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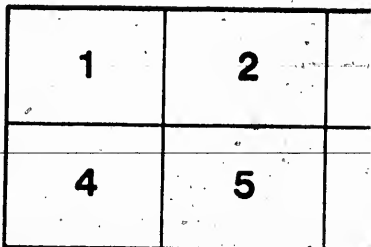
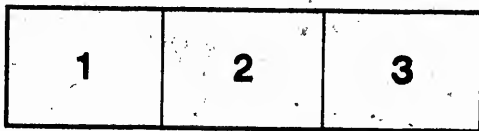
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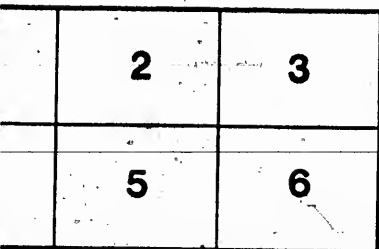
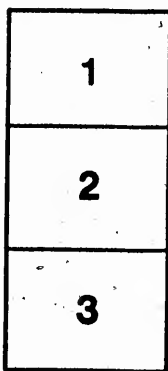
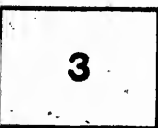
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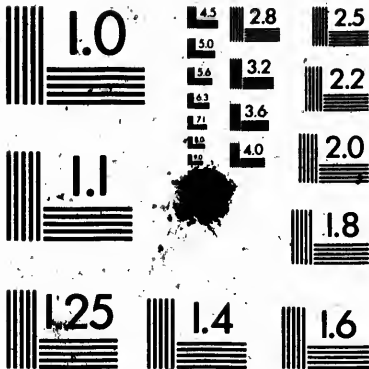
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WILLIAM FENN'S

LETTER

TO HIS

Wife and Children.

Fork, N. C.

PUBLISHED BY JONATHAN DOAN.

W. L. Mackenzie, Printer.

1836.

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Oct. 20, 1965

There is a pathetic and elegant simplicity in the writings of great and good men, which I take to be the natural result of conscious goodness and exalted virtue.— I was therefore highly delighted with a letter, which a neighbour of mine, a Quaker, has communicated to me, written by Mr. PENN, to his wife and children, a little before his first voyage to AMERICA, and found after his death among some old MSS. never published. I have permission to copy it, and here send it you. The sentiments are not studied, novel, or sublime, but simple, sincere, and natural; adapted to the occasion; flowing from the heart, and consonant with the rules of the true epistolary writing. Mr. Penn (as observed of Shakspeare) appears not so properly to “speak from Nature, as that she speaks through him.”—Whether we view this great man in the light of a legislator, historian, or chronologist, we must allow he had great extent of knowledge, accuracy of judgment, and quickness of invention, and I think it is but justice to his memory to observe, that in all his writings, the gentleman, scholar, and Christian are eminently conspicuous.

J. W. V.

London, 14th February, 1811.

MY DEAR WIFE AND CHILDREN.

My love, that sea nor land, nor death itself, can extinguish or lessen towards you, most endearedly visits you with eternal embraces, and will abide with you for ever, and may the God of my life watch over you, and bless you, and do you good in this world, and for ever. Some things are upon my spirits to leave with you, in your respective capacities, as I am to one a husband, and to the rest a father, if I should never see you more in this world.

My dear wife, remember thou wast the love of my youth, and much the joy of my life; the most beloved as well as the most worthy of all my earthly comforts, and the reason of that love was more thy inward than

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thy outward excellencies (which yet were many.) God knows, and thou knowest it, I can say it was a match of Providence's making, and God's image in us both was the first thing; and the most amiable and engaging ornament in our eyes. Now I am to leave thee, and that without knowing whether I shall ever see thee more in this world, take my council into thy bosom, and let it dwell with thee in my stead while thou livest.

1st, Let the fear of the Lord, and a zeal and love to his glory, dwell richly in thy heart, and thou wilt watch for good over thyself and thy dear children and family, that no rude light, or bad thing be committed; else God will be offended, and he will repent himself of the good he intends thee and thine.

2dly, Be diligent in meetings of worship and business; stir up thyself and others herein: 'tis thy duty and place; and let meeting be kept once a day in the family to wait upon the Lord, who has given us so much time for ourselves—and, my dearest, to make thy family matters easy to thee, divide thy time, and be regular; 'tis easy and sweet; thy retirement will afford thee to do it; as in the morning to view the business of the house, and fix it as thou desirest, seeing all be in order; that by thy council all may move, and to thee render an account every evening. The time for work, for walking, for meals may be certain, at least as near as may be: and grieve not thyself with careless servants, they will disorder thee; rather pay them, and let them go, if they will not be better by admonitions; this is the best to avoid many words, which I know wound the soul, and offend the Lord.

