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LETTERS

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FROM THE

• Rev. SAMUEL DAVIES, &c. 1-10 K

S H E W I N G

The State of Religion in *Virginia*,
particularly among the Negroes.

L I K E W I S E

An Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in LONDON to his Friend in the Country,

Containing some Observations on the same.

As cold Water to a thirsty Soul, so is good News from a far Country. PROV. xxv. 25.

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LETTERS

FROM THE

Rev. Mr. DAVIES, &c.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev.
Mr. *Davies* to the Rev. Mr. B.
1751.

AS the Publication of a Narrative of the *Rise, Progress, and present Situation of Religion in Virginia*, may not only gratify good people, but animate their prayers for us, I should charge myself with a criminal neglect by delaying or refusing to publish the marvellous Works of the Lord among us.

My design, Sir, is not to boast of Profelytes, or to asperse the church of *England* here established, but I hope I may observe, without the umbrage of calumny, what glares with irresistible evidence, that Religion has been, and in most parts of the colony still is, in a very low state; various *Vices* are triumphant, and even a *form of Godliness* is not common. — I cannot find there has been a Dissenting Minister settled in *Virginia*, till

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lately,

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lately, since its first plantation; and many of the populace knew little or nothing of any denomination, but that in which they had been educated.

I have reason to hope, Sir, that there are and have been *a few Names* in various parts of the colony, who are sincerely seeking the Lord in the communion of the church of *England*: A few of this happy character I found in and about *Hanover* before the late revival of Religion. Such were awakened, as they told me, either by their *own serious Reflections*, suggested and enforced by divine energy, or on *reading some Authors* of the last century, particularly *Bolton; Baxter; Flavel, Bunyan, &c.* and they often wondered if there were such doctrines taught any where in the world at present, as they found in the writings of these good men. — In this case about ten or twelve persons, who are now members of my congregation, continued for some time. One Mr. *Samuel Morris*, a person of an active, sociable spirit; who had been extremely anxious about his eternal state, and unweariedly seeking relief by all means within his reach, at length obtained a discovery of that glorious method of Salvation through **JESUS CHRIST**, to which sinners from *all the ends of the earth look, and are saved*, and where they universally agree to fix all their hopes.

After this discovery of the Gospel, his soul was anxious for the salvation of his neighbours, and inflamed with zeal to use means to awaken them; to which end he *read* to them such authors as had been most useful to himself;

himself; by these means a few of his neighbours were made more thoughtful about Religion than usual, who had lived, till then, in a careless ignorance of it. — I have prevailed, Sir, with this my good friend, who was the principal private instrument of promoting the revival of Religion, to give me a narrative of its Rise and Progress from this period till my settlement here, which I here present to you.

“ In the year 1743, a young Gentleman
 “ arrived from *Scotland*, with a book of the
 “ Rev. Mr. *Whitefield*'s sermons preached in
 “ *Glasgow*, taken from his mouth in short-
 “ hand, which, after I had read with great
 “ liking and benefit, I invited my neighbours
 “ to come and hear: The plainness, popu-
 “ larity, and fervency of the discourses being
 “ peculiarly fitted to affect our unimproved
 “ minds, and the Lord rendring the word ef-
 “ ficacious, many were convinced of their
 “ undone condition, and constrained to seek
 “ deliverance with the greatest solicitude. A
 “ considerable number met every Sabbath to
 “ hear these sermons; my dwelling-house was
 “ too small to contain the people, where-
 “ upon we determined to build a Meeting-
 “ house, meerly for *Reading*. By this single
 “ mean sundry were solemnly awakened, and
 “ their conduct ever since is a living attesta-
 “ tion of the happy issue of their impressions.
 “ When the report of these sermons, and the
 “ effect produced by *reading* them was spread
 “ abroad, I was invited to several places to
 “ *read* them, at a considerable distance; and
 “ by

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“ by this means the concern was propagated;
“ —Thus we continued till Providence afforded us an unexpected opportunity of hearing the Rev. Mr. *Robinson*, a zealous, faithful minister of Christ, whose labours have been greatly blessed in *Pennsylvania*, *Maryland*, and other Parts.
“ Having some information of him, he had an invitation sent him to come and preach to us. He continued with us preaching four days successively. It is hard for the liveliest imagination to form an image of the condition of the assembly on these glorious days of the Son of Man. Such of us as had been hungry after the Word before, were lost in an agreeable confusion of serious Passions, surprized, astonished, pleased, enraptured! So that we were hardly capable of self-government. We were overwhelmed with the thoughts of the unexpected goodness of God, in allowing us to hear the Gospel *preached* in a manner that even surpassed our former wishes, much more our hopes. Many that came thro' curiosity were *pricked to the heart*, and but few in the numerous assemblies on these four days appeared unaffected.—Before he left us, he put us into a method of *praying* and *singing* together at our publick meetings, which we had before omitted.
“ We were afterwards occasionally visited by the Rev. Mess. *J. Blain*, *John Roan*, *Gilbert* and *William Tennant*, &c. whose services were greatly prospered. In whose absence we returned to our former way of
“ *Reading,*

“ *Reading, &c.* The blessing of GOD re-
 “ markably attended these *private* means: It
 “ was really astonishing to observe the so-
 “ lemn impressions begun and continued in
 “ many by hearing good discourses *read*. I
 “ had repeated invitations to come to many
 “ places round, some of them thirty or forty
 “ miles distant, to *read*. Considerable num-
 “ bers attended with eager attention, and
 “ sundry were, in a judgment of charity,
 “ throughly turned to GOD; and thereupon
 “ erected meeting-houses, and chose *Readers*
 “ among themselves, by which the work was
 “ more extensively carried on.

“ Being thus destitute of a minister, we
 “ were joyfully surprized to hear that the
 “ Rev. Mr. *Davies*, our present Pastor, was
 “ sent by the Presbytery to supply us about
 “ six weeks, in Spring *Anno* 1747: For
 “ which seasonable instance of divine Provi-
 “ dence we desire to offer up our grateful
 “ Praises, &c.”—*Thus he.*

Being fully convinced, Sir, that *Hanover*
 stood in greater need of a minister than any
 place I knew, I accepted of their call to settle
 there, and obtained the licensure of four
 meeting-houses in *October* 1748: in the small-
 est of which you will see perhaps four or five
 hundred Hearers, and sometimes twice that
 number, the church people in general being
 eager to hear. This I looked upon at first
 as proceeding from meer curiosity; but as it
 continues in general without abatement, and
 in some places seems to increase, I cannot but
 look upon it, as an happy Prefage, &c.

