The John Custis Letterbook, 1724 to 1734

John Custis

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Custis, John

THE JOHN CUSTIS LETTERBOOK
1724 to 1734

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Josephine Zuppan
1978
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Approved, August 1978

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Most of all the writer wants to thank her husband and family for their continuing support and encouragement.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to present an edited transcription of a ten-year portion of the letter book of John Custis IV (1678-1749) of Williamsburg, a wealthy planter and member of the Virginia governor's council (1727-1749).

Sixty-one letters were recorded by Custis between 1724 and 1734. They were addressed to such individuals as James Blair, William Byrd II, Mark Catesby, Mrs. Hugh Drysdale, Richard Fitzwilliam, Charles Higgs, Hugh Howard, Lyonel Lyde, Dunbar Parke, Mrs. Gilbert Pepper, and Micajah Perry. The letters largely concern his business affairs in selling his tobacco on consignment with merchants in London, Bristol, and Glasgow.

His comments on the tobacco inspection act of 1730, which had been promoted by Governor William Gooch, are particularly noteworthy for students of the British colonial commercial system.

The letters also deal with a law suit against Custis as the holder of the Virginia estate of Daniel Parke II, his father-in-law.

The letter book is preceded by a descriptive introduction and a biographical sketch of John Custis that seeks to show how the contents of the letter book sheds new light on the man, who is remembered primarily for his unusual tombstone located on Virginia's Eastern Shore.
THE JOHN CUSTIS LETTER BOOK

1724 to 1734
INTRODUCTION

The letter book of John Custis of Williamsburg covers the years 1717 through 1742, during which time Custis recorded a total of some 145 letters. The sixty-one letters for the ten years from 1724 to 1734 are transcribed and edited here. They represent Custis's mature years from the age of 46 to 56. Most of the letters from this period have not been previously published. His letters to William Byrd II, his brother-in-law, are included in the recent publication of The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776, edited by Marion Tinling, and his extensive correspondence with Peter Collinson, who was devoted to promoting botany and horticulture, was published over twenty years ago in E. G. Swem's Brothers of the Spade: Correspondence of Peter Collinson, of London, and of John Custis, of Williamsburg, Virginia, 1734-1746.

The letters Custis recorded from 1724 to 1734 show his involvement in the political life of the colony but are perhaps more important for what they reveal about the economic concerns of a wealthy planter who owned thousands of acres of land and two hundred slaves. Custis represents the third generation of his family to be successful enough in Virginia to win a place on the colonial governor's council. And his self-confidence is evident in the tone of his letters, although he observes the customary eighteenth-century forms of politeness.
Exactly which letters Custis choose to record is an interesting question. The letter book does not represent all of his letters. Earl Greg Swem found that Collinson noted receiving at least one more letter than Custis recorded, and William Byrd mentioned in his diaries receiving letters from Custis that are not found in the letter book. In the letters presented here, Custis mentions to his merchant Micajah Perry that he had already sent two other letters, but no other letters to Perry are recorded for that year. Custis may well have had other letter books, for while this one contains primarily business correspondence, there are no letters of instructions to his overseers or to the many men to whom he loaned considerable sums of money. The book does, however, seem to contain only letters written to correspondents overseas; thus his letters to William Byrd in England are preserved here—as are letters to Commissary Blair and Richard Fitz—william when they traveled to England.

The physical survival of the letter book was guaranteed when Custis recorded his letters concerning the handling of the law suit of Dunbar Parke of the Leeward Islands against him for the recovery of debts supposedly owed by Daniel Parke II (Custis's father-in-law) in the islands. The law suit dragged on for years after Custis's death, involving not only Custis's son Daniel Parke Custis but also Daniel's widow, Martha, and her second husband, George Washington. The occasion of the law suit is outlined in the Custis biographical sketch that follows this introduction.
Custis's letters, nevertheless, are probably most important for what they reveal about the tobacco trade from the perspective of a wealthy, shrewd colonial planter who maintained cash balances with his British merchants. Custis's position on the governor's council and location in the colonial capital guaranteed that he would be current with the latest developments in British and Virginian mercantile policies. His two letters to Richard Fitzwilliam reveal much about the way Virginia politics were conducted and about Governor William Gooch's role in creating the tobacco inspection act of 1730. The price of tobacco and the size of the anticipated crop form unifying threads of concern throughout the letter book. The cycles of the tobacco trade are revealed here in very personal terms. But it is Custis's involvement in the Dunbar Parke law suit that gives this section of his letter book the slight flavor of an epistolary novel.

Custis's letters in this letter book are apparently drafts of those sent. Words are crossed out and sentences and phrases inserted showing the care he took in composing the letters. His choice of expressions can be memorable. He wrote William Byrd that if he came home while Alexander Spotswood was still governor, he would have no more peace than a toad under a harrow. He told Richard Fitzwilliam that he hoped the 1730 tobacco inspection act would travel to England and like the air so much there that it would not return to Virginia. After complaining to his merchant Micajah Perry about the low prices obtained for tobacco sold to Holland, he maintained that he was going to add "from A dutch account good Lord deliver me" to his litany. In short, Custis's letters are valuable source material for the student of colonial Virginia and can be fascinating reading as well.
EDITORIAL METHOD

Every attempt has been made to render the text as faithfully to the original as possible in order to retain something of the spirit of the eighteenth century as well as for the sake of greater accuracy. Nevertheless the physical format of the letters recorded in the letter book is standardized and when possible dates and addressees are supplied in brackets where Custis omitted them. If he signed or initialed a letter, the signature or initials are run in with the body of the letter. For the text of the letters, the copy is followed closely in producing the typewritten transcript. Superscript letters and symbols are lowered to the line, the ampersand is retained, and no punctuation or capitalization is supplied, nor is the Latin *sic* used. All abbreviations, such as *ye*, *yt*, and *yn*, are, however, expanded to *the*, *that*, and *then*. Most other abbreviations are retained unless they could be confusing, such as *Sr* for *Sir*. This transcript represents an entirely independent rendition of Custis's letter book that has been checked against an earlier transcription made by Maude Woodfin and then checked line by line against the original manuscript at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

All matter interpolated in the text by the editor is underlined and enclosed in brackets. Notes are provided to indicate where the manuscript is torn, blotted, or otherwise defaced. The letter book,
some years ago, was taken apart, laminated for preservation, and rebound so that the present physical condition of the letter book provides few clues as to its original state. Two receipts which were evidently tucked in the letter book were bound in it according to their dates. These two extraneous pieces are given in Appendix I.

If there is any doubt about the rendition of a particular word, the word is enclosed in brackets with a question mark. Interlineations are brought down to the line of the text at the place indicated by Custis, and insertions of materials written after the close of the letter are made as he indicated but enclosed in double brackets and identified as such in an annotation. Canceled words and passages are omitted unless they contain something of particular interest in which case they are enclosed in brackets and identified. The editor has tried to limit the use of brackets in order to permit an easier reading of the text.

The editorial notes attempt to provide the reader with some assistance in interpreting Custis's letters. Where possible, a reasonably complete, brief identification of individuals mentioned is provided at their first occurrence in the text. For individuals whose names are scattered throughout the letter book, an appendix of brief biographies is provided. This biographies are indicated in the name index with an asterisk by the page number where they occur. Unfamiliar or archaic terms are defined from the *Oxford English Dictionary* and are supplied without a citation. The few letters and parts of letters included here that have been previously published are identified in the annotations.
JOHN CUSTIS IV: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Custis IV of Williamsburg--characterized by E. G. Swem as a "wealthy, eccentric and somewhat misunderstood Virginia planter"--was born into the ruling oligarchy. His father and grandfather, also named John Custis, had each in turn taken their places on the governor's council. As with many of the Virginian ruling families, his ancestors had been connected with trade, but according to Louis B. Wright, "this ancestral shortcoming" was no disadvantage in Virginia. Custis's grandfather had been born in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, where, Colonel Norwood claimed, his father (John Custis I) "kept a victualling house in that town, liv'd in good repute, and was the general host of our nation there."¹ Custis had evidently moved there after the fall of Charles I, and his inn was "much patronized by the Royalists who fled there."² Colonel Argall Yardley married his daughter Ann and either sold or gave her brother John 600 acres of land on Virginia's Eastern Shore in a transaction dated 1650. This John Custis II and his wife Elizabeth (Robinson) Custis sailed to Virginia. Whether John Custis I of Rotterdam ever came to Virginia is not clear, although Ralph T. Whitelaw found a record of a John Custis, Jr. and Sr. serving on the same Northampton jury in 1655, and John Custis II would have been about 25 years old at that time. John and his brother William were officially naturalized in 1658, having been in Virginia four years.
or more. Indeed, a John Custis signed a loyalty statement "to the Commonwealth of England as it is nowe Established without King or House of Lords" in March 1651. A passport for safe travel between The Netherlands and Virginia was issued to Custis by Lord Arlington on the command of Charles II, so the Custises must have made at least one trip back after initially coming to Virginia.

In 1659 John Custis II became high sheriff of Northampton County, one of the many public offices he held throughout his life. Susie M. Ames cites his acceptance of the post of coroner of Northampton and Accomack counties in 1671 as an example of an official of higher rank accepting a lower office and its fees. For his assistance to Governor William Berkeley during Bacon's Rebellion, he was honored with the position of Major General of the militia on the Eastern Shore in 1676 and was appointed to the council in 1677. Ten years later he received a commission as naval officer and collector of customs on the Eastern Shore.