3dly, Cast up thy income, and see what it daily amounts to; by which thou mayest be sure to have it in thy sight and power to keep within compass; and I beseech thee to live low and sparingly, till my debts are paid, and then enlarge as thou seest it convenient. Remember thy mother's example, when thy father's public spiritedness had worsted his estate (which is my case.) I know thou lovest plain things, and are averse to the pomp of the world; a nobility natural to thee. I write not as doubtful, but to quicken thee, for my sake, to be

more vigilant herein, knowing that God will bless thy care, and thy poor children and thee for it. My mind is wrapt up in a saying of thy father's, "I desire not riches, but to owe nothing," and truly that is wealth; and more than enough to live is a snare attended with many sorrows. I need not bid thee be humble, for thou art so; nor meek and patient, for it is much of thy natural disposition—but I pray thee be oft in retirement with the Lord, and guard against encroaching friendships.—Keep them at arm's end; for it is giving away our power, eye and self too, into the possession of another; and that which might seem engaging in the beginning may prove a yoke and burthen, too hard and heavy in the end. Wherefore keep dominion over thyself and let thy children, good-meetings and friends be the pleasure of thy life.

4thly, And now, my dearest, let me recommend to thy care my dear children; abundantly beloved of me as the Lord's blessings, and the sweet pledges of our mutual and endeared affection.

Above all things, endeavour to breed them up in the love of virtue, and that holy plain way of it which we have lived in, that the world, in no part of it get into my family. I had rather they were homely than finely bred, as to outward behaviour; yet I love sweetness mixed with gravity, and cheerfulness tempered with sobriety. Religion in the heart leads into this true civility, teaching men and women to be mild and courteous in their behaviour, an accomplishment worthy indeed of praise.

5thly, Next breed them up in a love one of another; tell them 'tis the charge I left behind me; and that 'tis the way to have the love and blessing of God upon them also what his portion is who hates or calls his brother fool. Sometimes separate them, but not long; and allow them to send and give each other small things, to endear one another with. Once more, I say, tell them it was my counsel, they should be tender and affectionate one to another. For their learning be liberal; spare no cost; for, by such parsimony all is lost that is saved; but let it be useful knowledge, such as is consistent with truth and godliness, not cherishing a vain conversation or

idle mind; but ingenuity mixed with industry is good for the body and mind too. I recommend the useful parts of mathematicks, as building houses or ships, measuring, surveying, dialling, navigation, &c. but agriculture is especially in my eye—let my children be husbandmen and housewives—'tis industrious, healthy, honest, and of good example—like Abraham, and the holy ancients, who pleased God, and obtained a good report. This leads to consider the works of God and nature, of things that are good, and diverts the mind from being taken up with the vain arts and inventions of a luxurious world. 'Tis commendable in the princes of Germany and nobles of that empire that they have all their children instructed in some useful occupation. Rather keep an ingenious person in the house to teach them than send them to schools; too many evil impressions being commonly received there. Be sure to observe their genius, and don't cross it as to learning—let them not dwell too long on one thing, but let their change be agreeable and all their diversions have some little bodily labour in them. When grown big have most care of them; for then are more snares both within and without. When marriageable, see that they have worthy persons in their eye, of good life and good fame for piety and understanding, I need no wealth but sufficiency—and be sure their love be dear, fervent and mutual, that it may be happy for them. I chuse not they should be married into earthly covetous kindred; and of cities and towns of concourse beware; the world is apt to stick close to those who have lived and got wealth there—a country life and estate I like best for my children; I prefer a decent mansion of an hundred pounds per annum, before ten thousand pounds in London, or such like place in a way of trade. In fine, my dear, endeavour to breed them dutiful in the Lord, and his blessed light, truth, and grace in their hearts, who is their Creator; and his fear will grow up with them.—Teach a child (says the Wise Man) the way thou wilt have him to walk, and when he is old he will not forget it. Next obedience to thee their dear mother; and that not for wrath, but for conscience sake—liberal to the poor, pitiful to the miserable, humble and kind to all.—

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And may my God make thee a blessing, and give thee comfort in our dear children; and in age gather thee to the joy and blessedness of the just (where no death shall separate us) for ever.

