

Sunday 26 Oct. 1895.

My dear Mamma,

I write to let you know of a most fearful calamity which has befallen the dear old University. This morning I heard cries of fire and found that the Annex was in flames. Everyone was running to the Rotunda and soon a large crowd was assembled. No water could be gotten as high as the flames, only a miserable little stream of water about six feet in length came from the hose when at the level of the ground. In response to telegrams, Lynchburg and Richmond sent their engines by special trains, but the Lynchburg engine was delayed on the road and did not arrive within an hour of the expected time. I received a telegram from Richmond when the fire had been almost put out & wired back not to send the engine. There was nothing to do but to try to keep the fire from Buckmaster's and Turtie's houses and to save all that was within the Rotunda and annex. They tried to blow up the portico between the annex and the rotunda in the hope that, if the engine should arrive in time, the ~~the~~ Rotunda might be saved. But all to no purpose. Soon the flames had gained possession of the Rotunda and nothing is now left standing but the bare and ruined walls. The boys worked like fiends to save all that was

possible. I had estimated that only 1/10 of the books  
was saved but he is wrong - In my opinion at  
least 1/2 or over were saved. The Austin Collection was  
lost entirely. The statue of Jefferson, Muir's bust,  
the pictures were saved in fairly good condition.  
The School of Art was lost. Uncle Frank's valuable  
physical apparatus was carried out but the greater  
part so broken as to be practically useless.

Only 25000 insurance wh. is where near covers  
the loss. It is estimated the 75000 will scarcely  
rebuild the rotunda and annex to say nothing  
of loss in books and instruments. No change in  
lectures which will continue as usual, the classes  
meeting in Wash Hall, Temperance Hall, Museum  
and Professor's Offices. Papa is back in his old  
room - S. W. L. where the chairman's office will be  
Papa is so busy that he cannot write to you to  
night and told me to let you know of the loss.  
I am so exhausted myself that I cannot write much.  
The Professors are taking it bravely - not lamenting  
the past but making plans for the future.  
You can imagine how distressed everyone is.  
I myself, now that the excitement has worn  
off, am getting more and more miserable  
every minute and I can't express to you  
my sorrow. I love this old University with all  
my heart and if I who am comparatively young  
am so grieved what must be the distress of these  
old professors who have worked for the University  
so long and lectured so often within these

now ruined walls! What a number of blows have  
struck this University within the year you have been  
away! Misfortune after misfortune has crippled  
its usefulness and now that this crowning glory of  
the University, this building planned and built by  
Jefferson, this splendid library, our so famous copy  
of the *Solvol of Athens*, the dear old clock that  
never kept time, should be destroyed seems the  
seems to be the crowning evil and the worst that  
this Nemesis who pursues us could let fall on  
our heads. Horrible! horrible! horrible! The things  
gets worse the more I think about it. However  
lamentations do no good. We can only depend  
on state aid and the generosity of our alumni.  
Have just opened a telegram from Geo. Anderson of  
Richmond saying that he wanted to start a  
subscription immediately. Telegrams of sympathy  
come from all sides. O'Ferral seems especially  
interested. That is a good sign that the state will help  
us. Some taking a cheerful view of the situation  
say that in the end it will benefit the U. Va. by  
bringing her more before the people. Cannot offer  
any opinion on that subject. Thank you very much  
for the beautiful pair of gloves and more especially for  
thinking of me and of my 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Had  
intended to write you a special letter of thanks to-day  
but am too tired and miserable. Love to the children  
and yourself. Excuse hasty scribble. I believe me  
Your aff. son - John G. Fluctuator