Major General Custis's character is hinted at in a 1688 deposition by Mary Tilney. She quoted some of her neighbors as "'saying the severity and Rigidity' of Custis 'was soe greate that they doe noe else than . . . to call him King Custis.'" Earlier, when he had been sheriff, there had been complaints about him turning in an inaccurate list of tithables. His response, while refusing to swear an oath to the correctness of his list, had been to demand that his accuser confront him openly, but no one stepped forward.
Indications of growing wealth include the ownership of 110 sheep, out of 1,714 in Northampton County, in 1660. Six years later he reported fourteen tithables, the largest of the eighteen households in the county reporting five or more. Out of the total 426 tithables, 374 were white and 53 Negro. Governor Berkeley made Custis's Arlington plantation his headquarters during Bacon's Rebellion, which suggests that it may have been relatively large, or perhaps only advantageously located. Major General Custis's willingness personally to lend £1,000 sterling "for victuallng his Majestyes ships" during the uprising is a stronger indication of sizable wealth. In 1693 Custis and his last wife Tabitha gave 1,750 acres to his nephew Edmund "for and in consideration of the Love and affection wee have and beare to our well beloved Nephew and Grandson Edmund Custis of the County of Accomack in Virginia . . . and Tabitha his now wife our Granddaughter." In 1692, four years before his death at the age of 66, he stepped down from the council citing ill health and the difficulties of crossing the Chesapeake Bay to attend to his responsibilities. His only surviving child, John Custis III of Wilsonia, succeeded him on the council. This John Custis added the vocation of lawyer to those of planting and office-holding. Susie Ames points out that his name often appears as attorney in the county court records for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In one instance he assisted a Maryland man in recovering a runaway servant. In 1683 he successfully represented the parishioners of Hungars Parish before the General Court in a suit against the church wardens. He maintained that the governor had the same power and authority in Virginia as an English bishop in England.
As a councilor John Custis III held back from joining the opposition to Governor Francis Nicholson in 1703. He, Edmund Jenings, and Henry Duke, according to David Alan Williams, did not sign the charges against the governor. On the other hand, neither Custis nor Duke sent affidavits to England supporting Nicholson. Williams maintains that although both men attended the council meetings regularly, they "exerted little direct influence on the proceedings."\textsuperscript{13}

By his first wife, Margarett Michaeel, John Custis III of Wilsonia had seven sons and two daughters. John Custis IV of Williamsburg was one of those sons, and it is his wife's brother-in-law, William Byrd II, who characterized the older Custis in a 1709 diary entry as "an honest well-meaning man." Custis's plantation in Hungars Parish was twenty miles from Arlington, which had been bequeathed to John Custis IV. On a 1709 visit to the Hungars Parish church, Byrd commented that it "was the biggest congregation I ever saw in the country." He also reported that the geese were "very good and in great plenty there," but that they could not stay late at a neighbor's because of a "fear of the dogs which are fierce at Colonel Custis." When they left Colonel Custis, Byrd noted that he "lent me the only good horse I med with on this shore."\textsuperscript{14}

Major-General Custis not only left his Arlington plantation to his grandson John Custis but also provided for his education in England. Of Custis IV's years in England there is little record. In a 1734 letter he mentions that he "was bred in England."\textsuperscript{15} Wright feels that the colonial gentry sent their children to England to acquire social polish and genteel manners: "Faith in the value of training in good
manners, rather than belief in the worth of academic learning, was undoubtedly the controlling influence in persuading some parents to let their children go on this hazardous journey." Both William Byrd II and John Custis IV, however, were also expected to learn something of business while in London. The London merchants Micajah Perry and Thomas Lane assisted their Virginia clients by providing accommodation and training for their sons while in London. Byrd's father wrote him that Messrs. Perry and Lane would "imploy you about business, wherin I hope you will endeavour to acquaint yourselfe that you may bee no stranger to itt when necessity will require you to attend itt." That such acquaintance would prove useful is evident from Custis's 1718 letter to his merchants Bell and Dee in which he backs up his complaint about their handling of his affairs with the assertion that "I was not allmost 7 years with Mr. Perry—to know-nothing-of the Method of your business."17

On May 4, 1706, John Custis IV married Frances Parke, the daughter of Daniel Parke, Jr., and Jane (Ludwell) Parke. The same day William Byrd II married Frances's younder sister, Lucy. In his letter to Parke asking for his consent to their marriage, Byrd expressed his surprise at meeting "young ladys with their accomplishments in Virginia." Jane Parke's July 12, 1705, letter to her husband mentioned expenses relating to their learning dancing and French. By marrying Frances, John stood to gain "half as much" as he could show was his personal estate, according to his prospective father-in-law's August 25, 1705, letter and the further prospect of his wife's inheriting half of the land her grandfather, Daniel Parke, Sr., had left to his son as well as her father's estate.18 Additionally Custis acquired connections not only with
Parke, who had just been appointed governor of the Leeward Islands, but also with the powerful Ludwells and with William Byrd.

While Parke evidently never lived up to his promise of a marriage settlement for Custis or for Byrd, Philip Ludwell did try to exert his influence with Parke on Custis's behalf. In a letter to his son, Ludwell indicated that Parke was pretending to be offended at their marriage as a pretext "for throwing them off with nothing." For his own part Ludwell thought "Custis to be of as good extraction as Byrd or Park himself." Ludwell also suspected the gallant Parke of looking for an excuse to stop providing for his wife: "Mr. Perry and Park both watch whether I will take her into my care, Mr. Perry . . . has as good as told me not only that, but to give portions to the girles to. If they find I am inclind that way, I must question whether they would allow her-[Jane Parke]-a farthing. . . . ." Indeed Jane Parke's letter to her husband is a plea for a modest allowance and to be relieved of the responsibilities of managing his Virginian affairs and children, including godson. It reads very much along the lines of a request for a formal separation, described by Lawrence Stone as condemning "the wife to lonely isolation on a modest allowance" while leaving the husband "free to do anything but marry again."

In a letter congratulating Custis on his marriage, Micajah Perry, for his part, claimed to be acting on his behalf: "I yet hope to se he will act the part of a father: to both the Young Ladeys I have his repeated ingagments he will doe see: and tho I am very unhappy in all I advise: yet will run the Hazzard to ingage you to get the Lady to write to her father." In 1708 Philip Ludwell, Jr., wrote Custis of
Jane Parke's death indicating that he would be writing Parke and wondering if Custis "would have me propose anything to him--concerning your living at Queens Creek or any other thing that may be for your interest." He also advised Custis not to miss "any opportunity of writing to him [Parke]; Soe you ought more particularly to redouble your diligence on this occasion and improve it to your best advantage." Custis and his wife had earlier taken up residence at Queens Creek, on the basis of an agreement with Parke that Custis should have one fifth of the net proceeds for managing the Parke estates.  

Custis's marriage was an unhappy one, although during the early years John and Frances had some pleasurable experiences together. Visits with the Byrds in particular are mentioned in The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712. During a visit at Major Lewis Burwell's at Kings Creek, Byrd recorded that on the morning of May 2, "the women went to romping and I and my brother Custis romped with them." Frances must have disregarded her father's instructions of "doe not learn to romp, but behave yoursele soberly and like A Gentlewoman." The Custises divided their time between Queen's Creek in York County—which had been the Parke home--and the Arlington plantation. In November 1709 Byrd agreed to help Frances return across the bay with the assistance of the Burwells--a move he designated as a "frolic."

They arrived on the ninth at Arlington, which Byrd described as "a great house within sight of the Bay and really a pleasant plantation in which the hogs had done great damage." In the evening Parson Dunn and his wife Mary joined them, and they "ate oysters and were merry together till about 11 o'clock." A few days later they traveled the
twenty miles farther to visit Custis's father at Wilsonia, where "in
the evening we danced and were very merry till about 10 o'clock." They
attended the Sunday services at Hungars Parish and "in the evening we
drank a bottle of wine pretty freely and were full of mirth and good
humor." The next evening, however, they "all designed to be merry but
were all out of humor by consent and would neither dance nor drink."
Rain prevented them from returning to Arlington the following day, so
they amused themselves with a game at which they "ran much and were very
merry." However some of the women were out of humor, "as was natural
among so many." A day later they returned to Arlington with both
Custis and Byrd becoming slightly ill. Lucy Byrd, who was pregnant,
became "indisposed with a great flux of blood" for the next two days.
Because of a contrary wind, the Byrds still could not cross the bay "at
which my sister Custis was very uneasy and quarrelled with Mrs. Dunn
for persuading my wife to stay so long at Hungars." Three days later
"Mr. Dunn and his wife went away out of humor with my sister for her
unkind usage." "In the evening I read some English verse to the ladies."
They continued to pass their time walking about the plantation and
reading. On November 24, Byrd recorded that "the women scolded at my
brother Custis so much that he resolved to get the sloop out of the
creek, which he did... but the wind turned directly contrary." The
following day they managed the crossing. 23

Both of the Parke sisters evidently had bad tempers. By all accounts
Lucy had the milder disposition, but Byrd noted that he "was out of
humor" with her "for her foolish passions, of which she is often guilty."
The Custises evidently disagreed about where they should live; at least
in March 1710, Frances confided to Byrd her "great apprehension lest her husband should return again to the Eastern Shore." She was a modest woman, since Byrd pointed out her refusal to ride alone in his coach with Dr. William Cocke, a Williamsburg physician, to a neighboring plantation. On another occasion, he commented that "my sister loves to talk a little scandal of her neighbors." In the early years of their marriage, the Custises got along well enough to produce two surviving children; Frances Parke Custis was born on September 13, 1709, and Daniel Parke Custis on October 15, 1710. Daniel was christened on October 28, 1710, with Byrd and the newly arrived governor, Alexander Spotswood, as godfathers and Hannah Ludwell as godmother.  

In April 1711 news of Parke's murder at Antigua on December 7, 1710, reached Virginia. Byrd's wife was deeply affected by the news, and later in the month on a visit to the Custises, Byrd found that Frances was "melancholy." In May Byrd received a copy of Parke's will, noting "in which, I thank him, he gave me nothing but gave his estate in this country to my sister Custis and his estate in the Island to the daughter of Mrs. Chester." Under the terms of Daniel Parke, Sr.'s will, however, the property he owned in Virginia was to be divided between his son's children, but it was November before Frances "agreed to divide her grandfather's land without any intervention" and also to the sale of some of the land and negroes of her father to pay his debts," according to Byrd.  

Micajah Perry, one of the executors named in the younger Parke's will, estimated his London debts at £2,680 noting that his estate at White Church could bring £4,000. Breaking the entail on the Virginia property required an act by the Assembly, which was signed on
January 31, 1712. The bill lists a total of some 9,510 acres, including buildings, mills, and "appurtenances," in York, James City, New Kent, and King William counties and fifty slaves. According to the 1704-1705 rent roll, which Thomas J. Wertenbaker quotes, Parke owned some 16,050 acres in those four counties. The money from the land sold was designated in the bill first for paying the debts owed to Perry and Lane of London then for all other just debts and bequests, with any surplus going to the heirs of John and Frances Custis.

In early February 1712 Byrd suggested that he would be willing to take possession of the land and Negroes to be sold in return for assuming Parke's debts "due in England" and "all the Legacys charged upon the Virginia Estate." John Custis immediately agreed. On a mid-February inspection tour of some of the property in King William County, Byrd "found the land extraordinarily good and very level" and the plantations in good order. In the evening over cider and wine, Custis told Byrd "several things concerning managing the overseers" that Byrd "resolved to remember." Custis also agreed to take care of the current crop of tobacco, including its shipment to England for Byrd.