Hanover, June 28, 1751.

Copy

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Copy of a Letter from the Rev.
Mr. *Davies* at *Hanover* in *Virginia* to *J. F.* April 1, 1755.

Dear SIR,

DIVINE Providence has safely conducted me through the numerous dangers of sea and land, and replaced me in my former sphere of usefulness and happiness. The confluence of so many Mercies at one time, the tender guardianship of Heaven over my dear family and friends, the review of my remarkable successes in the important business of my Mission, and the promising situation of Religion among my People, threw me into a ferment of grateful passions, which has not yet subsided, though I have been at home about six weeks. I doubt not but as a friend you will congratulate me, and as a Christian assist me, in returns of gratitude and praise to my divine Benefactor.

As there is a propriety in transmitting to you an account of the Distribution and Reception of the *noble Charity* of that *generous SOCIETY* to which you are Secretary, I must confine myself to that; and refer you to my other correspondents for other articles of intelligence.

Though there are very few of the white People in this Colony in abject poverty, yet there are many in such low circumstances, that they cannot *spare* money to purchase
good

good books: And there are many more, who might indeed spare so much, without injury to their temporal affairs; but as they are stupidly insensible of their *Want* of Instruction, and do not form so high an estimate of the Means of Grace, as of the Necessaries, or even Conveniences of this mortal Life; they are willing to excuse themselves from it, as a piece of *needless* expence.

On one or other of these accounts, there are few houses in *Virginia* well furnished in this important respect; and multitudes are grossly ignorant, and consequently careless, about the concerns of Immortality. To some of these I have distributed *The Compassionate Address, Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, The Sabbath-breaker's Monitor, &c.* with the best advice I could give them, and I hope I shall be able hereafter to give you an agreeable account of the happy effects of the distribution.

But the poor neglected NEGROE SLAVES, who are so far from having money to purchase books, that they themselves are the property of others; who were originally *African Savages*, and never heard of JESUS and his Religion, until they arrived on the land of their slavery in *America*; whom their masters generally neglect, as though Immortality was not the privilege of their souls, nor the Religion of JESUS their concern! These *poor Africans* are the principal objects of compassion; and, I think, the most proper objects of the SOCIETY'S Charity.

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The inhabitants of *Virginia* are computed to be about three hundred thousand; and one half of them are supposed to be Negroes. The number that attend upon my ministry at particular times, is uncertain; but, I think, there are about *three hundred* that give a stated attendance. And never have I been so much struck with the appearance of an assembly, as when I have glanced my eyes to one part of the Meeting-house, adorned (so it has appeared to me) with so many black countenances, eagerly attentive to every word they heard, and some of them washed with tears.

A considerable number of them (about an hundred) have been *baptized*, after they had been Catechumens for some time, and given credible evidence, not only of their acquaintance with the important doctrines of the Christian Religion, but also of a deep sense of these things upon their spirits, and a life of the strictest Morality and Piety. As they are not sufficiently polished to dissemble with a good grace, they express the sensations of their minds so much in the language of simple nature, and with such genuine indications of Sincerity, that it is impossible to suspect the profession of some of them, especially when attested by a regular behaviour in common life.

My worthy friend Mr. *Todd*, Minister of the next congregation, has near the same number of negroes under his Pastoral charge; and some of them, he tells me, discover the same serious turn of mind. In short, there are multitudes of them in various parts, who
are

are willing, and even eagerly desirous to be instructed, and to embrace every opportunity for that end. They have generally but very little help to learn to read; and yet, to my agreeable surprize, fundry of them, by the dint of application in their leisure hours, have made such progress, that they can intelligibly read a plain author, particularly the *Bible*.

Some of them have the misfortune of irreligious masters; and hardly any of them are so happy, as to have masters, that will be at the expence of furnishing them with *Bibles*, *Psalms Books*, &c. Before I had the honour of joining as a Member of the Society, they were wont frequently to come to me with such moving accounts of their necessity in this respect, that I could not help supplying them with books to the utmost of my small ability; and when I distributed those among them, which my Friends with you sent over, I had reason to think that I never did a charitable action in all my life, that met with *so much Gratitude* from the receivers. I have already distributed all the books which were suitable to them, particularly *Bibles*, *Testaments*, *Watts's Songs for Children*, &c. But my house is still crouded with them; and their very countenances carry the air of *impertunate Petitioners* for the same favours with those that came before them. But alas! I must send them away grieved and disappointed.

Permit me now, Sir, to become an advocate in their behalf with you, and by your means with many of those generous Gentlemen with whom I know you are acquainted, for a farther

ther supply of *Bibles* and *Testaments*, that such as have taken the pains to learn to read them, and who I am persuaded, will make so good a use of them, may not be unavoidably *destitute* of so important a Charity. Give me leave particularly to mention Dr. *Watts's Psalms* and *Hymns*, which are not given away by your Society, and therefore must be procured some other way. My reasons for it are,

That the Books themselves are valuable — that they are the system of Psalmody the Dissenters use in these parts — that the *Negroes* above all of the human species that ever I knew, have an ear for Music, and a kind of extatic delight in Psalmody; and there are no books they learn so soon, or take so much pleasure in, as those used in that heavenly part of divine Worship. Some Gentlemen in LONDON were pleased to make them private presents through my hands of these books, and from the reception they gave them, and their eagerness for more, I can easily foresee how *acceptable* and *useful* a greater number would be among them. Indeed nothing would be a stronger inducement to them to learn to read, than the expectation of such a present; which they would consider as a *help* and a *reward* at once; and which they can be supplied with no other way.

I know of hardly any modern institution, which bears so favourable an aspect upon the declining interests of Religion and Virtue in our degenerate world, as that *generous SOCIETY*. They deserve the pleasure of hearing of the happy influence of their Charity, at the distance

distance of four thousand miles, in these ends of the earth; and it is no small happiness to me, that the strictest veracity allows me to transmit such an agreeable account. They, on your side of the water, may receive Blessings in answer to Prayers offered up to Heaven in *America*; and I am sure sundry of their Beneficiaries here are affectionate intercessors for them; among whom let them be pleased to remember, their, as well as,

Dear S I R,
 Your affectionate Friend,
 and most obliged humble Servant;
 SAMUEL DAVIES.

