prospect of school this winter.

20th—Just scholars enough to keep myself employed all the time. I like it better, for there are six hours in a day now that I can have but little time to think of myself. Celia has taken the school at the Furnace and commences the first of December.

24th Saturday night. Have been busy, very busy this week with my small school of twelve scholars and with planning and arranging for them. I have hardly had time to devote to thoughts of myself, but now that the task is over for this week, my feelings fall back into their former train of despondency. I am like one wandering in a wilderness and finding no rest.

25th—Have been reading Mrs. Heman's *Poems* of which I am extremely fond. There's a sadness breathing through them, that suits well with my own feelings.

29th Thanksgiving Day. A joyful sound to some no doubt, but not to me, it only makes me feel more desolate. At home, found E. much better than I expected. If Thanksgiving consists (as I have heard some people talk as though they thought it did) in rich food, then I truly had little reason for feeling thankful, for my food for the last five weeks has been only such as contained no butter, grease or sugar, which usually form so large a part in a Thanksgiving Supper or therefore my share was small.

Dec. 2d—My thumb is worse and I am able to use it but little.

Dec. 4th—My thumb continues worse and I shall be obliged to give up writing for the present.

April 1st (Note the jump)—Months have gone since I wrote the last line here, months that have passed like the shadows of storm clouds over some desolate spot, that seemingly leave as many behind that frown yet as darkly. They have passed and death has been within our circle and taken one we have long known we must yield him—one of our number we have laid in the cold dark grave, yet can it be colder than the world he has left, for has not the spirit passed to a brighter world. We believe, we trust as did he that he has gone to a happier home.

April 3rd—I closed my school last Saturday which is five months since I commenced. Have had 28 different scholars though never over twenty-three at a time. A long hard winter's work for me but from its very wearisomeness it has served to occupy my thoughts in a measure. But spring finds me the same helpless repining creature, physically no better, mentally no more reconciled to my lot. I have again had recourse to a new medicine and I fear with the same effect. I have been wearing Galvanic Bands for the last six weeks and have yet received no benefit—begin to think I shan't. I am studying Phonography now since my school closed which serves to help pass away my time. Mr. Josselyn's folks are going to Troy to live and Celia is going with them.

7th—Wrote a letter today, but my thumb will not permit to write much although better than in the first of winter.

14th—. . . I am almost persuaded to think, the "Sun has gone back on the dial of [?]" and we are to have a second winter.

17th—Rather pleasanter today for the wind having exhausted itself

has gone to rest in its mountain caves, while the sun having full sway again comes out and casts its beams upon the snow as if determined to melt it away, but as if to much effort, the frost-spirit is out and the snow but reflects its beams in dazzling brightness as cold as immovable as ever. I hardly know what to do with myself for I have injured my eyes, so soon, studying for they never bear much, I can see but very little and my thumb will not let me write much and that by holding my pen loosely and letting it almost guide itself. I can do nothing but *think*, THINK.

24th— . . . What a strange thing is life! to one it lifts the cup of happiness filled to the brim, which they may drink and know no sorrow, to another it is ushered in amid storm clouds; and gives but bitterness and anguish to the desolate hearts as if it mocked their yearnings for happiness.

26th—Came down to Mrs. Willards to see Dr. Gordon a Psychologist who I hear has been doing great wonders in this section among the sick. He has been trying to magnetise me but has had no effect and I have concluded to stay a few days, as long as he remains here and see if there can be anything done for me, but I am afraid it will be all of no use.

27th—Again he has been as unsuccessful as before and I am almost ready to give it up and go home for there have been several here that he has influenced without any trouble but he says he shall help me yet.

28th—At last he has succeeded in magnetizing me although in a slight degree and I think I feel a *little stronger* but still do not feel exactly satisfied about it. We shall see.