Frances, however, did not approve of their bargain concerning her inheritance. On April 19, Custis visited Byrd in Williamsburg to tell him that she "was resolved not to agree" to their arrangement. This news surprised Byrd, but he "thought it only a strategem to prevail with her husband to live at Williamsburg." He noted that Custis "went away in a very great rage with his wife" and that he had received a letter "from her with many things very foolish in it." Two days later as he was discussing the Custises' unhappiness with Dr. Cocke, John arrived with the news that Frances would acquiesce.
at about 7:00 in the morning, the Custises visited the Byrds at their Williamsburg lodgings "to perfect the deed between us." Byrd noted that "there were several little quarrels between my brother and his wife, and my wife could not forbear siding with her sister and they would fain make me believe that I had promised that my brother should make my sister [easy], which was wrong and gave me a bad opinion of my sister." Nevertheless the agreement was signed, and the women appeared in court that afternoon to give their formal consent.29

The discord over the disposal of Frances's inheritance did not help an already unhappy marriage. Although not a disinterested observer, Byrd recorded in his diary for March 1712 that Frances had complained about her unhappiness due to her husband's unkindness, an unhappiness he wrote off as "owing to her humor, which seems none of the best." The June 1714 draft of a marriage agreement between John and Frances, however, shows evidence primarily of arguments over money. Frances seemingly desired "a more plentifull maintenance," and John would accordingly be required to keep "true and perfect" accounts of his whole estate on the basis of which she would be allowed, "freely & without grudging," "half of all the clear produce ... for clothing herself and the children," providing for their education, and "for furnishing and providing all things that are necessary for house keeping (that are to be brought from England) and Phisick," "soe long as the sd Frances shall live [at] peace quietly with him." John was to enter into a bond to Philip Ludwell to guarantee his performance of the terms, a bond that would be void if Frances exceeded her allowance or got him into debt. Frances was, for her part, required to keep a true account of her household
expenses and henceforth to "for bear to call... John any vile names."
Both were also enjoined not to meddle in each other's management of their respective spheres. Other articles of the agreement dealt with what servants Frances could have to help her in household tasks.\textsuperscript{30} It is possible that the Custises' domestic quarrels increased with the death of John Custis III in 1714; John Custis IV may have been considering returning to the Eastern Shore to supervise his increased land holdings there. Whether the agreement would have enabled John and Frances to live together peacefully is not known, since Frances died the following March from smallpox.\textsuperscript{31}

After nine years of marriage, John Custis IV chose to remain a widower the rest of his life, some thirty-four years. In a 1718 letter to Byrd, who was in London and also a widower at the time, Custis wrote that because he had not heard from Byrd, he thought him "dead (or what is worse) married; if the latter I impute your neglect to your friends proceeds from your over amorous fondness to your enchanting spouse but... time will in A great measure allay the fond follies of your uxorious inclinations." Six years later he reported to Byrd, who was again in London and newly married, that he still held "that blessed resolution of abhoring Captivity; if it went hard with me when young, it must bee intolerable when otherwise." The possible advantages of remarriage--outlined by Stone as including household management, companionship, providing a mother for the children, a fortune, and better health--held no attraction for Custis.\textsuperscript{32}

His friendship with Byrd, however, survived not only the deaths of their wives but also potential friction over settling the complicated
Parke estate. Frances's death did not free John from Parke family affairs; he took seriously the guardianship of his children's property. And Byrd soon discovered that his bargain turned out to be a debt that was a continuing source of anxiety as well as an excuse to visit London again. Custis wrote him there in March 1719 that he was "sorry to hear you are still behind on Coll Parkes acct..." Byrd's reply later that spring reported discovering more debts—including "one thousand & odd pounds due to the king..." which had I foreseen I woud as soon as have run my hand into the fire, as have set it to so disadvantageous a bargain." In a 1723 letter to Custis, Byrd demurred from paying for some hoes Custis had ordered earlier as manager of the Parke plantations. In agreeing to pay for them, Custis wrote "it is just if you say soe; tho I think the hoes are the dearest I ever bought." After discovering debts in the Leeward Islands potentially chargeable to the remaining Virginia estate, Custis wrote Byrd that he could not "think you had so hard a bargain as you are please to fancy; you have a flourishing estate here now which was mine; and may heaven prosper it to you & yours--I would pay a great deal of mony in my own wrong before I would have a dispute with so good a friend as you are..." The nature of their friendship is perhaps revealed in Byrd's July 29, 1723, letter to Custis: You must surely be mistaken when you reproach me with haveing received no more than one letter from me this year; I have you so frequently in my thoughts, that tis impossible but they must have had vent oftener than you mention. I can assure you love has no more such violent operation upon me, as to engage all my thoughts; there is room left for a friend, especially for one I have so much regard and affection for as yourself. Our dear country inclines you all so much to that tender passion, that
you fance we who are in a colder clyme are as universally
heated with it as your selves. For my part I can wash my hands
in innocence, and assure you that my reason begins at last to
get the better of my inclination. I can figure to my self now,
that I see you put on a Sardinian smile, and tell me, that I am
more indebted to my age for this deliverance, than to my under­
standing. But you are deluded my dear major, if you fance this,
and I have the pleasure to tell you very feelingly, that my
fance was more vigorous formerly, but not my constitution. I
find by blessed experience, that age ought not to be computed by
the number of our years, but by the decay of our persons, as a
building is not properly old that has stood a great while, unless
it be grown ruinous & out of repair. Indeed time will wear out
everything at last, but some antediluvian constitutions with the
help of temperance & regularity will hold out a long time.36

Custis's connection with Byrd and Philip Ludwell may help account
for his not being nominated to the council by Governor Spotswood upon
the deaths of his father and two other councilors during the winter of
1713-1714.37 Richard L. Morton describes Spotswood as "the vigorous and
imperious representative of the Crown," who "took very seriously his
exercise of the royal prerogative" and in so doing, after a four-year
initial period of cooperation, encountered opposition from the planters,
who "already had begun to consider themselves Virginians first and
Englishmen second." In addition to administering a whole series of
reforms, Spotswood wanted to see the offices of deputy auditor (held by
Philip Ludwell) and receiver-general (held by William Byrd II) put into
better order. He even accused Ludwell and Byrd "of deliberately obstruc­
ting the collection of the quitrents when the Assembly's request for
their use in Virginia alone was denied." He succeeded in having Ludwell
dismissed by Auditor-General William Blathwayt in May 1716, although
Ludwell's son-in-law, John Grymes (who was an opposition leader in
the House of Burgesses), replaced him.38 And Byrd sold his post to
James Roscow, an action he explained to Custis as being necessary because
such an office . . . makes a man liable to be ill-treated by a governor, under the notion of advancing His Majesty's interest, by which pious pretence he may heap insupportable trouble upon that officer, if he should have the spirit to oppose his will and pleasure—he must either be a slave to his humor, must fawn upon him, and jump over a stick whenever he is bid, or else he must have so much trouble loaded upon him as to make his place uneasy. In short, such a man must be either the governor's dog or his ass; neither of which stations suit in the least with my constitution. . . . and now I am at full liberty to oppose every design that may seem to be arbitrary or unjust.39

Custis joined in that opposition. In a March 28, 1717, letter to Byrd, he reported that he had "not bin within the pallace doors nor exchanged one word with the Governor these nine months; it was my fate to bee upon A grand jury that petitioned the Governor to sitt again in the Court my self with some others opposed the petition with all our might, and thought if he did not think fit to sit, it was not our business to inter­meddle. . . ." As for being a "court favourite, he told Byrd, "I thought you had known me better, than to bee guilty of to much Complais­sance, I shall never think such deceitfull favour ever worth breaking my rest for." He goes on to warn Byrd not to rush back to Virginia, writing that "you will be much in the wrong if you come whilst this Governor reigns; if you do you may expect as much quiet as A toad under A harrow. . . ."40

Custis soon had a personal grievance against Spotswood as well. In a letter to Philip Ludwell he described how the governor had a vista cut through his swamp near the governor's mansion. After proposing to cut "what was only fitt for the fire" and to pay for it, Spotswood received his permission but then proceeded to "cut down all before him" which included "two very good oak Timber Trees" that Custis's tenant had intended to use for covering his tenement. The tenant asked the
workmen not to cut the felled trees into firewood until Custis could be notified, but they went ahead. Custis commented that it was "a great deale of pity such stately oak Timber should be destroyed for the fire, a wheelright would have given considerably for the Timber . . . besides it would have left my Tenement in Log timber for many years." Because he was recovering from the measles and a cough, he wrote to the governor asking him to desist, assuring him that "I would have waited on his Honour my self if I had been able." He goes on to tell Ludwell that he was not "afraid or ashamed to own every thing" in the letter, that he did his "utmost endeavor to write respectively civil to him, in return of which I have been informed he has said all the little mean things of me, and that I threatened to beat his Servants, which you very well know, I was not able to stand upright." Custis further complained that the governor had not paid him "one farthing" for the wood, much less offered recom-pense for the good timber. 41

Williams feels that Custis's selection as the representative of the College of William and Mary for the 1718 Burgesses "was an indi-cation that Commissary Blair, President of William and Mary, had decided to go against the Governor." This assembly made William Byrd their agent to present an address to the king stating their grievances against Spotswood. They even went so far as to propose a bill to repeal an earlier appropriation for finishing the governor's mansion, though it did not pass. 42 Custis's being a Burgess may have benefited his son; at least he reported to Byrd that "his greatness, A.S." had promised assistance in obtaining for "his Godson a pattent for the Land; whither this bee policy to soften me, being a member of the present assembly
now setting for the Colledge; or pure Love for his Godson I leave you to determine."^43

Byrd returned to Virginia in the spring of 1720 because he faced losing his seat on the council if he stayed away. Spotswood's reception was less than cordial. Byrd noted in his diary that the governor "railed at me most violently before all the people." Only four days later, however, they had a dramatic reconciliation, the occasion for an "illumination all the town over."^44 That the reconciliation was more than superficial, Leonidas Dodson doubts, while suggesting that Spotswood could have successfully opposed Byrd and Ludwell, if "he had been both willing and able to placate the commissary. Apparently he was neither."^45

In 1718 Spotswood had decided to assert his right as governor to collate ministers. He then proceeded to claim that James Blair had accepted the post at Bruton Parish in Williamsburg without going to Spotswood for induction. Blair's position was that the vestry should choose its minister and that the governor could only step in if it took longer than six months to fill any vacancy. Blair had the Bruton Parish vestry present him for induction, but Spotswood refused on the grounds that the vestry "had designated themselves as the undoubted patrons of the church." With the 1720 reconciliation, all parties agreed to a trial before the General Court in 1721 with an appeal to the crown. Blair had to choose between allowing the governor to select ministers or continuing the old practices. He chose the popular side, and according to Morton, "two years later Spotswood was removed and the suit was dropped. It cannot be proven, however, that Blair actually planned to solve the problem this way."^46 Custis could hardly have avoided being involved since he was both a member of the Bruton Parish vestry and a
friend of Blair's. For Blair's 1721 trip to England—presumably to protest Spotswood's actions and to secure his removal—Custis supplied a letter to Perry stating that Blair "perhaps may have occasion of some ready cash; if so I desire you to furnish him and charge it to me ... it would bee trifling to give this worthy Gentleman a Character to you, in fine he is my particular very good friend, and what service you can do him shall bee allways deemed as actually done to your humble serv vant." Spotswood's replacement, Hugh Drysdale, sailed to Virginia in the company of Commissary Blair in 1722.

With the 1722 incorporation of Williamsburg as a city, John Custis became one of the six aldermen, along with John Randolph, James Bray, Archibald Blair, William Robertson, and Thomas Jones. John Holloway was mayor and John Clayton recorder. The aldermen were responsible for choosing twelve free inhabitants to serve as a common council. With that council, they enacted city ordinances and regulations. The aldermen also annually elected the mayor and recorder and filled all vacancies. The mayor and aldermen also held a monthly hustings court.