Copy of a Letter from the Rev.
 Mr. *Davies* at *Hanover* in *Virginia* to *J. F.* March 2, 1756.

Dear S I R,

YOUR last Letter, with the large Donation of Books that attended it, gave me the most agreeable surprize, that ever I met with in my whole life; and the ferment of grateful passions raised upon that occasion, has not yet subsided.

I speak the very truth, Sir, I did not count myself worthy, in any measure to be the instrument of *so great a Good*; nor had I the least expectation, that a Letter from my hand would ever be honoured with such *extensive Success*.

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As an honour conferred upon me — as an evidence that the spirit of Christian Zeal and Charity, is far from being extinct in your great metropolis, even in this infidel and debauched age — as a present advantage, and in the mean time, a favourable omen with regard to futurity, to the neglected *Heathen Slaves* in this Christian colony — as an acceptable offering to God — and as fruit that will abound to the account of the benefactors — in all these, and sundry other views, I rejoice in it: I feel, that even a heart so insensible as mine, is not proof against the sensations of pious gratitude upon such an occasion. It has more than once cast me into the posture of adoration and praise before the Throne of Grace, and I am not left unassisted in the delightful work.

I dare say some scores, both black and white, bond and free, concur with me, in the most ardent returns of gratitude to the Author of every good gift, for a *Charity* of such extensive usefulness. And to you, dear Sir, who have been so active in promoting it, and to my other friends, who have concurred in the same way; to the SOCIETY which gave so favourable a reception to my representation; and to all the CONTRIBUTORS, whether within, or without the Society; I return the most humble and affectionate thanks, from myself, and from their many beneficiaries who cannot write, nor make their own acknowledgments themselves. And if the Prayers of these poor strangers to the Throne of Grace, who have lately learned to bow, and weep, and cry there, have any efficacy, your pious generosity,

generosity will be rewarded an *hundred fold*, both in this, and in the future world.

I count myself happy, Sir, that I can retaliate you, and the other Benefactors of this scheme, in that way, in which only you desire it; and that is, by giving you an account of the *Distribution and Acceptance of the books* among those, for whom they were intended. And this I shall do with the utmost alacrity and faithfulness, to the best of my knowledge. As far as I can recollect, I gave you a pretty full account, in a former letter, of the numerous *African Slaves* in this colony; and now I only design to add a few particulars which are new; or which did not then occur to my mind.

When the books arrived, I gave public notice of it, after Sermon, at the next opportunity: I desired such *Negroes* as could read, and also such *white* People as would make a *good use* of them, and were so *poor*, that they could not buy such books, to come to me at my house, and I should distribute them among them. On this occasion, I also enlarged upon a new topic of conviction both to the *Slaves* themselves, and their *Masters*.

“ Since persons at so great a distance, who
 “ had no connexion with them, were so ge-
 “ nerously concerned to christianize the poor
 “ *Negroes*, and had been at so much pains
 “ and expence for that end; then, how
 “ much more concerned, how much more
 “ zealous and industrious should their *Mas-*
 “ *ters* be, to whom the care of their souls,
 “ as well as their bodies, is committed, and

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“ who

“ who enjoy the advantage of their laborious
 “ service?—And how much more ought the
 “ *poor Negroes* to be concerned for them-
 “ selves? And how much more aggravated
 “ would be their guilt and ruin, if they per-
 “ sisted in obstinate infidelity and wicked-
 “ ness, after so much pains had been taken
 “ with them for their conversion?” This,
 as I found afterwards, proved a very popular
 topic of conviction, and made some impres-
 sions upon the minds of not a few.

For some time after this, the *poor Slaves*,
 whenever they could get an hour's leisure from
 their masters, would hurry away to my house;
 and received the Charity with all the genuine
 indications of passionate gratitude, which un-
 polished nature could give; and which affec-
 tion and grimace would mimic in vain. The
 books were all *very acceptable*; but none more
 so than the *Psalms* and *Hymns*, which enabled
 them to gratify their peculiar taste for *Psal-
 mody*. Sundry of them have lodged all night
 in my kitchen; and, sometimes, when I have
 awaked about two or three a-clock in the
 morning, a torrent of sacred harmony poured
 into my chamber, and carried my mind away
 to Heaven. In this seraphic exercise, some of
 them spend almost the whole night. I wish,
 Sir, you and their other Benefactors could hear
 one of these sacred concerts: I am persuaded it
 would please and surprize you more than an
Oratorio, and a *St. Cecilia's Day*.

The *good effects* of this pious Charity are
 already apparent. It convinces the *Heathen*,
 that however vicious, and careless about the
 Religion

Religion they profess, the generality of the white People are; yet, there are some who really look upon it as a matter of the utmost importance, and universal concern, and are actuated with a disinterested zeal to promote it — It has excited some of their *Masters* to emulation; and they are ashamed that *Strangers*, on the other side the *Atlantic*, should be at the pains to teach their domestics Christianity, and they should be quite negligent *themselves* — It furnishes the most proper helps for such *Negroes* as can read, and are piously disposed; and some of them are evidently improving in knowledge — It has excited *others* to learn to read; for as I give books to none but such as can read, they consider them as a *Reward* of their Industry: And I am told, that in almost every house in my congregation, and in sundry other places, they spend every leisure hour in trying to learn, since they expect *Books* as soon as they are capable of using them. Some of them, I doubt not, are excited to it by a sincere desire to know the Will of God, and what they shall do to be saved. Others, I am afraid, are actuated by the meaner principles of curiosity, ambition, and vanity. However, be the principle what it will, I cannot but rejoice in the effect; as it renders them more *capable of Instruction*, in the great concerns of Religion.

