

Sad News from Virginia, 1674¹

WE ARE ffreinds in the endles Loue of the Allmightie, doe wee reach vnto and kindly salute & embrace you, theese are to lett you vnderstand that wee receaued yo^r loueing letters & haue had them read in o^r meetings to the refreshment of o^r selues & other ffreinds in heareing & considering yo^r declared loue vnto vs, cheifly, and aboue all things desireing of the Lord that by the operation of his Power, wee may grow vp togeather with you in the Life & power of God to the praise of his great & glorious Name, & to the Establishment of our Euerlasting Vnitty & ffellowship in the same Life & Power.

The foure bookes you sent by Lott Ricketts vpon the ship Comfort wee haue receaued & haue allso disposed of them according to yo^r order, and wee are allso greatly reefreshed & gladed to heare that thruth prospers so well Amongst you in England, then which nothing can be more wellcome tydings vnto vs, and wee allso in some measure can giue you the like intelligence, Euerlasting praises be giuen to God, for since our deare ffreind G. ffox his departure hence (whose comeing amongst vs hath been uery prosperous) our meetings which at that time was not large, are at this time (as wee suppose), more then dabled, and seuerall of them (wee doe beleue) are uery true & sauerie ffreinds; & not only so (but as wee Judge) a large conuincement is vpon many who as yett stands off, And some theare is amongst vs as well as amongst you that through their miscarages & disobedience doth giue aduantage to the enemieys to speake reproachfully of truth which at some times doth cause some dissettlements amongst vs, and doth so at this present allso, wee being not many in number, but as the power of God hath in a large measure expelled all former slights of the enemie and cleared vp the vnderstandings of ffreinds to a new gathering into his truth, & so wee trust that by the same power, all things that are contrary to

¹ The original letter is among Bristol MSS. (v. 110). Bowden used the letter in his *History* (i. 356), but omitted all the live portions of the communication. For a *précis* of Bristol MSS. v., see THE JOURNAL, ix.

truth & the prosperitty theareof, shall be brought to nought, and wee doe hope that he that hath begun the worke amongst vs will carry it on in power to the Eternall praise of his Name, and to the Euerlasting welfare of such as abide in it,) And for the miscarriages of any that come from Bristoll to the disadvantage of truth in theese partes, wee know non, except one Edward Beare who last yeare ariued heare in the Katheren of bristoll whose remarckable & sad end wee thinke heare to note out, because he gaue as good a testimony for truth as Judas did when he brought backe the mony & sayd he had betrayd Jnnocent blood ;

Wee haue been informed that he the s^d Beare did formerly make profession of the truth amongst ffreinds in bristoll or elsewheare, and that some ffreinds haueing intrusted him with goods shipt vpon the ship Katheren he sought to defraud them the manner how peraduenture is better knowne to some amongst yo^u then to vs heare, as for any profession of truth in this place wee neuer saw any from him, but his behauour alltogether a disboyest drunken fellow (yett reported by some to haue been a quaker sometime) and haueing spent & imbesselled what he had gotten by the voyage, he tooke another voiage to New England and there insinuated him selfe into the fauour of freinds & through craft & deceit gott some ffreinds to intrust him with goods to the uallew of twenty L^{bs} of tobacco that he the s^d Beare was to lade in Virginia for the afores^d freinds accoumpt, & twenty l^{bs} more the s^d Beare promised to lade vpon his owne accoumpt & consigne to the afors^d freind to put to sale for his own vse, and the New England freind engaged to send heither a vessell at the crop for transport of the afors^d tobaccoes which at the time appointed was performed by him of New England, in meanetime this s^d Beare comes to Virginia & heare marries a wife by the prist (a harlott) & followes strongly his ould course of druncknes & was of great esteeme amongst the druncken Route but in conclution towards the shiping time this Beare buried his wife & sudenly after fell sick him selfe, and in the time of his sickness the wrath of God (without all doubt) haueing seased strongly vpon his soule, he was sorely distrest in spiritt & complained exceeding much of the wrong he had