Custis, however, had his eye on a seat on the governor's council. Byrd had written him in January of 1716:

As to what you desir'd of me before I came away, as I remember in some of my letters I told you that the whole number was fill'd up before I came over, so that til we know whether any of the 12 refuse to set we can have no handle for a new application.

In 1718 Custis wrote Byrd that he was "very sensible you Cannot answer my request on being in the Councill till a vacancy happens; I only desire you to contrive it so that I mae be in the first vacancy which favor I never can expect from this present Governor." He saw that
his opposition to Spotswood and his alliance with Byrd, Ludwell, and Blair lessened his chances for the seat, despite the fact that his father and grandfather had been councilors. He must have, nonetheless, hoped that Byrd could effectively use his personal influence while in London to thwart the governor, but the next vacancy slipped by him. Byrd informed him that Spotswood had "recommended Mr. Digges before I had any advice from you or anybody else that there was any vacancy, so that Mr. Digges has His Majesty's letter, and I think you escape abundance of plague and vexation by not having it." Nearly eight years and two governors later, Custis received the desired position. Robert Cary, one of his London merchants, had assisted him, after Drysdale had recommended him, and Custis gave Cary his "hearty thanks for your friendly zeal in taking out and paying the fees for the warrant to be one of the council; it is what I little dreamt of." He also wrote to Perry that he was much obliged to Cary "because I never mentioned any thing of it to him."

< Custis joined the council at the same time that the newly appointed lieutenant governor, William Gooch, took over from the council president, Robert "King" Carter, who had been acting governor after Drysdale's death. >John M. Hemphill characterizes Gooch as "a sympathetic executive, a constructive administrator, and a resourceful politician." Williams claims that he "was the embodiment of Walpole's colonial policy." Gooch's administration lasted from 1727 to 1749, the rest of Custis's life.

Governor Gooch worked in concert with his council in trying to counteract the interference of the British tobacco merchants. Those
merchants used their influence in filling colonial posts, in obtaining royal vetoes of Virginia laws, and in proposing measures beneficial to their personal interests at the expense of the Virginians. Gooch in particular concerned himself with obtaining a new tobacco law requiring official inspection at public warehouses, in order to improve the quality of Virginia tobacco and thereby raise prices by stimulating demand and reducing the amount of trash sold. He took credit for the Tobacco Inspection Act of 1730, having gone to the trouble of consulting with Micajah Perry thus forestalling objections by the London merchants. Custis, however, found that the act worked to his personal disadvantage. Since the warehouses stamped their location on the hogsheads of tobacco along with the official weight, his Eastern Shore tobacco sold for less than his York River crops. He wrote Perry that "if ever we get rid of the Tob: Law and I have liberty to bring it to York River without the Eastern Shoar Stamp I do not doubt but it will be the same as York Tobacco." Custis joined with other Virginians in protesting the British law making it easier for British merchants to collect debts owed them by colonists. This act permitted British creditors not only merely to swear to accounts of debts in front of a British magistrate but also then to hold colonists' land and slaves liable for them, although in England a mortgage would have been necessary first. Custis explained his opposition at length in a letter to Lyonel Lyde, his Bristol merchant:

The Merchts have got an act of Parliament Passd; (and it is sd you and Mr Perry are the Cheif promoters; of that cruell and unjust act,) I must Call it so because it does not give us the liberty of our fellow brittish subjects; but inverts the whole course of the Law--makeing ex parte evidence, which the Law abhors,
good evidence against us; the Merchts going before the Cheif Magistrate and swearing to his account, by that act is good evidence here; which is very cruell; then your subjecting our Lands for book debts is contrary to the Laws of our Mother Country; which cannot touch real estate without A specialty and as wee are brittish subjects wee might reasonably expects brittish lib-
erty wee desire nothing else than to bee subject to the Laws of our Mother Country but wee have great reason to think you aim at our possessions who have got most of your possessions by us; for my part I am at present free from the effects of your act; owing no one in England a farthing; but have mony owing me, so that you cannot think what I say is self interest; but purely the result of my thoughts.56

John Custis's letter book is filled with letters to his various merchants: Perry and Lane, Robert Cary and Company, Bell and Dee, John Hanbury, Lyde and Cooper in Bristol, and John Starche in Glasgow. The letters often contain complaints about goods received, the price of tobacco, losses in weight of tobacco from pilferage, insurance and freight charges, and shipmasters. Custis would be sure to alert his merchants to the high quality of the tobacco he sent them and if there would be a short crop due to bad weather or an infestation of worms, so that they would not sell his tobacco too quickly to get the best price for it. The accounts he received from Lyde and Cooper, for example, showed how many hogsheads of tobacco were received from which ship and the shipmaster's name, all of the various fees charged—including the customs duties, cartage, the commissions the merchant got for handling the business, and possibly insurance, although Custis argued against having it—and the quantities sold with the names of the buyers and the rates.57 Custis made sure that each of his merchants always had enough money to his credit to pay the English customs so that he could take advantage of the discounts for cash payment. In 1731 he wrote to Robert Cary on just this subject:
I am very sorry I should not have sufficient Cash in your hands to answer the discounts of what Tob; I send you, I know very well what it will take to clear a hd of 800 net; and made sure I had credit enough to answer that, if I had dreamt otherwise, should not have troubled you with more Tob; than my mony would clear, for that is doing nothing; and am sensible you give 9 or 12 months' Cr but what is that to the purpose; . . . I assure you I know it to bee fact having formerly lived with old Mr Perry some years and saw the methods he and others used.\textsuperscript{58}

Custis had ended his earlier association with Bell and Dee in 1721 because they did not send him "an account Current every year," bought goods on eighteen months credit when they had his cash in their hands (and the goods arrived in terrible condition), and charged him an "extra-vagant arbitrary freight." He wrote them that "there are many more unreasonable things to bee said on your late proceedings; but I have not patience to descend to particulars."\textsuperscript{59} Tobacco consignment merchants earned a 3 percent commission on the gross price received for the tobacco for handling its sale, another 2-1/2 percent on goods purchased for the planter and sometimes a 2-1/2 percent freight charge for shipping those goods to Virginia. If the planter—unlike Custis—did not have sufficient cash or credit with his merchant, the merchant could pay the tobacco duties and then both pocket the various cash discounts and charge the planter interest on the full amount. He would also charge interest on the goods ordered by the planter.\textsuperscript{60}

Custis found it advantageous to correspond with more than one merchant. He did so in order to obtain the highest price for his tobacco and the lowest prices for the things he ordered from Britain, playing one merchant off against another. Given the uncertainties of shipping due to weather, warfare, and pirates, being able to send his tobacco by the ships belonging to different merchants—or even to Bristol or Glasgow
rather than to London--benefited him. Indeed he complained to Robert Cary in 1725 that he could not get the captains to accept tobacco consigned to him as they would carry "but to their owners, . . . and I assure you that you are obliged to Capt Cant who declares he will Carry tobacco to you as soon as to any man." The return voyage was just as crucial. In 1735 Custis wrote to Perry

If you Gentlemen at London think it for your interest to send our goods so late; I believe most will think it not their interest wholly to depend on the London ships; we want our Cloathing early for our slaves, and other necessaries for our Plantations, which will force us to correspond with the out ports; or let our slaves perish; or set all the winter by the fire.

The London merchants evidently responded to such warnings because two years later Custis notified Lyde and Cooper in Bristol that "indeed the Londoners were all to nimble for you last year; and I beleive will endeavor to bee so allways." 61

In filling personal requests, Custis took advantage of having both Cary and Perry as his London correspondents. In 1727 he directed Micajah Perry to put £2,000 sterling of the money he had on account with him into the Bank of England and impowered Perry to receive the interest for Custis's use yearly. At the same time he alerted Robert Cary of the request, asking him to take the money from Perry and make the deposit if Perry refused or could not be bothered. Seven years later Custis reminded Cary of the transaction and desired him to see by the bank books whose name it is in; doubtless it ought to bee in mine and not Mr Perrys; . . . I desire you may make no words of this." Wright maintains that Robert Carter's letters reveal "a shrewdness that would have been a credit to the canniest of his New England contemporaries," a judgment that could as easily apply to those of John Custis. 62
Slaves were an important part of the plantation economy, and Custis owned over two hundred, spread over his various properties. Some of them were skilled craftsmen; Byrd mentioned in his diary buying a "negro shoemaker" from him. Like other planters Custis treated their illnesses himself, and also like others his slaves sometimes ran away. Byrd noted in September 1710 that four of the Custis "negroes were run away." In the May 9, 1745, Virginia Gazette, Custis advertised a reward for the safe return of a runaway slave "named Peter," who went away with "Irons on his Legs." Surprisingly, the advertisement notes that Peter robbed Custis of cash, household linen, and other goods. The fact that Peter could read and probably write is also mentioned. When John Randolph went to England in 1732, Custis kept an eye on his plantation business as he had earlier for William Byrd. In reporting to Randolph, Custis wrote that "some of the Nigros, and particularly Simon at Chicohominy has . . . run away, haveing a notion that he had no master; but upon complaint of the overseer, I went immediately up; and undeceived him to his cost."

Part of his solicitude for Randolph's affairs stemmed from Randolph's acting on his behalf in a troublesome law suit over the Daniel Parke estate. When Byrd encumbered himself with the Parke debts owed in London and Virginia, no mention had been made of other debts in the final agreement. Since the will stated that Frances, as the principal heiress of the Virginian and English estates, would be responsible for all debts, when claims turned up in the Leeward Islands, an application was made to John Custis for their payment. Lucy Chester, who had inherited Parke's wealth in the Islands, married (apparently at the age of 11) Thomas
Dunbar, who took the name of Parke as specified in Daniel Parke's will. This Dunbar Parke then appealed to Custis for payment of the debts; Custis replied explaining the course of events in Virginia and England and assured him that he had "paid more than the whole estate in Virginia was ever worth." He also pointed out that "tis very strange that such a vast estate as the Generall left in those Islands should not satisfy any reasonable body considering how shamefully it was given away; from his lawfull posterity but I assure you Sir; I am not at all a stranger how that estate has bin managed." As for Dunbar Parke's threatened law suit, Custis maintained that he knew "the expense of going to Law as well as any man; having never bin free of it, ever since I first took upon me the management of this unlucky estate of Coll. Parkes." He went on to say that he would "spend the last penny I have in the world, rather than... pay one farthing of your unjust and unreasonable demand." He also wrote to Caesar Rodney, an executor of the estate, and to Micajah Perry and William Byrd about Dunbar Parke's letter. He informed Perry that he had "retained Mr. Holloway, Randolph and Clayton who give me encouragement as all Lawers will do and tell me I am in no danger." In 1741 Custis summed up the course of the litigation in a letter to John Hanbury:

as for my Law affair; it goes as fast as the rules of Law, and the tricks and Quirks of the Lawers will permit; it has bin A long vexatious tedious affair... I have lost by death so many Lawers both in Virginia and England; and flung away so much mony; that I shall [not] employ any more in Eng; till the cause is ripe to go there where there is choice enough; though there is not here; ... I do not expect to live to see the end of the dispute.65

Neither Custis nor his son did live to see its end.
For relief from such frustrating affairs, Custis had his garden. He took up gardening soon after moving to Williamsburg. In a 1717 letter he reported having "lately got into the vein of gardening." William Byrd shared this interest and mentions Custis's garden in his diary. Dr. Cocke's wife was the sister of Mark Catesby, the naturalist who evidently knew Custis and liked his garden. After Catesby had left Williamsburg, Custis acknowledged both a gift and a compliment "concerning my Garden, which I assure you no ways deserves it." At that point he was "out of heart with endeavoring any thing but what is hardy and Virginia proof." His gardening interests, however, are most fully recorded in his extensive correspondence with Peter Collinson, the well-known British horticulturalist. Their delightfull letters have been carefully edited by E. G. Swem and published as *Brothers of the Spade*.