This CHARITY may also be of singular service in a POLITICAL View; for now, when the *French* and *Indians* are invading our country, and perpetrating the most shocking barbarities and depredations upon our frontiers,

tiers, we have not been without alarming apprehensions of Insurrection and Massacre, from the *numerous Slaves* among ourselves, whom they might seduce to their interest by the delusive promises of Liberty. And while they do not feel the restraints of Conscience and Christianity, our apprehensions are but too well grounded. I have done my utmost, without hinting my design to them, to prevent so dismal a calamity; and for this purpose, I have endeavoured to convince them, that there are many of the *English*, as well as myself, who are really solicitous for their welfare, which has given me no small popularity among them; and especially to bring them under the restraints of the pacific Religion of JESUS, which has so friendly an influence upon society, and teaches a proper conduct for every station in life. Now I can distribute these books among them as tokens of disinterested benevolence, as helps to understand Christianity, and in the mean time to detect the Impostures, Superstitions and Cruelties of POPERY. For this latter purpose, *The Protestant's Resolution* is extremely well calculated—To this I may add, that as I have the honour of distributing the books, it gives me a very handsome opportunity of speaking seriously, and with particular application, to many who might not otherwise come in my way.

There are *thousands of Negroes* in this colony, who still continue in the grossest ignorance, and most stupid carelessness about Religion, and as rank *Pagans*, as when they left the wilds of *Africa*. And there are not a few
of

of this unhappy character, even in the bounds of my congregation; (which, by the by, is about sixty miles in circumference). But I think, Sir, my ministry of late has been most successful among them. Two *Sundays* ago, I had the pleasure of seeing *forty* of their black faces around the Table of the Lord, who all make a credible profession of Christianity, and sundry of them with unusual evidences of sincerity.

Last *Sunday*, I baptized *seven* or *eight* *Adults*, who had been Catechumens for some time. Indeed, many of them seem determined to press into the kingdom of God; and, I am persuaded, will find an abundant entrance, when many of the children of the kingdom shall be shut out—*One* of the Catechumens baptized last *Sunday*, I conversed with the evening before; he addressed me to this purpose in broken *English*, “ I am a poor
 “ slave, brought into a strange country, where
 “ I never expect to enjoy my liberty. While
 “ I lived in my own country, I knew no-
 “ thing of that JESUS I have heard you speak
 “ so much about. I lived quite careless what
 “ will become of me when I die; but I now
 “ see such a life will never do, and I come
 “ to you, Sir, that you may tell me some
 “ good things, concerning JESUS CHRIST,
 “ and my Duty to GOD, for I am resol-
 “ ved not to live any more as I have done.”
 Such a simple address is very striking oratory to me; and would my time allow, I could give you many such specimens.

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There is one happy circumstance, which I think very remarkable, and that is, That notwithstanding the odium Protestant Dissenters lie under in this colony, where they were not known till very lately; and notwithstanding the usual disaffection which those bear to vital Religion, who have none themselves; yet the *Negroes* in these parts are freely allowed to attend upon my ministry, and sometimes upon my private instructions, even by such *Masters*, as have no Religion at all, or are Bigots to the established Church. Indeed, it is the object of my zeal, not to make them Dissenters, but good Christians, and good Servants. But, when I consider how often the most candid and generous endeavours are misconstrued by bigotry, or avowed impiety, I cannot but wonder my attempts meet with so little opposition, and escape suspicion: And I cannot but look upon it as a promising Presage.

I have distributed sundry of the books among the poorer sort of *white* people, with this charge, that they would not keep them by them as a private property (except the Bibles, for which they would have constant use in their families) but circulate them about among such of their neighbours, as would seriously peruse them; that they might be as extensively serviceable as possible. Some of them have since discovered to me, what solemn impressions they received in reading them.

I sent a few of each sort to my Friend and Brother Mr. *Wright*, minister in *Cumberland*, about ninety miles hence; where there is a
great

great number of *Negroes*; and not a few of them thoughtful and inquisitive about Christianity, and sundry of them hopeful converts. He has been faithful in the distribution, and informs me, they meet with a very agreeable and promising reception. He is very laborious in his endeavours to instruct the *Negroes*; and has set up two or three Schools among them, where they attend on *Sunday*, before and after sermon; for they have no other leisure time.

It affords me no small pleasure, that you have some *more Books* in reserve for me. I know I have had vastly more than my proportion as a Member of the Society; and I cannot have the face to solicit for farther benefactions; nay, it pains me to think, that by directing the channel towards this new world; some places nearer home may have been drained, or left unwatered. But alas! dear Sir, when I reflect upon the almost universal neglect of the many thousands of poor slaves in this wide extended country—That they generally continue *Heathens* in a Christian country—That but few of their *Masters* will furnish them with such means of instruction—and that they are absolutely *incapable* of furnishing themselves—When I reflect upon the burden of guilt under which my country groans, on this account—When the impressions of these things are fresh upon my mind, I am quite *insatiable*, and can never say, *it is enough*. Alas! what are four or five hundred Books among *so many thousands*? Indeed, I believe there are more than a *thousand* *Negroes* that attend upon my ministry, at the sundry

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sundry places where I officiate alternately; and sundry of them, who are well disposed, I am obliged to send away *without a Book*; for they were all distributed within a few days after their arrival; and I took care not to give one of each sort to every particular person, but ordered them to borrow and lend among themselves.

I earnestly desire to have something to distribute among them, that would at once help them to *read*, and teach them the *Rudiments* of Christianity. I have had some thoughts of attempting such a thing myself, if I knew how to discharge the expences of the Press; though I have no peculiar qualification for it, but this, that I might perhaps adapt myself better to their modes of speaking and thinking, than those who have had no acquaintance with them. *Dr. Watts's Sets of Catechisms* are the best I know extant, for the last of these purposes, and therefore I beg you would send me a considerable number of them.

Thus, Sir, I have given you an account of the *Use* I have made of this generous Charity; and the *happy Effects* that are likely to follow from it. And I have only this Request to add, that the Friends of Religion with you, would help it forward, not only in this way, but also with their importunate Prayers. This assistance is greatly needed, and earnestly desired by their, as well as,

Dear S I R,

Yours, &c.

SAM. DAVIES.

Extract

Extract of a Letter from the Rev.
Mr. *Davies* at *Hanover* in *Virginia*
to Mr. C. Dated *Feb. 7, 1757.*

THE Collection of *Books* which I lately received, is the most important assistance to me in the discharge of my ministry; that I can expect from mortals. It dissolved me into a flood of grateful tears, and has sent me more than once to return my thanks to Him, who is the *Origin* of all that good, of which his creatures, in the height of their benevolence, are but *subordinate* instruments.