And now my dear children, that are the gifts and mercies of the God of your tender father, hear my counsel, and lay it up in your hearts; love it more than treasure, and follow it and you shall be blessed here and happy hereafter. In the first place, remember your Creator in the days of your youth—it was the glory of Israel in the 2d of Jeremiah—and how did God bless Josiah, because he feared him in his youth; and so he did Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. Oh, my dear Children, remember, and fear, and serve him who made you, and give you to me and your dear mother—and that you may live to him, and glorify him in your generations. To do this, in your youthful days seek after the Lord, that you may find him; remembering his great love in creating you that you are not beasts, plants, or stones; but that he kept you, and given his grace within and substance without, and provided plentifully for you. This remember in your youth that you may be kept from the evil of the world—for in age it will be harder to overcome the temptations of it. Wherefore, my dear children, eschew the appearance of evil, and love and cleave to that in your hearts that shows you evil from good, and tells you when you do amiss, and reproveth you for it. It is the light of Christ, that he has given you for your salvation; if you do this, and follow my counsel, God will bless you in this world, and give you an inheritance in that which shall never have an end. For the light of Jesus is of a purifying nature—it seasons those who love it, and take heed to it; and never leaves such till it has brought them to the city of God, that has foundations. O! that you may be seasoned with the gracious nature of it; hide it in your hearts, and flee, my dear children, from all youthful lusts; the vain sports, pastimes, and pleasures of this world; redeeming the time because the days are evil.—You are now beginning to live—what would some give for your time! Oh! I could have lived better, were I, as you, in the flower of youth. Therefore, love and fear

the Lord, keep close to meetings, and delight to wait upon the Lord God of your father and mother, among his despised people, as we have done, and count it your honour to be members of that society, and heirs of that living fellowship which is enjoyed among them, for the experience of which, your father's soul bleaseth the Lord for ever.

Next, be obedient to your dear mother, a woman whose virtues and good name is an honour to you; for she has been exceeded by none in her time for her plainness, integrity, industry, humility, virtue, and good understanding—qualities not usual among women of her worldly condition and quality. Therefore, honour and obey her, my dear children, as your mother, and your father's love and delight: nay, her too, for she loved your father with a deep and upright love, chusing him before all her many suitors, and though she be of a delicate constitution and noble spirit, yet she descended to the utmost tenderness and care for you; performing the pain-fullest acts of service to you in your infancy, as a mother and a nurse too. I charge you, before the Lord, honour and obey, love and cherish, your dear mother.

Next, betake yourselves, to some honest, industrious course of life; and that not of sordid covetousness, but for example, and to avoid idleness. And if you change your condition and marry, chuse with the knowledge and consent of your mother, if living, guardians, or those that have the charge of you—mind neither beauty nor riches, but the fear of the Lord, and a sweet and amiable disposition; such as you can love above all this world—and that may make your habitations pleasant and desirable to you. And being married, be tender, affectionate, and patient, and meek. Live in the fear of the Lord, and he will bless you and your offsprings. Be sure to live within compass, borrow not, neither be beholden to any; ruin not yourselves by kindness to others, for that exceeds the due bonds of friendship, neither will a true friend expect it. Small matters I heed not. Let industry and parsimony go no farther than for a sufficiency for life, and to make a provision for your children, (and that in moderation, if the Lord gives you any.) I charge you:

to help the poor and the needy ; let the Lord have a voluntary share of your income, for the good of the poor, both in our society and others ; for we are all his creatures, remembering that " he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." Know well your incomes, and your outgoings may be better regulated. Love not money nor the world, use them only and they will serve you ; but if you love them, you serve them ; which will debase your spirits, as well as offend the Lord. Pity the distressed, and hold out a hand of help to them ; it may be your case ; and as you mete to others, God will mete to you again. Be humble and gentle in your conversation, of few words I charge you, but always pertinent when you speak ; hearing out before you attempt to answer ; and then speaking as if you would persuade not impose. Affront none, neither revenge the affronts that are done to you ; but forgive and you shall be forgiven of your Heavenly Father. In making friends, consider well first ; and when you are fixed, be true not wavering by reports, nor deserting in affliction ; for that becomes not the good and virtuous. Watch against anger, neither speak nor act in it : for like drunkenness, it makes man a beast, and throws people into desperate inconvenience. Avoid flatterers, for they are thieves in disguise ; their praise is costly, designing to get by those they bespeak ; they are the worst of creatures ; they lie to flatter, and flatter to cheat ; and, which is worse, if you believe them you cheat yourselves most dangerously. But the virtuous, though poor, love, cherish, and prefer. Remember David, who asked the Lord, " Who shalt abide in thy tabernacle ? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill ?"—answer : " He that walketh uprightly, worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart, in whose eyes the vile person is contemned, but honoureth them who feareth the Lord." Next, my children, be temperate in all things ; in your diet, for that is physic by prevention, it keeps, nay it makes people healthy, and their generation sound. This is exclusive of the spiritual advantage it brings.—Be also plain in your apparel ; keep out that lust which reigns too much over some ; let your virtues be your ornaments, remembering life is more than food, and the