As for Custis's house on France Street in Williamsburg, it was advertised for sale in 1778 as having "one of the most retired and agreeable situations." Custis described it as being "as strong and as high a house as any in the Government." Hugh Jones noted that the Williamsburg houses had "a passage generally through the middle of the house for an air-draught in summer," which agrees with the advertisement. According to Robert Beverly Williamsburg residents "contrive to have large Rooms, that they may be cool in Summer . . . and . . . they adorn their Apartments with rich Furniture." In ordering a bed from Cary, Custis did show concern that it be "good and handsom," desiring his "particular care in this matter; if I could bee so much in your Ladies favor as to choose the materialls I should bee much obliged to her. Womens fancies in things of this nature exceeds that of mens." Ivor Noël Hume reports
on the excavation of a well on the Custis property and the discovery of the "finest group of early eighteenth-century drinking glasses yet found in America," none dating later than the 1730s. And in 1723 Custis asked Byrd to find for him in London a painted "fire screen" for summertime use, commending Byrd's "good judgment in painting" at the same time he complained about that of Commissary Blair. 69

Custis's relationship with his children is difficult to determine. His letter book seems to record only letters to correspondents overseas, and those letters seldom mention his family. In a letter to Mrs. Gilbert Pepper, Daniel Parke's older sister, he did claim that his children were "all the Comfort I have in the world and have kept my self single partly for their sakes." In an earlier letter to her, he revealed that Daniel could not visit them in England because he could "not spare him so far from me whilst I live."70 As for his daughter Fanny, Custis had evidently placed her in the care of Hannah Ludwell, who may have been her godmother as well as Daniel's.71 In 1731 he recounted in a letter to Perry the story of one of Perry's shipmasters, James Bradby, "perswading Fanny to like him" and then proceeding to badger Custis, who was quite ill, not only into consenting to their marriage but also to provide "a good seat of Land," well stocked, and settle it on Fanny and their future children, as well as to promise her a large inheritance. Captain Bradby then postponed the ceremony--"a day or two before the Marriage"--until his next voyage. Custis referred to him as a "rascal" and promised that he and his friends in the future would not ship anything with that man.72

But Fanny did marry several years later. The Virginia Gazette carried the following notice:
On Wednesday Evening Mr. William Winch, a very considerable merchant, was married to Miss Fanny Parke Custis, only Daughter of the Honourable John Custis, Esq; one of His Majesty's Council of this Colony, a very deserving, well accomplish'd young Lady, with a good Fortune.

Winch, however, apparently wrote her out of his will the next year because Custis did not pay him the "£1000 for her marriage portion." At the same time she was writing him affectionate letters regarding his business in Virginia.73

Daniel Parke Custis also had trouble finding a spouse. Custis wrote Perry that Daniel "was in a fair way of being Married and going from me; but the Lady did not use him very handsomly; and the match is forever broke of." Although he professed a leaning toward an alliance between Daniel and Ann Byrd, nothing came of it because William Byrd could not bring him to satisfactory terms with regard to a marriage settlement.74 In the end Daniel decided on marrying Martha Dandridge, a prospect Custis did not particularly like. He objected because she had no fortune comparable with his son's and possibly because he disliked her father. James Power, an attorney, helped Daniel win his father's permission—if not blessing—and the marriage took place in 1749. Martha joined Daniel at his plantation in New Kent County, where he had lived for some years.75

Custis may have also had a natural son by one of his slaves, "young Alice." The boy, named John but called Jack, was such a favorite that Power's letter to Daniel, informing him of his father's approval of his proposed marriage with Martha, mentioned winning Custis's favor by presenting Jack with a "horse, bridle, and saddle" in Daniel's name. And at one point Custis threatened to disinherit Daniel and leave the
bulk of his estate to Jack. Custis's final will did in fact provide for Jack's manumission and for a comfortable maintenance. He specified that a "handsome strong convenient dwelling house according to the dimensions I shall direct and a plan thereof drawn by my said friend John Blair Esquire," be built and well furnished for Jack. He further directed that Jack should live with his son until the boy reached the age of twenty. Jack, however, died in 1751. 76

John Custis may have been somewhat senile in his later years. Despite his having "always bin a regular moderate man and never . . . drunk in his whole life," Custis's life was seemingly an unending battle with one illness after the other, making it difficult to believe that he lived to the age of 71. As early as 1717 Byrd wrote him that "the truth is you have been so great a sufferer by disorder already, that I believe you will begin to think health worth any constraints or self denial that one can use upon our former habits or inclinations." In April 1731 Custis wrote that he had "been very much affected with sickness ever since last August." 77 But in October 1740 he "was taken with pains in my shoulders and knees which dayly increased . . . and the use of all my limbs taken from me with the excessive pains that for some months I could stir nothing but my eyes . . . in this condition lay confined till March." He told Collinson in 1741 that he expected to be crippled the rest of his life and had "often wished for death." A year later he reported being able "to walk about with a cane" and to ride "as well as ever," though he needed help mounting and dismounting. He said that the disease was a "Nigro distemper endemiall to Afrik." He had bought some diseased slaves who infected "more than 50" of his
other slaves and believed that he had "got it endeavoring to cure them; and getting cold setting on a tedious Assembly in very severe weather." Custis also reported that he then had "little taste for any thing; my garden is the chiefest pleasure I take besides reading which If I did not delight in should have run mad." 78

The state of his health did at last cause him to notify the council on August 26, 1749, that "A Consciousness of my Inability has made me long decline all public Business, and determines me no more to interfere with Affairs of the Government." Acting on his letter the council and governor suspended him. 79 His resignation was critical because he had become the president of the council through seniority and the governor was about to leave for England and Custis would have become acting governor, despite his infirmities. He died early that November.

The inscription on John Custis's tombstone has earned him a place in popular Virginia history. The provision concerning it is, therefore, worth quoting from his will in its entirety:

"my will and earnest desire is that my executor hereafter named do lay out and expend as soon as possible after my decease out of my estate the sum of one hundred pounds sterling money of Great Britain to buy a handsome tombstone of the most durable stone that can be purchased for pillars very decent and handsome to lay over my dead body engraved on the tombstone my coat of arms which are three parrots and my will is that the following inscription may be also handsomely engraved on the said stone (viz) Under this marble stone lays the body of the Honorable John Custis Esqr of the City of Williamsburgh and Parish of Bruton formerly of Hungars Parish on the Eastern Shoar of Virginia and county of Northampton the place of his Nativity aged 71 1/2 years and yet lived but seven years which was the space of time he kept Batchelors house at Arlington on the Eastern Shoar of Virginia This inscription put on the stone by his own positive orders and I do desire and my will is and I strictly require it that as soon as possible my real dead body and not a sham coffine be carried to my plantation on the Eastern Shoar of Virginia called Arlington and there my real body be buried by my grand
father the Honorable John Custis Esquire where a large walnut tree formerly grew and is now inclosed with a brick wall which brick wall it is my will and I strictly charge and require it that the said brick wall be always kept in good repair very handsomely by my heir that shall enjoy my estate and if my heir should ingratitude or obstinately refuse or neglect to comply with what relates to my burial in every particular I then barr and cut him off from any part of my estate either real or personal and only give him one shilling sterling and in such case I give my whole estate real and personal to the next heir male of my family named Custis that will religiously and punctually see this my will performed but more especially what related to my burial in general and if by any accident the tombstone and appurtenances should be lost broke or any waies miscarry in coming in from England or any other ways whatsoever in that case my positive will is and I earnestly require it that my heir or executors immediately send to England for such another stone exactly with the same appurtenances of the same price until one shall come safe to hand. . . .

The inscription on Custis's tombstone is usually cited as his attempt to gain revenge on his wife for an unhappy marriage. Jennings Cropper Wise thinks that "it was not enough that his contemporaries should witness his domestic and marital difficulties, but posterity must be apprised of his wife's character, not to say his own, by means of an elaborate tombstone." After reviewing Custis's life, however, it is difficult to believe that the inscription was prompted solely by his unhappy marriage, although it does ironically echo an opinion of his father-in-law. Parke had written Frances that "I know it is the desire of all young people to be married, and though very few are as happy after the marriage as before, yet everyone is willing to make the experiment at their own expence." The combination of ill health and the worry over the Dunbar Parke law suit could also have contributed to Custis's fond memories of his bachelor days. Worry over the marriages of Daniel and Fanny also clouded his last years. In a 1736 letter to Perry he had written "if [I] could see my Children marryd to my satisfaction
have thought of laying my bones in England." Thirteen years passed before Daniel took a bride, and then it was not wholly to Custis's liking. He had reasons besides nine unhappy years (assuming the entire marriage was difficult) to long for a return to the simpler life he had enjoyed as a bachelor on the Eastern Shore.

It is also likely that he did not have full possession of all of his faculties when he made the will. His threatening to disinherit his son seems out of character, given his lifelong concern over preserving his property for his heir. And during those last years he became friendly with Mrs. Anne Moody, the wife of a tavern keeper on Capital Landing Road. Just what their relationship was is open to conjecture. In his will he left her "twenty pounds sterling . . . to be paid to her annually during her natural life." She also received a portrait of Jack. After Custis's death Daniel and Martha sued her and her husband to recover the things Custis had given them from his house. It is perhaps relevant in this context to mention Robert Cary's condolence letter to Daniel. After saying "we . . . are sorry to hear of our old Friends Death, but as he is reliev'd from such great Misery we hope our Loss is his Gain," he continued with a report on business affairs. Interestingly, he sent all of the items Custis had ordered except "the other being chiefly Millry etc for some Lady we omitted." It is easy to picture Mrs. Moody possibly taking advantage of a sick old man, especially one who might have been jealous over his son's recent marriage.

