

My dear Child!

D. G. March 29<sup>th</sup> 1851.

[Dorchester Ga.]

Mr. Harris, I hope, has had an opp.<sup>n</sup> of seeing you & preparing your mind for that melancholy intelligence, & it is now my office to communicate. This dear little creature, so repeatedly the most anxious object of our hopes & fears, & so retained so long in this world by a degree of solicitude & watchfulness in his medical & domestic attendants, that was never exceeded in any human beings to another: he left us about six o'clock this morning. Some internal complaint, incurable & unknown, has been preying upon his life in all probability from the first hour of his existence; & his relapses after apparent convalescence made us at length slowly despair of his recovery to health & strength: so that his release became desirable, as the less of two great evils.

It is not necessary to inform you of the unabating afflictions of your mother; but I sh<sup>d</sup>. not do justice to your sister, if I did not tell you,

That parental fondness c<sup>d</sup> not surpass his anxiety  
& interest in the sufferings of his little angel. When  
I reflect on the trials <sup>of</sup> your mother has undergone,  
is constantly vituperating his cruel torments in her soliti-  
tary condition, without that support & consolation, w<sup>ch</sup>  
my presence might have contributed; & when I re-  
collect the raptures, ~~both~~ <sup>of</sup> she has told me of  
his personal attentions & the drawings of his un-  
derstanding; I feel for her a degree of sympathy, w<sup>ch</sup>  
no words are able to express: but we have resigned  
ourselves, I trust, to this bitter cup, as salutary  
in its effects, though painful in its operation: & con-  
-solate ourselves under a persuasion, that life so pro-  
-tracted without effectual relief c<sup>d</sup> only have proved  
a prolongation of torment to himself, <sup>with</sup> unceasing dis-  
-quietude & unavailing commiseration to us all.

We, who survive, my dear Child!  
must make a proper use of this calamitous event  
in redoubling our affectionate attentions to each  
other, & in preparing ourselves by every act of reci-

proval benevolence to mollify our mutual sorrows through the  
remembrance of our pilgrimages, that we may live & die in the  
exercise of all kind offices & the cultivation of every friendly con-  
-tract with ourselves & all our connections.

As the melancholy event has agitated our feelings  
during the last week, the execution of your men for robbers, I  
felt an unusual interest in their situation; & as they were ex-  
-ceedingly ignorant, I soon desirous, that some attention sh<sup>d</sup> be paid  
-them beyond the formal & unimprovised duties of the chaplain.  
The time was short, but I obtained leave to visit them from  
the magistrates, & I was with them five different times. I em-  
-ployed the opportunities to the utmost capacity of their atten-  
-tion & understanding; & I enjoyed the satisfaction of perceiving  
as well as learning from the reports of their attendants, that  
their minds, in consequence of my instructions & admonitions, for  
a sensible & improved sense of things, soon settled into that  
-serenity of resignation & decency of temper, w<sup>ch</sup> their situation

required. It is universally allowed, that no man ever met death with more tranquil resolution, than these poor creatures. Nay, one, who had been uncommonly dismayed at first, & had expected a reprieve, declared himself so resigned to suffer the will of God, as to feel no desire of deliverance; & they welcomed the summons to the execution with a readiness & cheerfulness that commanded the admiration of the beholders; those lamentations & sorrows, & noise among the rest, formed a striking contrast to their steadiness & silence, & magnanimity.

Adieu! my dear God! & may we all learn, not only to acquiesce in our afflictions, but to rejoice & glory in them with the apostle, as merciful dispensations of God towards us for our improvement in holiness & virtue.

Your dearest mother & sister affectionately remember you: & convey our kind remembrance to all our relations & friends at Notton.

Betsey at present is inconsolable. Your mother supports this affliction better.

I remain, my dear!  
your most affectionate  
Father & Friend  
Gilbert Wakefield

1996-2-10-0

F. L. Richardson

2956 WAKEFIELD (Rev. Gilbert, 1756-1801). Scholar and Controversial Writer. Adopted Unitarian Views. Edited various classics. Imprisoned for writing a seditious pamphlet. A.L.S. to his daughter. 4 pp., 4to. Dorchester Gaol, 29th March, 1801. £2 10s

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A long letter written whilst serving his term of imprisonment. He gives a graphic account of the execution of four men for robbery. " . . . Another melancholy event has agitated our feelings during the last week, the execution of four men for robberies. . . . I obtained leave to visit them from the magistrates, & I was with them five different times. . . . I enjoyed the satisfaction of perceiving that their minds, in consequence of my instructions & admonitions, from a rambling and confused sense of things, soon settled into that serenity of resignation & decency of firmness, which their situation required. It is universally admitted that no men ever met death with more tranquil resolution, than these poor creatures. Nay, one, who had been uncommonly dismayed at first, & had expected a reprieve, declared himself so resigned to suffer the will of God as to feel no desire of deliverance, & they welcomed the summons to the execution with a readiness & even cheerfulness that commanded the admiration of beholders." Etc

16 EARLE (John) Micro-Cosmography; or, A piece of the world characterized; in Essays and Characters. 12". London. Printed A.D. 1659, Salisbury, Reprinted 1786.