30th—I have been magnetised again today and *I am sure now that I am better* not much, but still sufficient to convince me that I am *better*. I have stepped four steps with a very little help and have now got home again as the Dr. is going back to Windsor where he belongs. I can scarcely analyze my feelings, they are a strange mixture of hope and fear and I think it would puzzle me to tell which predominates. I may be as bad as ever in a day or two, I dare not look forward to think what may be, yet I will hope for the best. I had but a slight expectation of getting help when I applied to him but he tells me he is confident he can cure me. So they all tell me. I dare not think it possible that I *can* get well. Let me think of the number of times that I have been disappointed and beware of being too presumptuous.

May 1st—Feel as well today as I did yesterday, can walk rather more with my crutches than usual and have taken two or three steps alone. How much shall I be disappointed if I do not get better? I dare not *think* how much. In about a fortnight I shall see Dr. Gordon and if I should continue to get better till after that time,—but let me not think of it. There is something strange and mysterious about psychology to me. I should like to understand more about it. There are but few flowers to be gathered on this May day and I am certain of one thing that I have not been into the woods to gather many. Oh! that I could tell how I might be by the first day of June.

Sunday 12th—. . . Why, when I can speak calmly, *why can I not* control and subdue my thought to the same quiet indifference? Why can I not learn the lesson that one might think these long years of suffering and bitterness had taught me, *to wait, to bear*, to “suffer and be strong.” I often meet with others equally afflicted with myself and some even worse, who have been year after year crushed down by disease, who yet have gathered in those long hours of suffering a strength, a power to bear that raises them superior to their fate and nerves them to meet it with calmness. Why is it not possible for me to crush out this repining spirit, this yearning for something higher, better, this insatiate craving for a life of action, this thirsting to drink deep at the fount of Knowledge, all which are denied me; and find a new strength springing from my weakness, even the strength of spirit, which “suffers and is strong.”

Friday 17th—The Dr. gone all day yesterday but was magnetised last night and again this morning without effect. Strange when I was better before that it does me no good this time. I am getting about discouraged. Must I be disappointed in this as in everything else?

Saturday 18th—Magnetised again, but no better, *no better* and I am trying with my whole strength of mind to bear it without repining.

Sunday 19th—Magnetised this morning and again tonight. Tonight for the first time I feel rather stronger but am afraid it will fade away like enchantment before morning.

Tuesday 21st—. . . The Dr. went away this morning and is coming back about the middle of next week and I have concluded to stay until he comes again, to make one more trial, if that proves unsuccessful then farewell to hope and all thought of health forever.

Wednesday 22nd—I almost imagine my hands feel stronger than they have done and yet they will not bear much, I can hardly decide. I can walk no better and am afraid I shall not *begin* to do the stunt the Dr. gave me, which was to walk half across the room without any help before he came back. Mary continues better.

Sunday 26th—Rained every day since Wednesday and rains today. Feel about as gloomy as the weather, but dare not express my feelings for I have promised to think I am better let what would come and can keep my promise much easier in word than thought. I don't feel any stronger than when the Dr. went away and it seems to me that the prospect looks very discouraging in the future. I have been trying to "hope against hope" for the week past and what has it availed me? What avails it ever, to build castles in air, which the first breath of reason scatters to the four winds of heaven? I shall see the Dr. once more and then—the future will tell. I *know* he helps others, I have *seen* him help them; I have seen those he *has helped*, who were apparently worse off than I am, and are now tough and well; and why cannot he help me? He says yet, he can and has not every other Physician said the same? I was better at first and why if he helped me once can he not do it again? I am almost tempted to believe there is a fate that controls my destiny which nothing can change.

Wednesday 29th—Another day of rain and storm clouds as if in revenge for yesterday's pleasantness. Feel rather tired after my ride but hope I shall be as well by tomorrow. . . . Expect the Dr. here now every day until he comes. I wish it were well over that I might know my fate, for this is my *last* trial, yet why should I expect aught but the same disappointment? Why have I been foolish enough to allow one particle of hope to rise in my mind when I do truly know by the past, 'tis but to set in darkness? Why but because I am but human and have not yet crushed out every feeling common to humanity. Oh! that I could look into this dark mysterious future and from its [?] depths bring forth the web of my own destiny even though it were stained with tears of blood and stamped with the dark signet of despair. This torturing suspense it gives me no peace, *none*.