Reading Custis's letter book containing letters written during his prime, 1717 to 1742, gives a different picture of the man than has been recorded in local tradition. His keen business mind shines forth in
the detailed instructions to his merchants. His miserly tendencies also show up clearly, but they were not strong enough to prevent him from living well and showing consideration for his friends. At one point he ordered tobacco pipes for the use of his visitors, noting that he did not smoke himself. 84 He also knew his own mind and expressed himself vividly—as for example in complaining about being charged for some newspapers, he wrote "I never have had any news papers in my life; nor ever desire any I do not regard who has lost a Spaniell bitch who has died of the pox and such stuff as Gazetts are stuffd with."85

It was his bluntness and willingness to speak out that stayed in Richard Hartwell's memory. In a 1766 letter to the printer of the Virginia Gazette, he remembered

a trial at Williamsburg, when the Hon. Mr. Gooch was Governour, of a man for horse-stealing, who lived in Prince William. The fact was proved against him, to the satisfaction of the whole Court; and yet, by a Venire from that county, he was acquitted. At which Col. Custis, one of the Council, could not contain; but, through a spirit of indignation rose up and swore he believed the whole Jury were horse-stealers themselves.

This anecdote not only tells something about Custis but also about the justice meted out by the Virginia oligarchy. As Wright points out "it is a tribute to their integrity and honesty that their decisions were distinguished for wisdom and justice."86

But where is Custis's character and personality to be found? Perhaps it is best revealed in his lifelong friendship with Commissary Blair—not himself an easy man to get along with—and William Byrd. The Byrd diaries record a warm, friendly relationship, as does their surviving correspondence, and it was a deep and strong friendship to surmount the litigations surround the Parke estate. Blair's regard for Custis was evidently shared by his nephew, John Blair, who
is mentioned in Custis's will as his "worthy and esteemed friend" (he received a bequest of £100 sterling and his wife Mary five guineas for a mourning ring) and served as one of the witnesses. The key to Custis's character is perhaps that "Sardinian"--or sardonic--smile that Byrd mentioned in his letter, rather than a tombstone that was fabricated in the mind of an old man suffering from a chronic, disabling disease.
NOTES FOR BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH


3. Ibid. His brothers Thomas settled in Baltimore, Ireland, Edmund in London, Robert in Rotterdam, William also on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Joseph in Virginia for a time, and of course his sister Ann in Virginia. Their mother Joane Powell Custis's estate in Rotterdam was settled in 1676.


5. Whitelaw, Virginia's Eastern Shore, I, 109. Since the passport is dated January 14, 1672/73, and was recorded in the Northampton County Court records on May 20, 1684, its significance is conjectural. The passport is printed in Susie M. Ames, Studies of the Virginia Eastern Shore in the Seventeenth Century, reissue (New York, 1973), appendix. According to manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland, a John Custis of Virginia traveled there in 1678 with a cargo of tobacco he was exporting. John Custis, Nov. 19, 1678, copy of an invoice, "An Answer about the Tobacco," ca. 1678, and Deposition, Jan. 18, 1678-79, National Library of Ireland, SR:12, Xerox copies in Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Research Archives.


12. William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Ser., III (1895), 258, gives the inscription on his tombstone; Ames, Studies of the Eastern Shore, 170, 91, 211.


16. Wright, First Gentlemen of Virginia, 81.


18. Byrd Correspondence, I, 259n; Add. MSS 3 6217, British Library (printed) Respondent's Case, 161-171, microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Research Archives; William Byrd to "Seignor Franforoni" [Daniel Parke], ca. 1705-1706, Byrd Correspondence, I, 256; VMHB, LIV (October 1946), 312-315; Custis, Recollections, 16n.

19. Philip Ludwell to Philip Ludwell, Jr., Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Mssl L51f5, Lee Papers, Section 5, VMHB, LIV (October 1946), 312-315.
20. Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), 661; Stone notes that divorce was nearly impossible and a separation a mensa et thoro was the only alternative.


24. *Ibid.*, 537, 312, 474, 248. Two earlier infants were buried near their grandfather at Arlington according to the tombstone inscription.

25. *Ibid.*, 321, 337, 349. The will is printed in *VMHB*, XX (1912), 380, along with an account of Parke's murder during the rebellion, 378-379. Lucy Chester was his natural daughter. Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 443, see also 440.

26. Micajah Perry to William Byrd II, May 12, 1711, Byrd Correspondence, I, 281; Waverly K. Winfree, comp., *The Laws of Virginia: Being a Supplement to Hening's The Statutes at Large, 1700-1750* (Richmond, Va., 1971), 60-63; a list of the Negro slaves by name and age appears in the Custis papers at the Virginia Historical Society, Mssl C9698 a48.


28. Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 484-485; William Byrd to John Custis, February 4, 1711/12, Byrd Correspondence, I, 284-285. The letter is addressed to Custis at Queen's Creek and also mentions Custis's shipping the tobacco for Byrd.


33. Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 334, Apr. 23, 1711, Byrd talked to the
governor about going to London "to manage Colonel Parke's affairs"; John Custis to William Byrd, March 1718/19, Custis Letter Book.

34. William Byrd to John Custis, May 1719 and July 29, 1723, Byrd Correspondence, I, 323-324, 347. See also letters to various correspondents including Perry mentioning Byrd's attempts to pay off the debt (ibid., II, 480, 499, 522-523, 549, 553). Perry's role in the whole affair bears looking into. He had been acting as Parke's London agent in answering complaints about Parke's actions as governor in the islands and made efforts to prosecute Parke's murderers against the express orders of Custis--efforts that he then charged to Custis and Byrd, which Custis at least refused to pay. As one of Parke's major creditors Perry plainly acted against the interests of Parke's daughters in proving the will but frankly wrote Byrd on May 12, 1711, that "we have proved the will and ... shall only say that we can save our selves; we shall leave others to shift" (ibid., I, 280). Custis told Byrd in a July 20, 1724, letter that he would not pretend to be able to judge Perry's thoughts "but no one thinks but the securing his own debt was his cheifest view" (Custis Letter Book).


37. Leonidas Dodson, Alexander Spotswood, Governor of Colonial Virginia, 1710-1722 (Philadelphia, Pa., 1932), 164. Dodson notes that Mrs Byrd and Mrs. Ludwell as well as Spotswood's niece, Mrs. Russell, may have played a part in causing private differences (p. 167n).


41. John Custis to Philip Ludwell, Apr. 18, 1717, copy in Ludwell's handwriting in Virginia Historical Society, Mssl 51f64, Lee Papers, section 46, and printed in VMHB, XVII (July 1938), 244-245. Ludwell wrote a note at the bottom of his copy of the letter (which was not printed in the VMHB): "I am lately informed that he [Spotswood] continues to tell ridiculous stories of Mjr Custis about it tho he has not yet thought fit to pay him even for firewood noe more than he has the gardener for laying out his garden above a year past."
42. Williams, "Political Alignments," 182. Custis had earlier been elected from Northampton County in 1705. Morton, Colonial Virginia, II, 458.


45. Dodson, Alexander Spotswood, 272.

46. Morton, Colonial Virginia, II, 468-469; Dodson, Alexander Spotswood, 201. See also Hugh Jones, who was an interested party to the disagreement, The Present State of Virginia, From whence Is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina, ed. Richard Morton (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1956), 122-127.

47. John Custis to Messrs Perry, 1727, Custis Letter Book.


50. William Byrd to John Custis, May 16, 1719, Byrd Correspondence, I, 322.


57. Lyde and Cooper accounts, Custis Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society; also an invoice for goods sent to Custis showed charges for case cord and cording, entry and searchers fees, cartage to the waterside, loading, porters and wharfage, boat transport to the ship, etc., December 24, 1723, Msssl C9698 a23.


59. John Custis to Bell and Dee, 1721, ibid.


63. Byrd, Secret Diary, 484, 229; and a list of slaves from his father's estate made by Daniel Parke Custis indicates that some were carpenters as well (Virginia Historical Society, Custis Family Papers, section 14, Msssl C9698 158–159).

64. Park's Virginia Gazette, May 9, 1745; John Custis to John Randolph, December 4, 1732, Custis Letter Book.

65. John Custis to Dunbar Parke, January 15, 1724/25, to Micajah Perry, January 14, 1724/25, and to John Hanbury, 1741, Custis Letter Book. See also John Custis to Peter Collinson, 1741, ibid. The lawsuit went to Chancery and was still going on when George Washington took over the management of the affairs of his wife's (Daniel Parke Custis's widow) children and grandchildren. See Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington, A Biography (Richmond, Va., 1945), II, III.


70. John Custis to Mrs. Pepper, 1734 and 1732, Custis Letter Book.

71. John Custis to Philip Ludwell, April 18, 1717, VMHB, XVII (July 1938), 244-245; to Micajah Perry, April 2, 1723, Custis Letter Book.


73. Park's Virginia Gazette, June 29, 1739; "Virginia Gleanings in England," VMHB, XV (January 1908), 302-303; see Custis Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.


75. Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 16; Hume, Rubbish, 190; Custis, Recollections, 19-20; John Custis to Peter Collinson, 1737 or 1738, Custis Letter Book, notes that Daniel lived 40 miles from Williamsburg. Hume speculates that Martha disliked her father-in-law because upon Daniel's death in 1757, she sold off many of the Custis possessions from the house in Williamsburg, including more than 135 of the family paintings.

76. Hume, Rubbish, 189-190; Custis, Recollections, 20n.; typescript copy of Custis's will in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's house history for Custis Square, prepared by Mary A. Stephenson, 1959, Virginia Historical Society also has a copy of his will.

77. John Custis to Peter Collinson, 1739, in Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 61; William Byrd to John Custis, October 4, 1717, Byrd Correspondence, I, 305; John Custis to Micajah Perry, 1731, Custis Letter Book.

78. Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 72, 79, 78, 174n, 73. Swem points out that there was no heat in the old capitol building and the assembly usually met in the winter. On the advice of Wyndham B. Blanton, Swem identified Custis's illness as Yaws--"a chronic disabling rarely fatal disease," caused by "a spirochete, resembling that which causes syphilis" (174n). A catalog of Daniel Parke Custis's library listing approximately 457 titles probably represents his father's interests, being the sole heir; see VMHB, XVII (October 1909), 404-412.

80. Typed copy of John Custis's will, in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's house history for Custis Square.

81. Jennings Cropper Wise, Ye Kingdom of Accawmacke or the Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (Baltimore, Md., 1967; orig. publ. 1911), 334; Custis, Recollections, 24; John Custis to Micajah Perry, 1736, Custis Letter Book.

82. Hume, Rubbish, 190; typed copy of Custis's will, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

83. Robert Cary and Company to Daniel Parke Custis, March 1749, Custis Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Mss1 C9698 s64.