You, dear Sir, and the other Contributors to this pious Charity, may indulge the generous pleasure of reflecting, that many of the most wretched part of mankind, at the distance of near *four thousand miles* from you, are likely to be advanced, by your means, from a state of *Slavery, Barbarism,* and exposedness to *everlasting Misery*, to the glorious *Liberty*, the divine *Refinements*, and the *everlasting Happiness* of the *Sons of God*.

I have not the face to solicit you for additional Charity, but, as you may, perhaps, have some money left in your hands, I shall point out two defects in the former collections, for the use of the Negroes; the one is, that there were but few of *Dr. Watts's Catechisms*, especially the second Set; both which are peculiarly adapted to their capacities; and sundry of them have already, in about a month, learned the first Set by heart, and are
ready

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ready for the other. The other defect is, the want of *Spelling Books*, for those who are now eager to learn to read, but are not as yet capable of using the other books. I have had a few sent to me, but they are all gone, and the demand for more is every day more urgent.

I have really considerable hopes, that by means of this pious Charity, the greatest number of the *Negroes*, in the bounds of my congregation and Mr. *Todd's*, will, in time, acquire the Art of Reading; an art of so much importance to their religious instruction. And if a considerable number of the *present* Generation were taught, they might teach *their Posterity* with little trouble to their Masters: And thus, a taste for intellectual improvement would circulate among them; and they would unavoidably come to *know* something of Christianity, which is the first step towards *embracing* it. I derive my hopes of this, both from the general eagerness that now appears among the *Negroes* to learn to read; and from the emulation to teach them, which has been excited in their *Masters*, by the generosity and zeal of the Friends of Religion with you. Every good scheme will certainly meet with opposition in such a world as this, where it is popular and fashionable to neglect the Son of God, and his Religion. But I have encouragement to hope, that the generality of my people, who are Proprietors of four or five hundred *Negroes*, will make a conscience of teaching them to read.

Your

Your accounts of the Progress of Religion, especially in the *Church of England*, are so reviving, that I must endeavour to retaliate you in that article: And this will lead me to play the *Biographer* with some of my brethren, without their privity: But, I dare say, they know I love them so well, that they can venture to trust their characters in my hands.

Virginia, was for five or six years a melancholy and laborious solitude to me, separated from my brethren, and surrounded with enemies in Church and State. During that time, I passed my life in a continual tremor; but since I have found myself enabled to stand my ground, I begin to collect a little more confidence. I divided my labours among seven Congregations, fifteen or twenty miles a-part; which, being much too extensive a charge for me, Mr. TODD was prevailed upon to relieve me from the care of four of them. Since his settlement, I have had a most intimate Friend, and an honest-hearted Assistant. His characteristics are, *Solidity, Sincerity, and Steadiness*. He has no *Compliments*, nor *Affectation* in Religion, Friendship, or any thing whatever; but he is all of a-piece, *sincere and honest all through*. I enjoyed the time of harvest in his congregation; and there has been no remarkable revival there, since his settlement: But he has gathered up some considerable gleanings; and his honest heart is set upon doing more good.

Mr. WRIGHT was appointed to supply my place for half a year, while I was in *England*: And, after that, at the invitation of a few

C

serious

serious people, he preached a Sermon or two in *Cumberland*, a county about eighty miles south west of *Hanover*. Here a surprizing scene opened: The plain Preaching of the Gospel did execution, and carried all before it; and in a little time, he was settled among them as their Minister, and has now about *two hundred* Communicants; and sundry more are under promising impressions. He is a plain, pungent, convincing Preacher; and has a remarkable talent for useful conversation. I sent him a share of the last cargo of *Books*, as well as the first; and he is as fit a person to distribute them, as can be fixed upon.

Mr. HENRY, who is settled about an hundred and thirty miles from hence, is one of the most honest men in the world. Indeed, I have hardly ever known a man, whose heart has been so steadily and zealously set upon the Salvation of souls, for so many years. It is his ruling passion, and the labour of his life. He has little regard to the accuracies of composition; and he is often rallying me for the offences I commit of that kind, which you would think are but very few, and very pardonable.

He informed me a few days ago, that he hopes he has about *thirty* spiritual children in his congregation, where he has been settled about two years; and I know he is not extravagant in computations of this kind.

There are two of my Brethren, Mess. CRAIGHEAD and BROWN, settled on the frontiers among the *Apulachian* mountains: But the congregation of the former has been broke

broke up, and he obliged to fly, by the incur-
sions and barbarities of the *Indian Savages*.
The latter has stood his ground as yet, tho'
in perpetual apprehensions of danger; and,
when I saw him last, he told me some young
people in his congregation were under very
hopeful impressions.

SAM. DAVIES.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev.
Mr. *Davies* at *Hanover* in *Virgi-*
nia to the Rev. Mr. F——.
Feb. 7, 1757.

I HAVE *four* or *five* congregations under my
care; and there are *five other* Ministers in
the colony, as honest-hearted, and as zealous
as you could wish, who, though settled at a
great distance, no less than an hundred miles
from *Hanover*, assist in promoting the same
common cause—I mean the cause of *catholic*
Christianity, and not of the Dissenters as a
political Faction: For, in this view, I care but
little which Party is uppermost. I have also
had such generous assistance from my worthy
Friends in ENGLAND, as has more than
once dissolved me into floods of joy, and the
most tender gratitude towards God and man.
I have reason to hope a divine blessing has
already attended, and will yet more abun-
dantly attend their pious Charity, among both
bond and *free*, *white* and *black*.

C 2

For

28 LETTERS from the

For about a year and half past, I have had more success than usual among the POOR NEGROES. I have baptized in all an *hundred and fifty Adults*, and at the last sacramental occasion, I had the honour (for so I esteem it) of sitting down at the Table of the Lord, with *sixty* of them. I have now a few more *Catechumens* for baptism under instruction, but I am not without fears, that the progress of the work has been in some measure declining for about a month, or two past. The only ground of my apprehension is, that I have not had so many new Profelytes applying to me for instruction, as for some time before. However, multitudes are as *eager to learn* as before: Some, from a pious thirst after Christian knowledge; some, from curiosity; and some, from ambition: But, whatever be the present principle, I hope *many happy effects* will flow from this acquisition, as it will render them more capable of being their *own* instructors, and of receiving instruction from *others*. Their natural genius is not at all discouraging, and when they set about learning in earnest, it is astonishing what *Progress* some of them make, though with little leisure or assistance.