Friday 31st—. . . . I am slowly but *surely* giving up *all* hope of being much better this time. If I get a little better I am sure to be worse after it. Mary has not been as well as usual for a few days

past. The Dr. went away tonight and is coming back Sunday. Sally went home today and I almost wish I had gone with her for it is of no use to stay longer as I can see.

Saturday, June 1st—One year ago today I commenced penning a few scattered thoughts here, because it served to pass away time and give vent to some feelings which would otherwise have corroded the place where they were crushed back to keep them from the eyes of the cold and careless whose pity would be but a mockery; one year ago and how has it passed. These pages are but a faint shadowing of the loneliness the dark feelings of despair that has shrouded my spirit, lit up only now and then by some faint gleam of hope, only to fade out leaving the mind more dark more cheerless than ever. My own dark fate has been enough to chill the freshness of youth, but beside there has been sickness, sorrow, death in our home the past year, some are gone far away to seek wealth that it may bring happiness and one sleeps where we laid him with a snow shroud covering his last resting place and the wind wailing his last dirge. The grass grows green now on the sod that covers his bosom but he wakes not when all nature is bursting into life, he comes not forth from his last resting place, he sleeps there yet. Did I say he sleeps there yet? 'Twas but the impulse of the moment, for did I not feel when I gazed upon his face, so calm so holy in death did I not *feel* that the spirit had but thrown off its earthly covering and passed to a more congenial clime where no pain or sorrow comes, it pressed onward, onward in its course, becoming more and more godlike through all eternity. Oh! that that spirits mission might be to us, to *me* learning me to bear all the ills that life can bring looking onward and upward to a higher nobler sphere.

Sunday 2nd—. . . . If there is a class of beings on this earth whom I reverence more than all others, whom my mind bows down to worship as a superior order 'tis those who struggle on through pain and want, through sickness and sorrow, unmindful though the world may gaze coldly upon them, though the friends of happier hour may turn away in the bitter hour of grief, though no eye pities, no heart gives back the answering tone of sympathy, yet bear it all without a murmur nerving themselves up with a sublime faith that all is right, and though the dearest hopes in this life have faded away forever and their bright dreams of the future perished, yet live, with the soul as if raised half way as a connecting link between earth and heaven, gazing upward with an eye of faith while bound down by the feeble

clay. Oh! I could worship in my inmost soul a being like this, who as the poet beautifully expresses it, "Knows how sublime a thing it is, to suffer and be strong." If I could but bring my mind to a state like this, but I have tried and tried in vain. There must be much selfish feeling rooted out, before I can ever hope even to *approach* this standard of excellence.

Thursday 6th—It is past, and death has been with us. After suffering the greatest distress for an hour or two before her death, Mary died a little before five this afternoon. . . . Oh! such pain, such agony as she was in a short time before her death, I, who had never seen the death of any one, thought "What an awful thing to die." But in her last moments when the breath went slowly but surely out and I saw the look of rest and peace that settled on her features, I thought in my heart, it is well with the dead.

Friday 7th—Came home today found a letter from Orvilla who is homesick yet, but is as well as usual. Celia, she writes, seems to be rather better. I hope it may prove so, but feel very doubtful. Before coming home I went in to take a last look of all that remains of Mary. How is it that the features wear so much expression if the spirit has left the body? I have read some author who advocates the idea that the spirit remains in the body until decomposition commences and I was almost tempted to believe it, as I gazed upon her countenance. It seemed as if from every lineament of her face shone forth a spiritual beauty, I might say a glimpse of the soul, so beautiful she looked in her still repose. Even a smile rested about her lips, closed in everlasting silence and did it not tell more truly than words could have done that there was happiness. If the spirit lingers not till its frail tenement of dust returns to dust, then must it have been a seal left upon the features by the departing spirit that we might know it could not die, as the setting sun though hid by the mountain still casts its light upon the eastern light as if unwilling to leave it in darkness.