85. John Custis to Micajah Perry, 1726, ibid.

86. Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, September 19, 1766; Wright First Gentlemen of Virginia, 92-93.
THE JOHN CUSTIS LETTER BOOK

1724 to 1734
This comes to inform you that on the 12 of August we had such a violent flood of rain and prodigious gust of wind, that the like I do beleive never happend since the universall deluge it has destroyd most if not all the Tobacco in the colony; some few people had housd a pretty deal, but the generality young and in the field; and corn specially fodder all most ruind God knows what dreadfull effects that may have; the trees in the woods miserably blown up by the roots so that there was no passing in many places on horseback; houses blown down vessels drove on shoar; I my self have as strong and as high a house as any in the Governmt; stands on high ground; and I do affirm it that I was obliged to put on a pair of whole boots to walk from one room to the other to Leave my house hold goods on the Lee side of the house and that with much ado; the oldest man that lives has never saw or heard of such a gust since the colony was seated the injury it has done the Country in generall is incredible; I do not expect to make Tob: to pay my publick taxes--steming being prohibited so that nothing can bee made of the little tatterd Tob: left in the field; I do not know how to express what a dismall face every plantation I have seen has I earnestly entreat you not to sell my Tobacco till the spring unless you can have a very great price for I am sure if youll keep it you may have your own demands there can bee but little come to you next year and the cheif that must bee old Tobacco that is left behind; I am not sure of sending one hd.
Mr Perry

1724

Sir

I Recd yours via Barbados with an account of sales of 18 hd tob; by the Spotswood [1722] and must tell you Sir was startled to see such a crop of Tobacco given away; when the sworn receivers viewed that and the Crop in Cant that year they assured me it was the best Tobacco they had seen a great while and I know my self it was very good; one James Shelton a Carpenter and a man just free showd me an account of sales of Tobacco from you made in the same year in the Thames ships: which was such trash that no sworn receiver would pass it, it was such trash; and wagers laid that it would bring him in debt; and you have given him 9 d £: and 10 d pr £: and mine that one hdd was worth all his you sold for 8 d £: which I must tell you I think unkind considering that I have not only shipt you a great deal of Tob: lodged not a little mony in your hands; which is an advantage to no one but your self; made it my cheif study to advance your interest here; and that an obscure fellow because he is a new correspondent and little if any mony in your hands should bee more kindly dealt by than your older friend, another instance is some Tob: shipt by Mr Phil Lightfoot which was such trash that Mr Gibbons a skillful sworn receiver could not pass it; and the overseer that made it being a poor fellow, Mr Lightfoot could have no satisfaction but shipt it on the overseers oath; who would swear any thing rather than bee ruind and this tobacco in the same year you gave 50 pr more than for myne that was duly qualified the whole Country rung of the badness of that Tob: if you
had bin pleas'd to have kept my Tob: according to my desire it would have answer'd; I have seen your Letters to some wherein you say the Market was empty; and you had accounts from hence of the short Crops; and to sell such Tob: for 8 d ½ is very od; I hope I shall have no more reason so justly to complain; I have gave you an account of the most dreadfulest gust the 12 of Aug: that ever happen'd such Noahs flood it has allmost ruind the Country & the Tobacco all most clean swept away corn in abundance of places great Lost; the cheifest part of the Timber in the country blown down which cannot bee repaired in severall ages I hope you will not sell my Tobacco till next spring and then I am sure you may have your own demand I hope you will pardon this Letter which I must think I have a deal of reason to write and assure you that I am to my power Yors [Dunbar Parke] [January 15, 1724/5]  

Sir  

By Capt Cant I recd your very surprizing Letter and if the rules of good manners did not oblige me I should hardly give you or my self the trouble of an answer; however I will tell you the whole matter relateing to Coll Parkes estate with all the truth and sincerity a man of honor or honesty is capable of; it is fact that Coll Parke left his estate in England and Virga: to my Wife by the name of Fran Custis; and did burden it with his debts; some small time after his death I recd a list of his debts amounting to £10000; I immediately by act of Parliment; (which I could not do without) sold the greatest part of it towards paymt of those debts; but that would not do, my Wife & I my self joynd in a sale of the whole estate of Whitchurch in great Brittain; and
still it fell short; about £2000 pounds which I pd also; then upon
a nice scrutiny of Coll Parkes papers; I found when to late the most
valuable part of his virgna: estate; was entailed by old Coll Parke the
father of the Generall; upon my wife and Mrs Byrd; which wee both now
enjoy according to deed of partition so that the Generall was but
tenant for life; and could not dispose of it nor burden it with any
debts; which oversight causd me to pay severall 100s pounds in my own
wrong more than I was obliged to by Law or equity; and do assure you
I have no assets in my hands; having paid more than the estate was worth;
this is sincerely matter of fact and whither you beleive it or not I
value not, the demand you make is more than his whole estate in Virga
was ever worth; before it was tore to peices;--tis very strange that
such a vast estate as the Generall left in those Islands should not
satisfy any reasonable body considering how shamefully it was given
away from his lawfull posterity; but I assure you Sir; I am not at all
a stranger how that estate has bin managed; and how shamefully you have
sufferd your self to bee imposd on; I could descend to particulars
but they being of so keen a nature that I shall at present wave them,
you are pleasd to offer to settle your controversy in friendship; no
man setts a higher value on friendship than my self but do not under-
stand buying it at so dear a rate; and I know the expence of going
to Law as well as any man; having never bin free from it ever since
I first took upon me the managemt of this unlucky estate of Coll
Parkes; which If I had never heard of would have bin well for me;--
and find I must still go on to the end of the Chapter and do assure
you Sir; I would go to Law the whole Course of my Life; spend the
last penny I have in the world rather than I will pay one farthing of your unjust and unreasonable demand; and must beg leave to tell you that you shall not repair your oversights at my Cost; I must confess you may give me some trouble; and put me to some Charge; but depend on it; where you put me to one penny worth you will put your self to a pound; and when you have done all the play will not pay for the Case I have consulted all the able Lawers in our Colony (and wee have some very great men) and they all assure me you; nor no one for you can recover one farthing of me; so that whither you come or stay it will bee equall to for I have put my self allready to as much Charge as I can do; excepting Court Charges which cannot possibly fall on me; so that I am very well provided for you & Mr Rodney come when you please; and am glad to find you design to exhibit a bill in Chancery against me which will not bee ended in a hurry (and if it bee your pleasure first to take up arms; I am fully resolved if God spare me to bee the Last that shall Lay them down; as for your appealing to Eng: that does not at all fright me I know the nature of that as well as any man; and thank God have as many friends there as I have in any part of the world; and (without ostentation can find mony to give you as much Law there, as I am determd to give you here; but that must bee the work of some years; as for your Councill's opinions two of them I know to bee great men; and they have given their opinions very Right according to the Query you have stated and so might the most ignorant old woman in your Islands; but if they knew the Circumstances of the facts they would tell you another story; as for your takeing such a troublesome voyage tis your own fault I
shall go to the Law with all the ease in the world the Court being in sight of my door; you say you cannot bee disappointed but I would not have you bee so sure of an affair you know nothing of if you and I live you will tell me another story 6 or 7 years hence--I must ask your pardon for being so prolix but not well answer yours fully with more brevity; I shall not say more till I see you in the Spring and till then I am

Mr [Caesar] Rodny

I recd a very smart Letter from one who Calls him-self Dunbar Parke; demanding a pretty sum of mony of me to pay the debts in the Leeward Islands of the Lale Gen Parke; how that great estate has bin mismanged you best know when Coll Parke made that scandalous will he could never dream that any thing from the Islands could in reason bee demanded from this estate he having left such great effects there; neither can you or any one beleive that knew the Generall; that he ever design[d] to die with that will; but made it purely to please that adulterous strumpet; who so unfortunately intoxicated him; I took Mr Rodney to bee a man of more honesty and honor than to attempt (if it were in his power which God be thanked it is not) to rob the Lawfull posterity of his deceas’d friend to enrich a kennell of whores and bastards; and if you had the Least respect for the memory of Coll Parke; you would not suffer his dead ashes to bee so exposed by exhibiting such a scandalous will in any Court where he was so well known as in Virga;

I am very well prepared for any attempt you design on me; and should bee very glad to have a better opinion of you and am pleased to deliver the enclosd
Sir

I Recd all my goods by the Burwell tolerably well except one iron pot broke to peices and some earthen ware the Ship did not arrive here till Xmas; being forced to Antigua and like to have bin all lost I suppose Capt Cant will relate this matter more full than I can; he brought me the enclosd Letter from Antigua from one Dunbar Parke who Married my good Father Parkes Bastard; and you will see demands £10000 of me the will of Coll Parke expressly says all his debts must bee pd: out of the Virga and english Estates but then he proceeds and tells what debts & legacies; VIZ: that is to my Daughter Lucy Byrd one thousand pounds sterl &c: so that Coll Parke could never mean that his Daughter should pay the debts in the Islands and I hope the words of the will; cannot bear any such construction; they have got the opinion of three able Lawers which you will see; but I suppose they did not tell the Lawers that the greatest part of the Estate had bin allready sold to pay debts &c and even those debts in Eng: & Virga and I am very sure that more has bin allready paid than the whole Virga estate was ever worth or would have yeilded if it had bin taken by executions; I thought I had bin rid of all trouble relating to this unhappy estate but find I am but just begining I have retain'd Mr Holloway Randolph and Clayton who give me encouragemt as all Lawers will do and tell me I am in no danger; I beg you will send me A just account of what Coll Byrd has paid and stands engaged for if not paid, and if it bee more than the Estate was worth it may bee of service to me; if these whores and bastards get their demands my son is ruind; I do not doubt but that you will
do all in your power for us; Dunbar designs to bee foul of you for
what estate was in England; I wish I had never heard of that famous
name of Parke; which would have saved me a world of trouble and uneasiness;
I shall let you know all the proceedings as they happen

I am sorry you have omitted my Daughters' invoice sent by Bradby,
it has bin a very great disappointmt to the girl and put me to an
unnecessary Charge in buying necessaries for her here

[William Byrd II]  [January 1725]

Dear Brot:
I am in dayly expectation of seeing you but in case I should be dis-
appointed this comes to inform you that one who calls him self Dunbar
Parke, haveing married that little bastard of Coll Parkes in Antigua;
has writt me a very smart Letter a Copy of which I have sent Mr Perry;
and demands £10000 of me; it being debts of Coll Parkes recoverd by Law
in Antigua; and the will says his Daughter Frances Custis is to pay the
following legacies & all his debts; and then proceeds to say what they
are VIZ: to my Daughter Lucy Byrd £1000 &c, so that I think he only
meant the debts in England and Virga: which you as I suppose have paid
they have got the opinion of three able Lawers in their behalf as they
imagin; but those Lawers have not bin let into the truth of the Matter;
they do not know that all the debts and Legacies in Eng: & Virga are
paid which I veryly beleive is more than they whole estate would have
sold for; I desire you will lett me know very particularly how much
mony you have paid which will bee of service to me; and please to Lett
me have authentick proofs of the debts you have paid; for I fear Coll
Parkes estate must account for all; if so my son is all most ruind; I
hope you have got Coll Parks Letter by you wherein he engaged to give
his daughter Lucy £1000 if you married her; which will bee record amongst
his just debts; I am afraid wee have paid to many Legacies which ought
not to have bin paid before all the debts had bin satisfyd I wish
I may not have cause to wish that I had never heard of that famous name
of Parke

