

To his Excellency William H. Mann,
Governor of the State of Virginia.
My dear Sir:

I am writing you in reference to Virginia Christian as I feel a deeper interest in her case than that of an ordinary client. There are reasons which I thought then and I think now, were sufficient to justify our course in denying her an opportunity to testify in her own behalf. Virginia Christian is a coarse-mannered, homely girl and being extremely ignorant would surely have prejudiced her case before the jury and might have so thoroughly excited the bystanders as to have caused trouble.

Before and during the trial of her case feeling against her ran high and many threats of violence were made. Yet her evidence would have given her a chance for a new trial before the Supreme Court which she has not now and can never get. When it became generally known that the criminal was an ignorant

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negro girl under the age of seventeen who went to the Belote home where she had been working for several years, in answer to a request left by Mrs. Belote with her parents, this feeling began to subside rapidly and now the consensus [sic] of opinion is that the infliction of the death penalty is too severe and that a commutation of such a sentence to life imprisonment would meet the general approval of all classes.

You will pardon my persistency in the matter but I have such a deep sense of responsibility and am anxious to put every phase of the case before you.

It has been my very unpleasant duty to represent the accused. I say unpleasant because, in conducting such a case, one has to be careful not to disturb the very cordial relations existing between the races, and which I hope may ever remain. If your Excellency will pardon personal reference no one has worked harder than my colleague J.T. Newsome and I to strengthen

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and keep this relation in tact [sic]. I am doing what I can in this suit from a standpoint of humanity and have received not one cent as fee.

The father of the girl is head of a family of eight children with a wife hopelessly paralyzed and has more than he can do to maintain and support them.

Under these circumstances we are doing what we can, hoping that the prayer of Virginia and those who join in the petition may touch the heart of the governor of this great commonwealth and that he may exercise judicial clemency and commute her sentence of death to one of imprisonment for life.

The courts have from time to time, declared that premeditation need exist but for a short period but they have never intimated other than that it is necessary to be shown before a verdict of murder in the first degree can be had.

The prevailing and more humane sentiment

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here is that by commuting the death sentence to one of life imprisonment the end of justice will be fully met.

Trusting that the prayer of this poor ignorant girl and those who join in her petition may be answered, and that God may enable you to see your way clear to commute the death sentence to one of life imprisonment, I am

Your obedient servant,
Geo. W. Fields