Sunday 8—Company all day yesterday. Have written today, "Lines on the death of Mary S. Willard." I have written no poetry before, since before my school commenced last fall, why I can scarcely tell. My thumb all last winter was so bad that I did not allow myself to write any, hardly being able to do all I was obliged to in school-time, and this spring the spirit of Poesy has passed me by, or but given me a moments call and then flitted away before I could avail myself of her presence.

Monday 16th—Dr. Gordon came here yesterday and I was magnetized last night and again this morning, feel rather better but cant feel much encouraged though he still says he can't give up but he can cure me.

Tuesday 17th—Magnetised again today and feel considerably better. The Dr. has gone home this morning and I have concluded to see him again the next time he comes, though I don't expect to derive any permanent benefit.

Monday 30th—Magnetised again and feel still stronger but yet I do not even hope it can last as everything seem to conspire against me. If I could see the Dr. every day for a few weeks it might possibly be of some use to me but now I go back about as fast as I gain. I have tried this morning to make him say he will give up my case as hopeless but he still says he cant think but he can help me. He is going home today and I came home this afternoon with but little idea of seeing him again.

Thursday July 4th—Independence day, so they term it. It may be so to some but it certainly is not to me. I only feel more deeply my own dependence my own misery. What a strange creature is man! How many among those who celebrate this day with feasting and with the firing of cannon and martial music and give themselves wholly up to mirth and rejoicing, how many think or realize their entire dependence upon each other and upon their Creator? Why then dedicate a day to Independence when there is no such thing on earth? But they will say, 'tis in honor of our fathers glorious deeds, for the victory they gained over their foes which made us an Independent Nation, and should their memory be forgotten? No, it should *never* be forgotten but let each as he devoted this day to a remembrance of their struggles, their trials and their victory, think well of the duty he owes his country, his fellow men and his God, and in the solemnity of the thought he will feel his own dependence and grow wiser and better.

Sunday, 7th—. . . . But the "Little folks in green" have all gone from here long ago, or else they think me not worthy of their care, for I never even get a glimpse of them in their moonlight revels, or catch one tone of the song they are said to sing in the midnight hour, and so I must fain content myself as I am. Content myself? As well may the prisoner bound in his cold dark dungeon, feel content when he hears the glad songs of the birds echoing in melody through

the air he longs once more to breathe, and feels that the bright sunshine is resting on the damp, dark walls that close him in forever. Am I not a prisoner in every sense of the word? Is not my mind cramped up in its clay prison house, bound with the strong fetters of disease, which keeps it chained down, when it longs to go forth once more into the world of action, for without action of what worth is life?

Monday, 8th—. . . . What hope is there for me but in Death. And what will Death bring? We may not know, yet to me it brings my only thoughts of rest or peace. Could I but *know* the future was, as has been represented, a Higher Sphere, and yet Higher Sphere wherein, leaving all pain and sorrow with our frail earthly bodies here, we should grow wiser, happier, better through all Eternity, when the soul freed from its earthly felt like an uncaged bird, should stretch forth its Heaven-born pinions through all Immensity, behold the glorious mystery of Creation unfolded to its gaze, know and understand the beautiful Harmony that pervades the whole Universe of Nature and feel the wisdom, goodness and majesty of the Creator, could I but *know this*, how earnestly would I long for the hour when this "mortal should put on Immortality."

Tuesday 9th—Nothing particular to mark today as being any different from any other. If I reckoned my life as a certain wise man, who on recollecting he had done no one a service, exclaimed "Alas my friend I've lost a day" I fear I should never grow older. And what is life? Is it nothing more than to pass day after day in dressing, eating, drinking and breathing? Is life made for no higher purpose than just to crawl through a few short years and go down to the grave no wiser than when first beginning with life, making no one happier or better? Does the mind ask nothing more? Ask the pale student at the midnight hour, why he pores thus eagerly over the pages of ancient, mystic lore until he half lives in a world of the past and of his own creation, when he knows it is eating out his life. Ask the philosopher why he descends into the treasure house of Nature, unlocking its almost forbidden mysteries and displaying them to the eyes of his fellow man. Will they not tell you it is because the mind *will not* rest in inaction, but must fasten itself upon something from which it may obtain food, upon which to spend its energies? Life is not *life* without action of body and action of mind. How small a share is mine then.