On a fly-leaf is the signature "Gilbert Wakefield, 1798," with an autograph note by him: "After the manner of Theophrastus, & with an execution, at least equal to their exemplar." GILBERT WAKEFIELD (1756-1801) was a distinguished scholar, and an intimate friend of Priestley.

On another fly-leaf is the inscription:—"To W. H. Ainsworth, Bexley, Feb. 16, 1841." Below this WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH has written:—"From J. T. Rutt. Given, a few days before Mr. Rutt's death. W. H. A."

JOHN TOWELL RUTT (1760-1841), politician and man of letters, was on close terms of intimacy with Priestley and Wakefield; he was co-editor of the enlarged edition of Wakefield's *Memoirs* in 1804. He died at Bexley on the 3rd of March, 1841.

B-196 Original tree calf. £3

D. G. March 29th 1801.

(Dorchester Goal)

My dear Child !

Mr. Harris, I hope, has had an opp<sup>y</sup> of seeing you and preparing your mind for that melancholy intelligence, w<sup>h</sup> it is now my office to communicate. This dear little creature, so repeatedly the most anxious object of our hopes & fears, c<sup>d</sup> be retained no longer in this world by a degree of solicitude and watchfulness in his medical & domestic attendants, that was never exceeded in any human beings to another; he left us about six o'clock this morning. Some internal complaints, incurable & unknown, has been preying upon his life in all probability from the first hour of his existence; & his relapses after apparent convalescence made us at length wholly despair of his recovery to health & strength; so that his release became desirable, as the less of two great evils.

It is not necessary to inform you of the unabating assiduities of your Mother; but I sh<sup>d</sup> not do justice to your sister, if I did not tell you that parental fondness c<sup>d</sup> not surpass her anxiety & interest in the sufferings of this little angel. When I reflect on the trials w<sup>h</sup> your Mother has undergone, in constantly witnessing his cruel torments in her solitary condition, without that support & consolation, w<sup>h</sup> my presence might have contributed; and, when I recollect the raptures, with w<sup>h</sup> she has told me of his personal allurements & the dawnings of his understanding, I feel for her a degree of sympathy, w<sup>h</sup> no words are able to express; but we have resigned ourselves, I trust, to this bitter cup, as salutary in its effects, though painful in its operation, & console ourselves under a

persuasion that life so protracted without effectual relief, c<sup>d</sup> only have proved a prolongation of torment to himself and with unceasing disquietude & unavailing commiseration to us all.

We, who survive, my dear Child ! must make a proper use of this calamitous event in redoubling our affectionate attentions to each other & in preparing ourselves by every act of reciprocal benevolence to smoothe our mutual sorrows through the remainder of our pilgrimage, that we may live & die in the exercise of all kind offices & the cultivation of every friendly sentiment with ourselves & all our connections.

Another melancholy event has agitated our feelings during the last week, the execution of four men for robberies. I felt an unusual interest in their situation, & as they were extremely ignorant, I was desirous that some attention sh<sup>d</sup> be paid them beyond the formal & unimpassioned duties of the chaplain. The time was short, but I obtained leave to visit them from the magistrates & I was with them five different times. I employed the opportunities to the utmost capacity of their attentions & understandings, & I enjoyed the satisfaction of perceiving, as well as learning from the reports of their attendants, that their minds, in consequence of my instructions & admonitions, from a rambling & confused sense of things, soon settled into that serenity of resignation & decency of firmness wh<sup>h</sup> their situation required. It is universally allowed, that no person ever met death with more tranquil resolution than these poor creatures. Nay, one, who had been uncommonly dismayed at first, & had expected a reprieve, declared himself so resigned to suffer the will of God as to feel no desire of deliverance;

& they welcomed the summons to the execution with a readiness & even cheerfulness that commanded the admiration of the beholders; whose lamentations & sorrows, & mine among the rest, formed a striking contrast to their steadiness & silence & magnanimity.

Adieu ! my dear Girl ! and may we all learn not only to acquiesce in our afflictions, but to rejoice & glory in them with the apostle, as merciful dispensations of God towards us for our improvement in holiness & virtue.

Your dearest Mother & sister affectionately remember you & convey our kind remembrances to all our relatives & friends at Nott<sup>m</sup>.

Betsy at present is inconsolable.

Your mother supports this affliction better.

I remain, my dear !

Your most affectionate

Father & friend

Gilbert Wakefield.