I have an instance of this among *my domestics*: I have made it a point of Conscience to teach such of them to read, who seemed to me capable of learning. The person I have in view, was above forty years old, when he entered into my service; a very *stupid, lubberly fellow* in appearance, and but very imperfectly acquainted with our language. I
therefore

therefore despaired of his ever being capable of being taught to read, and resolved to instruct him in the principles of Christianity in the best manner I could without it. But, he, unexcited by me, some how learned the letters, and began to spell, and before I so much as suspected it, he was almost prepared to read. Upon this, I encouraged him, and furnished him with *Books*, and now he can read *English* almost as intelligibly, as he can speak it. He can give but a very broken account of his Religion in *Words*, but when I look to his *Life*, there I can see the CHRISTIAN. He is a faithful servant, and generally inoffensive to all. He has been sometimes overheard in *secret Prayer*, perhaps for half an hour, or more, when it has been past midnight, and he supposed the rest of the family were in their beds.

I hope, if the *present Generation* were taught to read, they would themselves take care to teach *their Children* without any expence or trouble to their Masters, and therefore I have been using my endeavours with the owners to assist them. A Sermon on this head I have sent to our common Friend Mr. C——, which, I hope, he may be able to get Printed by Subscription, that it may be *distributed gratis* in VIRGINIA, among those who most need it, and are most unwilling to purchase such things.

I hope the generality of those whom I have baptized, *behave in character*, though some of them, unpolished as they are, have had art enough to impose upon my charity. It is

30 LETTERS from the

really the hardest task I have to perform, to deal with them in a proper manner. I am afraid of *discouraging* them, as well as acting contrary to the Apostolical Pattern, by imposing high terms of admission to baptism; and I am cautious on the other hand of swelling the number of Profelytes with only *nominal* Christians, if I should reduce the terms of initiation into it, very low.

I find it the hardest thing in the world at once to convince their judgments, and make their minds properly sensible of the Reasonableness, the Glory, and the Necessity of a *Mediatorial Religion*; or, in other words, of the *Christian Scheme of Salvation* by JESUS CHRIST. They have generally very high notions of the necessity and efficacy of *Baptism*. Indeed, it seems to be their common opinion, when they first become a little thoughtful, and uneasy in a state of Heathenism, that if they were but baptized, they should become Christians instantaneously; and it is hard to convince them of the necessity of proper preparatory qualifications for it.

Many of them only seem to desire to be, they know not what: They feel themselves uneasy in their *present* condition, and therefore desire a *change*. Others, I fear, would be baptized in compliance with the *Fashion*, and that they may be upon an *Equality* with their Masters: Many such converse with me; whom I am obliged to exclude from that Ordinance. In general, I make their temper and conduct, rather than their speculative notions, the standard of my judgment concerning

ing them; and when I can discover the Feeling, and Practice of a *Christian*, I think them proper members of a *Christian Church*, although they should be very ignorant of many of its important doctrines.

There is, however, a number of them, who, I have not the least reason to doubt, are the *genuine Children of Abraham* by faith; and some of them seem to have made a greater progress in experimental Religion, than many sincere Christians of a fairer colour. Some of them are, indeed, astonishing monuments of divine Grace. There are *ten* of them in one quarter (so we call the little houses where the Negroes dwell) who, I have reason to hope, are all, or at least, nine in ten, sincerely and zealously engaged in the doctrines and duties of our holy Religion. This, indeed, is an instance, which, I am afraid, can hardly be paralleled, among either white or black, in these Parts. But there are other instances very remarkable, though not so surprizing—

SAMUEL DAVIES.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev.
Mr. *Davies* at *Hanover* in *Virginia*
to Mr. *B. F.* Feb. 7, 1757.

I HAVE allowed my Friend Mr. *Wright* a Part of the Books I have at sundry times received, to be distributed in his congregation, where there are uncommon appearances of the progress of Religion: Some time ago
I re-

32 LETTERS from the

I received a Letter from him with the following Paragraph, intended to be communicated to the Society.

“ I take this opportunity to express my
“ gratitude for the Books you sent me at
“ sundry times this Spring, before I had any
“ claim as a Member of the SOCIETY to
“ which I now have the honour to belong.
“ And I desire to adore God for raising up
“ such a spirit of disinterested and pious ge-
“ nerosity in so many in *Great Britain*, as
“ to contrive so noble a scheme for promo-
“ ting *religious Knowledge* among those who
“ were like to be destroyed for lack of know-
“ ledge.”

“ You may inform them that my infant
“ congregation, in these uttermost parts of
“ the earth, is like to receive an everlasting
“ advantage by their pious Charity. I have
“ had no opportunity of discovering the suc-
“ cess of the books, except in two instances.
“ The *first*, is a woman, singularly inquisi-
“ tive; who, upon reading *The Compassionate*
“ *Address*, told me, she had got so much ad-
“ vantage by it, that she would give ten
“ Pistoles for it, rather than part with it:
“ The *other* is a boy, who had just finished
“ his servitude: He could hardly read a word,
“ and was not able to buy a book, but hear-
“ ing that I had books to distribute gratis,
“ he applied to me for some, and the books
“ I gave him, with the serious advices that
“ attended them, were so far blessed to him,
“ that

“ that he is now under promising serious im-
 “ pressions.”

“ In short, Sir, I cannot express the plea-
 “ sing expectations I have that God will do
 “ great things in these remote parts by the
 “ *diffusive Benevolence* of the Society, and
 “ other good Christians. Pray convey this
 “ account to the Society, and you will lay
 “ an additional obligation, upon

Cumberland County,
 Sept. 7, 1756.

Yours, &c.
John Wright.

I have also intrusted my favourite friend and next neighbour, Mr. *Todd*, with the distribution of a number in his congregation. And he tells me, that *The Compassionate Address* was likely to be of great service in a particular neighbourhood.