body than raiment. Let your furniture be simple and cheap; avoid pride, avarice and luxury. Read my "No Cross, No Crown". There is instruction.— Make your conversation with the most eminent for wisdom and piety, and shun all wicked men, as you hope for the blessing of God, and the comfort of your father's living and dying prayers. Be sure you speak no evil of any, no, not of the meanest, much less of your superiors—as magistrates, guardians, tutors, teachers and elders in Christ.

Be no busy-bodies; meddle not with other folks matters, but when in conscience and duty prest—for it procures trouble, and is ill manners, and very unseemly to wise men. In your families, remember Abraham, Moses and Joshua; their integrity to the Lord: and do as you have them for your examples. Let the fear and service of the living God be encouraged in your houses, and that plainness, sobriety, and moderation in all things, as becometh God's chosen people—and, as I advise you, my beloved children, do you counsel yours, if God should give you any. Yea, I counsel and command them, as my posterity, that they love and serve the Lord God with an upright heart; that he may bless you and yours, from generation to generation. And as for you, who are likely to be concerned in the government of Pennsylvania, and my parts of East Jersey, especially the first, I do charge you, before the Lord God and his holy angels, that you be lowly, diligent and tender; fearing God, loving the people, and hating covetousness. Let justice have its impartial course, and the law free passage; though to your loss protect no man against it; for you are not above the law, but the law above you. Live, therefore, the lives yourselves you would have the people live; and then you have a right and boldness to punish the transgressor. Keep upon the square, for God sees you—therefore do your duty—and be sure you see with your own eyes, and hear with your own ears. Entertain no lurchers—charish no informers for gain or revenge; use no tricks, by to no devices to support or cover injustice; but let your hearts be upright before the Lord, trusting in him above the contrivances of men, and none shall be able to hurt or supplant.

* The title of a book of his, in which his religious sentiments are recorded in a style easy, concise and nervous; his reflections interesting; his arguments, for the most part, just, and generally forced by illustrations from Scripture.

Oh! the Lord is a strong God, and he can do whatsoever he pleases; and though men consider it not, it is the Lord that rules and overrules in the kingdom of men; and he builds up and pulls down. I, your Father, am the man that can say, he that trusts in the Lord shall not be confounded. But God, in due time, will make his enemies be at peace with him. If you thus behave yourselves, and so become a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well, God, my God will be with you, in wisdom and a sound mind; and make you blessed instruments in his hand, for the settlement of some of those desolate parts of the world, which my soul desires above all worldly honours and riches; both for you that go, and you that stay; you that govern, and you who are governed; that in the end you may be gathered with me to the rest of God. Finally, my children, love one another with a true and endeared love, and your dear relations on both sides; and take care to preserve tender affection in your children to each other—often marrying within themselves, so as it be without the bounds forbidden in God's law. That so they may not, like the forgetting and unnatural world, grow out of kindred, and as cold as strangers; but as becomes a truly natural and Christian stock, you, and yours after you, may live in the pure and fervent love of God, towards one another as becometh brethren in the spiritual and natural relation. So my God, that has blessed me with his abundant mercies, both of this and the other and better life, be with you all, guide you by his counsel, bless you, and bring you to his eternal glory; that you may shine my dear children, in the firmament of God's power with the blessed spirits of the just—that celestial family, praising and admiring him the God and Father of it for ever and ever. For there is no God like unto him, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; the God of the Prophets, the Apostles, and martyrs of Jesus; in whom I live for ever. So farewell to my thrice dearly beloved wife and children. Yours, as God pleaseth in that which no waters can quench, no time forget, nor distance wear away, but remains for ever.

FINIS.