donn to honest men by fraude & deceit & tould seurall about him as wee are credibly informed how he had been one of them called quakers, & had been in a fine state, and while he continued in that condition he prospered much both inwardly & outwardly & had he continewed in it he had Obtained Eternall Life, but falling from it he had incurred Eternall Damnation which must needs follow, and he sent for Thomas Jordan & his wife & complained of his Estate & tould them how well it was with him in the dayes he continewed in truth & s^d if God would restore him he hoped to become a new man & pretty much more to that purpose, & Thomas Jordan tould him if he did performe his promise made vnto the Lord it might be well with him againe, if nott a worse thing might befall him & so left him at that time hopeing he had left him in a pretty good condition, and within 3 or 4 howers after comes the Master of the New England Vessell for the freight afore mentioned which Beare not being in a capassity of performing, fell into his ould anguish of spiritt & soone after attempted to hang himselfe, which at that time was preuented, but he tould some that within few dayes he should be a dreadfull spectacle to many which shortly came to pass, for not longe after there being in the house but one person his mother in Law he bids her fetch him a little warme broth presently, & while the fire was blowing vp in the next roome & a little broth hotte in a pottinger, he the s^d Beare slypt out the runing string of his drawers & tyed it about his necke and go to the rayle of the bed, & so with one knee vpon the bed & the other leg vpon the ground crouching he hangd him selfe the woman comeing with her broth, being all amased, had not power to pluc him downe, but runs out to cry for helpe, in mean time Beare was dead where they lett him hang till a Jury came to see him, the new England man hearing of this took certifiycatt of Beares death & returned home without his freight, & Beare his sayings & confession & clearing of the truth was a publique thing & made known to the Jury & so published abroad as without doubt hath been very seruisable to truth. heare is allso to be noted that a little after his death our ffreinds William Yarrott . . . [*paper torn*] Beare dwelt & his mother in Law tould W^m Yarrott that

Beare tould her 3 dayes before his death that he had a fire burning with in him ;

Seuerall other things remarkeable hath here falne out this yeare as a Prist ariued heare in the ship samuell & Marie of bristoll & hangd himselfe, allso our Nancemum prist setting into a rayling discourse against the quakers & makeing his boast that shortely he would reconuert all the new conuincd quakers, before he could finish his worke he had to doe, was straingly drowned in a little smale creeke that runs through a Marsh, & a Jury sate aboute his death. All which things haue draune the minds of many into a serious consideration of their estate & makes for the prosperitty of truth which wee trust the Lord will carry on in this perverce & wilde place, in which truth wee kindly bid yo^u farewell and remaine yo^r ffreinds & bretheren

Nancemum the 25th of
4th mo : 1674.

WILL DENSON.²
WILL : YARRATT.³
THO : JORDAN.⁴

o^r ffreind Will Yarrett whose occations weare such as could not stay the wrighting heareof desired to haue his deare Loue remembred vnto yo^u & all ffreinds, & wee desire to haue o^r dear loue recomended to all ffreinds accordingly.

WILL DENSON.
WILL YARRATT.
THO : JORDAN.

[Addressed]

ffor
Dennis Hollister.
Thomas Gouldney.
Thomas Callowhill.
Dwelling in
bristoll.

[Endorsed]

1674 ffrom freinds in Nancimum.

² Among Women Friends of Nansemond who sign an Epistle to Women Friends of London, in 1679 (Box Meeting MSS.) are Frances Denson, the elder and the younger, Katherine Denson, and Sarah Denson.

³ Given by Bowden (*Hist.* i. 357) as *Parrott*, also in THE JOURNAL, ix. Margaret *Yarratt* signs an epistle from Nancemond in 1679. *Yarratt* is doubtless correct.

⁴ For Thomas Jordan (1634-1699), see *Camb. Jnl.*