I will add one instance more in the bounds of my congregation, and that is, a Gentleman who accidentally met with the same *excellent Address*; and when he cast his eye into it, it so engaged his attention, that he could not put it out of his hands, until he had read it through; and he told one of my Friends, that it gave him the *most solemn* and *affecting* thoughts of eternal things, that ever he had in his life. May his goodness not be as the morning cloud! *That little Book, Dodderidge's Rise and Progress, and Baxter's Call*, are, I think, the most popular and useful Books among the white People in *Virginia* ———

SAMUEL DAVIES.

Copy

Copy of a Letter from the Rev.
Mr. Todd at Hanover in Virginia
to Mr. C. Feb. 3, 1757.

Dear SIR,

A FEW Weeks ago I received a Box OF BOOKS sent to me by you, and other good Friends to the immortal interests of the *Negroes* and *Poor* in this distant Part of the world.

I was very much struck, upon first receiving the BOOKS, with a sense of the marvellous Goodness of God, in putting it into the hearts of his people, to present so large and bounteous a Charity, so unexpectedly; where it is so much wanted, and of that kind which was most needful in these parts, and best calculated to answer the pious and charitable intentions of the Donors.

I have often returned Thanks to the God of all Goodness for the favour, and feel myself under greater obligations to improve this, with the other favours received from him, to the honour of his Name and the good of my fellow creatures. Nothing could have more seasonably answered my wishes for the good of the POOR within the sphere of my labours, both *Negroes* and *white* People, than this.

Many among the *white* People are amazingly ignorant, and many are very poor, and some very desirous of improvement in the

the knowledge of God and Religion. The *Negroes* are generally desirous of knowledge, and have often applied to me for Books, as they had none, and had no way to get any. I furnished them as well as I could, but neither to their satisfaction, or my own, and their want still increases, as their sense of Religion increases. Now this will be a very great relief to them, and me, and I have great hopes a remarkable Blessing will attend it.

From the little experiments I have already made, I know they will very thankfully receive the books, and many will carefully improve them. I had a few of the books sent to *Virginia* to my favourite Brother Mr. *Davies*, from that Society, which I believe, and am persuaded, God has raised up for the most important purposes: And as they were calculated to do much good, so my People, both white and black, were so taken with them, that they appointed, with my approbation, to meet on the LORD'S DAY in private societies, to *read*, and *pray*, and *sing Praises*.

This is the more necessary, as the three Places where I stately preach, are so far distant from each other, that it is impossible for them to hear me at all of them, being fourteen or twenty miles distant from each other at the least; so that the *Sabbath* which used to be spent in idle visits, or meetings for diversion, or servile business (which has been very common among the Slaves) is now spent in societies for *religious Worship*, when they cannot attend upon the Preaching of the
 Word,

Word, and *these Books* will greatly promote this work by the blessing of God.

About *two hundred*, or *more*, attend my ministry in good weather, at each of my places, to whom I often lower my style in my Sermons, and address them in a plain and pathetic manner: I sometimes give previous notice, that I intend to preach particularly to them; then vast crowds attend with remarkable seriousness, and shew themselves very thankful for such a favour, and some are deeply impressed with divine things. At such Sermons, the bulk of my *white* hearers are generally much affected, and manifest great satisfaction; which, by the way, is an additional conviction to me, that the most plain, pathetic, and solemn discourses, warmly addressed to the Conscience, are most likely to save perishing sinners of *all* colours.

I intend to preach a Sermon to the *Negroes*, and let them know the great obligations they are under to God for his goodness, in making this *additional Provision* for them, and the importance of making a right improvement of *this Donation*, and I shall examine them as to the knowledge they gain hereby, and am not without hopes, that many will improve in the knowledge of God and true Religion by *these helps*. I have had the pleasure of hearing them sing the Praises of God, and praying together, when others have been in their beds; and now they will have a variety of good helps, I hope the work will go on with *greater advantage*.

I acknow-

Rev. Mr. DAVIES, &c. 37

I acknowledge myself, and do in the name of your poor Beneficiaries acknowledge the great obligations we are under to our *London Friends*. I believe a Charity was never better bestowed, and doubt not but that these Poor will put up many earnest Prayers for their good Friends beyond the great waters.

I am, &c.

JOHN TODD.

Copy of a Letter from the Rev.
Mr. *Davies* at *Hanover* in *Virginia* to *J. F.* Feb. 15, 1757.

Dear S I R,

IN my Letters to my other correspondents who are Members of the Society, there are so many paragraphs relating to the reception and distribution of the books I lately received, that I need not enlarge in my account to you.

Such *liberal Assistance* to me in the discharge of my office, especially that branch of it which relates to the *Negroes*, could not fail of affecting me with the most ardent gratitude to God and man. And my pleasure has been much increased by the promising appearances of *its Success* among multitudes.

Every new benefaction of Books sets hundreds upon attempting to *read* with fresh ea-

first application to me. Many come to me, who have not yet learned, but tell me, they are eager to make trial, and want books for that purpose: Among these I have divided the *Spelling Books*, which were sent to me from some private hands, and I bid them come to me when they have learned them, and let me see they can read, and then I shall furnish them with other books.

This method I take, to prevent the abuse of the *Books*, which they are not capable of using at present; for besides those who endeavour to learn, from a desire of Christian knowledge, there are others who are excited to it by ambition, and natural curiosity; and, as these are not, I am afraid, under the influence of a conscientious Principle, I do not think it proper to trust them too far, but oblige them to be honest, by keeping them under my eye. Some of these, who have had *Spelling Books* but about six weeks, have already come to me, and read pretty well; and one or two of them have repeated *Watts's first Set of Catechisms* with great ease.

This Charity seems also to have a very good effect upon the *Masters*: They justly infer, that if it be the concern of *Strangers*, at the distance of near four thousand miles, to propagate Christianity among their domestics, it is much more *their own*, who enjoy the fruit of their painful service, and to whose care they are immediately intrusted. Sundry of my People are at the expence of sending their *young Negroes* to school, and others take pains to teach them at home; or, having taught

one

one of them, they make him a teacher to the rest.