Friday 19th—Am still at Mr. Pollard's. Today wrote for Abby

"To my Mother's Spirit," suggested by a discussion among us, as to whether spirits could communicate with mortals. 'Tis a beautiful idea, that our departed friends are around us and with us, that they can come back to guard us from temptation, to soothe us in affliction and win us from sin. 'Tis a beautiful idea, but if true, *could* the world be so sunk in wickedness? Yet if not true it might be still working and I am inclined to think it may be so. Is it not their influence when better thoughts to the heart come back which had almost yielded to sin?

Wednesday 24th—Let me remember that, to help me cultivate a grateful disposition. Have written today "Life is an Echo" and every word I write instead of thinking of my helplessness, let me be thankful that I can use my thumb even in so slight a degree and be happy in the thought.

Friday 26th—Have sewed a very little every day since I came home and have written considerably today. How long will my thumb last?

February 9th, 1853. After a long, almost a three years silence again I unfold these pages, once more to trace upon their surface the thoughts of a long-tried heart. Oh! how deeply have I drank of the cup of affliction since these last lines were traced. How lonely, how dark and how desolate, have passed these weary years, years of confinement and pain and deepest suffering. Oh! how long I have lain bowed down by disease, shut up from the world in darkness and solitude like a prisoner chained down in his dungeon. But all this is now passing away. The chains of disease are falling off my limbs are once more resuming, or —

[THESE ARE ENTRIES MADE IN THE JOURNAL FROM
NOVEMBER 17, 1855, TO JUNE 22, 1856.]

1855

Hartford, Ct.

Nov. 17th.

The pages, both bright & dark, of my former life are left unwritten, save in the great Life Book of Eternity. I came to Hartford one week ago to day to speak under Spirit Influence as I have been doing Publicly for the last year & a half. Having been raised from a bed of sickness, where I suffered the most extreme pain by Spirit Agency, I have felt it my duty to do that which has been pointed

out to me by my Spirit Guides, & the result is, that I have felt constrained to take the position which I now occupy, that of a Public Speaking Medium. And in the course of events I am now at Hartford, a place which I have once before visited in the same capacity. I spoke here last Sabbath, at "Union Hall," afternoon & evening. Had a very good attendance, especially in the evening. Also spoke at Manchester some eight miles distant last Tuesday Evening. There are very few believers in Spiritualism at that place, but had a very good audience. I enjoyed it well. Tomorrow, (Sabbath) I speak here again at "Union Hall." I do not know whether I shall return home to Plymouth, Vermont, then, my arrangements are not made.

I have spent a part of two days walking in the Cemeteries here. I have enjoyed it much. Yesterday, in company with a friend, I paid a visit to "The Asylum for educating the Deaf & Dumb." We found a great many children there, from five or six years of age to eighteen or twenty who could neither speak or hear, under process of training by *signs* to *speak* the English Language. I should liked to have seen Julia Bruce of whom I used to read when a child in "Parley's Magasin" and in her books for children, but she was not well, therefore we could not see her.

I have been stopping while in Hartford with Mrs. Mettler and family. Mrs. M. is well known to that part of the world who are interested in Magnetism, Psychology, Spiritualism & other kindred sciences, as a Clairvoyant & Healing Medium. Her wonderful powers as such have in the last five years, won her a wide reputation & many friends. She at present resides on Winthrop St. & sits five hours a day for examination of patients. I was intending to have walked down this afternoon & gather some leaves from "The Charter Oak" to preserve, but it has just commenced raining & fear I shall not be able to go. I walk all possible for my health. When I visited this Oak in the summer, so remarkable for the interesting incident in our nations history connected with it; I found it as nearly like the pictures of it which I have been accustomed to look upon since childhood as any thing could possibly be. There it stands a monument of grandeur even in decay. As though it fain would linger amid the scenes of its growth. Associations of the past are a sacred spell, linking that old decaying tree with the days of the "Revolution" even farther back than that, & with the deeds of our father's fathers long past away, which this, one of their monuments,