I have sent a number of the *Books* to my worthy Brethren Mess. *Wright* and *Henry*, to be distributed in their congregations; and I know they will discharge the trust with the utmost cheerfulness and fidelity. In my Letter to your Brother, you will find some account of the use Mr. *Wright* has made of a former Parcel. And since I sent him some of the *last*, he writes to me — “Yesterday about
 “ twenty Negroes came to my lodgings for
 “ BOOKS; and after public and private ad-
 “ dresses to them, I made a distribution of
 “ most of the parcel you were so good as to
 “ send me. The contributions of our dear
 “ Friends in *South Britain* seem to raise a
 “ very promising disposition in many of the
 “ *Negroes.*”

I also sent Mr. *Richardson* a large share of the *last* cargo, to distribute in his neighbourhood, where white and black have but very sorry means of instruction. He has an unusual degree of zeal for the conversion of the Negroes, although in a private station; and when he has finished his studies, I hope he will be a successful missionary among the *Indian Savages*, towards whom his heart is set.

I am in great hopes, that this little harvest among the *Africans*, is but a Presage of one more extensive among the *Indian Natives* of

40 LETTERS from the

seven thousand souls; and the latter of about a thousand. I give this hint to the Society, meerly, for the sake of the pleasure, which, I know, such intelligence will afford them.

I doubt not, dear Sir, but you will continue your zealous efforts in this Apostolic service; and, I am in hopes, a divine blessing will attend it. *Spelling Books*, and *Watts's two Sets of Catechisms*, are now most wanted among the Negroes.

I must request you, Sir, to return my most affectionate acknowledgments, with those of their poor grateful Beneficiaries, to all those generous persons, who, as *Members of the Society*, or in a *private Character*, have contributed towards this important Charity.

I am, &c.

SAM. DAVIES.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev.
Mr. Davies to the Rev. Mr. G.
March 17, 1757.

I REALLY hope the valuable collection of Books I have received from my *British* Friends, are likely to be blessed for saving many souls from death, in these ends of the earth; and such an assistance to me in the discharge of my ministry among white and black, has frequently dissolved my heart into a flood of gratitude towards God and man.

It seems to me, my dear Brother, that the good People in *London* are determined to make
one

one bold push in the cause of CHRIST, which has been declining for so many years. They spare no expence of money or labour; but esteem doing good, though at the distance of four thousand miles, and among the lowest parts of human nature, as a self-rewarding duty. By their means, I hope a number of *poor African Slaves* will be made the Lord's free men; and a number of *Indian Savages*, in time, will be divinely polished into meek disciples of the harmless Lamb of GOD. Blessed be the Origin of all good! his creatures, in the height of their benevolence, are but his instruments.

Oh my dear Brother! could we spend and be spent, all our lives, in painful, disinterested, indefatigable services for God and the world, how serene and bright would it render the swift approaching eve of life. I am labouring to do a little to save my Country, and which is of much more consequence to save *Souls*—those precious, immortal things, *Souls!* from *Death*—from that tremendous kind of death, which a *Soul* can die. I have but little success of late; but, blessed be God, it surpasses my expectations, and much more my desert. Some of my Brethren, particularly Mr. *Henry* and Mr. *Wright*, labour to better purpose. The pleasure of the Lord prospers in their hands. —————

Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Town to his Friend in the Country,

Containing some Observations on the foregoing LETTERS.

GIVE me leave, Sir, to make one Observation before I send this long Letter, which is, that though by Mr. *Davies's* Account, his success has, for some weeks before he wrote, seemed to decline, and some of his Negroes have disappointed his expectations, yet Providence has abundantly made up this complaint (which I hope will not last long) by the accession of others, who are with success building on the foundation he has had the honour to lay.

In the third Letter is the first Account we have ever had of these new labourers in our great Master's vineyard; and if I am not greatly mistaken in my calculation, what they have already done, greatly exceeds all the Accounts we ever had before, whilst the work was confined within his own diocess. Mr. *Wright* has two hundred added to his church since he came among them, and though he is not very express, what number of these were Negroes, the difference with me is not great; for, whatever joy the accession of these unhappy slaves will always give me, I do not doat so much on their colour, as to be inattentive to, or unthankful for the Progress of the

the Gospel among the *Natives* of *Virginia*; as I am afraid the greatest part of them were almost as *ignorant*, and quite as *vicious*, as the worst of those *Africans*.

Mr. *Todd* has constantly six hundred Negroes attending the three places of public Worship where he preaches, with *remarkable Seriousness*; and some are *deeply impressed* with *divine things*. Mr. *Henry*, who, I think, is one of the last who has settled in *Virginia*, has had the honour of begetting thirty spiritual Children; in which calculation, Mr. *Davies* says, he is, by no means extravagant. What colour these are of I do not know, but in *Christ Jesus* they are all one.

The two worthy Ministers who have carried their labours among the *Apulachian* mountains, the wildest and most barbarous part of *America*, are not without seals to their ministry even there. Thus, my dear Sir, when God gives the Word, great will be the number of those that publish it; and as he never sends any, where he has not some work for them to do, and some People to be gathered in; I have good reason to hope that multitudes will be added, by their means, to the Church, of such as shall be saved.

My time will not permit me to add any more, except, what I hope you will pardon me for observing, as I am sure it is a reflection you stand in no need of; *viz.* that those families which were sufficient for Mr. *Davies*.

of so many new labourers. God has provided more *Teachers*, and opened more mouths to receive *divine Nourishment*, and it would be pity that any of them should perish, for want of it. The divine Providence has enlarged the vineyard, and it is our duty to take care it is properly planted. He hath strengthened their hands, and inclined their hearts to the work, and shall we weaken them by denying tools to work with?

They will meet with discouragement enough, when we have exerted our utmost to support them. I am afraid, they often preach in hunger, and nakedness, and some of them in danger of their lives. They make no complaints of these, they ask no augmentation of their salaries, and shall we refuse them the only thing they petition for; the means of diffusing the fruits of their personal labours, where they frequently cannot go themselves, by spreading the labours of others, especially the sacred Oracles of Truth, among such as have no means to procure them.

I acknowledge with thankfulness, my friends have done generously, perhaps some of them even beyond their ability; but permit me still to hope, that either they will not be weary of well-doing, or Providence will raise up others to carry on the most useful Charity that was ever set on foot in these kingdoms. —

TO FE 60

F I N I S.