Mr Robt Cary

I recd all my goods you sent pr the Burwell safe, and yors of the 10
of Nov; with the carnation seed; should bee very glad of some Layers
of good flowers, I know they will live in if the master takes care of
them because I have had them come safe but I beleive it will bee safest
to put them in a wooden thing; because pots will bee apt to breake;
I have a pretty little garden in which I take more satisfaction than
in any thing in this world and have a collection of tolerable good
flowers and greens from England; but have had great losses in their
comeing in partly by the carelessness and ignorance of the masters of
the ships that brought them; and sometimes by the ships comeing in to
tate I had 100 roots of fine double dutch Tulips sent me from one
Jowers a gardiner at Battersey; but the ship came in so late that most
of them spent themselves 2 or 3 came up which are now fine flowers any
roots that are bulbous will come safe if the ships comes in early; if
you send any layers order the Capt to put the box that contains them
in the ballast of the ship and now & then give them a little water and
if it lays in your way with out to much trouble should bee glad of a
few double tulip roots which must be kept dry in the Cabbin—
I am sorry to find that my stemmed Tobacco by Cob does not rise well; I thought it good of the sort when it went from hence; but I do not apprehend what you mean by its being grey; if it be the white mould you mean, the best of the planters recon that a good sign and that Tobacco will keep, but yellow and blew mould is a dangerous sign I am perswaded any color will go down this year; for never was there such a demand for Tobacco in my memory; and if it bee Tobacco it is no matter what it is else; what I have sent you is very good and had the good fortune to escape the gust; tho I have little or none of my own crops but what could bee very mean in a good year; but for the worst hd I have I am offerd 32sh Ster: pr Ct; and I beleive I shall take it; some sent you I bought at a sawsy rate having Cash by me thought I might turn it into Sterling that way; the rest I recd for Rents which my tenant happen to house before the gust; I have great temptation to sell it here; but seeing every body so desirous to ship I thought I stood as fair a Chance as any man; not doubting of your best endeavours for my interest; I have sent you an invoice for some goods which I desire you to send me pr the first good ship for York River; --I was glad to hear my 12 hds by Bradby were unsold; I think they were good and hope will fetch a good price.

Mr Perry

Yors by Capt Graves of 8br: 24 I recd wherein you tell me you have sent my goods pr the burwell, and insured them as directed; I heartily wish you would read directions before you at random put them in execution; I never orderd you to insure my goods; because I never thought goods in danger; my desire was to ensure the Cash you sent; because if A pyrat
should take the ship mony was so ready a thing that they would never take it; but they have no occasion for goods and never touch any unless they keep the ship so that you have put me to a needless charge of £3 4sh 6d and positively against my instructions; which you will be convinced of if you will bee pleased to read my Letters; then I sent for 100 moiders, and instead of that you sent me £100; which is vastly different; and have not insured them; alltho you had my positive directions as above; severall things omitted I sent for, and some things sent I never dreamt of these things I cannot think proceed from any wilfull neglect; but purely not having directions before you when they are put in execution; I shall bee allways very glad to have my mony laid out according to my own desire; because I think it is my right--I am glad to find you had my Tobacco by you when you writ to me; it cannot fail of a good price--never was such a demand for Tobacco here; I once thought I should not have made one hd but some of my new designs that were in the woods escaped better than my old Plantations, so that I shall send you some pretty good as times go and some that have the gusts livery, but is a deal better than abundance that will go home but even for very worst I have I have refused 32sh pr Ct Sterl. tho I confess it is resisting a great temptation, and more than it can bee worth, but I remember a saying of Hudibras (VIZ) that is the value of A thing which it will bring; I should have sold all but on the receipt of yor Letter I am resolved to ship it; thinking I stand as fair a Chance as any man, I come now to answer yors relating to my Childrens mony I have discoursd Coll Ludwell about it; and he says he never had a penny of it and as for your saying Coll Ludwell must account
with my Children you must pardon me if I cannot agree with you in that I beleive no one can bee accountable but your self, yor Grandfather being the Executor; I did expect and hoped it had bin out att interest long ago according to the donors intent and will and as for Coll Byrds Children being in the same case, I think you are mistaken because your Grandfather writ to me that Coll Byrd had taken his Children mony out of his hands and agreed to pay them interest; and Mr Perry would have perswaded me to do the same but I refusd it; as having no occasion to take mony at interest, and have so much of my own lay dead; Coll Ludwell has writ to you to clear the matter; so shall no more of it at present; I writ to you by Capt Hopkins concerning a troublesome lawsuit

Mr Perry 1725

Amongs all the friends you have in Virga I must bee certain that no one wishes you better or studies more your interest than my self which emboldens me to say what follows Mr Bradley has settled a factor here to buy Tobacco; which is a great forwarding his ships and by furnishing people with goods his Tobacco comes to him at an easy rate; and will in a little time engross a great deal of the trade of both York and James River; I would have no more concernd in this business than your Family; Mr Boling has bought a pretty deal of Tob; for you at a sawcy rate and his [drawn?] bills at 30sh pr Ct; and so would have gave me for all mine but I refusd it now Sir had you a suitable Cargo here entrusted with an honest man you might have bought Tobacco early at half that price and engaged people to you; here is a young man my Neighbor in Town one Saml Cobs; who is bread to Merchandise; and I
beleive understands the Virga business as well as Mr any body and
knows and understands the humor of the planters perfectly well; I am
intimately acquainted with him; and beleive him to bee as diligent, and
honest, as any man that lives; this man would bee very willing to serve
you, and if you think this project will turn to good account, you Cannot
fit your self in the whole Colony better, if you have a mind to buy
arronoka Tob:63 or any Tob: any were else, he is a stiring man and beleive
will go were ever you direct him; I beg your pardon for being so free
and forward; but hope you will take it as I mean it (VIZ) nothing but
pure respect for I can no ways bee byassd or have the least glimpse of
interest in the matter; only purely to serve you as I think

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[William Byrd II] 1725

Dear Brot
Yors of the 15 Aprill last I recd relateing to our Antigua kindred;
I have not seen or heard from Dunbar since; I writ him a very warm
Letter which Ibeleive has a little coold him; I am sorry I cannot
agree with you in your opinion about our agreeemt; I confess by the
articles Mr Clayton drew up, you are no ways obliged to pay any debts
but in Eng: and Virga which was a great omission in Mr Clayton being
positive contrary to his instructions, which was the articles drawn
up between us at Coll Dukes65—you may remember the first heads you
drew I did not like and told you that you should pay all debts due from
Coll Parke except those contracted in Virga; before I took upon the
managmt of that estate as expressed in the articles; your answer was,
well Brot to make all plain and easy I will mention it so; which you
did, and I now have it from under your own hand attested by 2 evidences; which Mr Clayton overlookd when he drew our last agreemt: if I were now to appear before the tribunall of heaven; I would there aver that it was my meaning and am sure was our positive agreemt: and allways expected you should bear me harmless from all demands except contracted by my self in Virga; &c and therefore I might justly calld the councill our councill &c: and cannot think you had so hard a bargain as you are please to fancy; you have a brave flourishing estate here now which was mine, and may heaven prosper it to you & yours I would pay a great deal of mony in my own wrong before I would have a dispute with so good a friend as you are; but the world would cry out shame on me if I should tamely see my Children ruind [[I have sold their birthright to make yor fortune clear and if it must bee still encumberd, their case is as bad as ever and their estate is sold to little purpose which never could be any mans intentions in his right mind could say a great deal more in this manner if I could see you]] 66

I return you many thanks for your kind professions to me, and shall bee glad to have an account of what you have paid of the debts and Legacies of our Father of wretched memory Mr Randolph is of your opinion that it is a collusion betwixt Dunbar & Rodny, wish it may; so much relating to so serious and affair

Wee are in dayly expectation of seeing you and my new sister; 67 tho most agree you never design to do Virga that honor; I should bee very joyfull to see you but if this troublesome business goes forward would gladly have you in Eng: when the appeal comes home; which will be lett which will bee victorious; may you and my sister live long
to gether, and may it bee impossible to distinguish whether your desires equall your enjoynts: which is the hearty prayer of

I should bee proud to hear from you by all occasions

Mr Robt Cary  

ca. November 1725

I have Recd yours by Capt Buckler, Bolling and Cant; and return you many thanks for yor pretty Present in Bolling; who has acted a very unkind part both by you and me—I have never seen one thing you sent me by him The Garden truck were carelessly put in the steerage; where as I am informd a dog tore all to bitts; the Carnations and auriculas so that they they all perishd; the box, and Gooseberry trees, of them lived but the Gardener you mentiond under whose care you put them, I beleive to bee an ignorant knavish fellow; for he has Carried those few things which escaped with life to Secretary Carters which is A long way from me and should have them as soon from Jamaica--I have never seen Boling nor the Gardiner--Boling Ship lay severall days nigh me and he in Town; but never was so kind to Call on me, nor knew nothing of the matter till Mr Jno Randolph told me my flowers were all dead; Boling pretends he did not know who they belonged to in fine I have bin ill used and it has given me more uneasiness than if I had lost 100 times the Value in any thing else; had you sent them in any of Mr Perrys ships I should have had them safe; his Masters being A set of the Men of the most humanity of any of that Fraternity; the Micajah allways rides just by me; and Came in as soon as Boling and have an interest in all concernd with Mr Perry the things should have bin put on the Ballast of the ship and then they would have all lived; with a little water once
a fortnight; I have had abundance of Garden roots. Come safe so; especially when they were put into Carefull hands

I recd all my goods safe by Capt Buckler, and would have sent you Tob: in him, but he could not or would not take it in when it was ready; I have not seen him; nor scarce know him, but desired Mr Cobs to speak to him for freight for me, his answer was he could not take it in; indeed the Masters are so nice this year that they will not take any Tob, but to their owners, I hope to Prevail with some of Mr Perrys Masters to take in for you and I do assure you that you are obliged to Capt Cant who declares he will Carry tobacco to you as soon as to any man; my garden seeds & roots are come safe by him; & my other goods I have not yet on shoar; he being not long arrived; you writ me word I had some things by the Willis Capt Cobs told me you never mentiond my name to him that put me to A stand till Cant arrived indeed if you had sent by him he is ill convenient to me allways rideing in MochJack bay; when you send any thing to me send to York River or to James River if it be in any of Mr. Perrys ships, especially the Micajah; I send you this invoice early because I would have my goods by the first York ship--or James River, provided it belongs to Mr Perry you sent me in some cloth last year but sent me no coat Buttons which has bin a great disappointmt; send me as many coat Buttons of the newest fashion as will trim the coat, I have sent a bit of the Cloth to match them. I am sorry to learn you talk of A sinking Market; all the former Letts: from Eng: gave such encouragemt of the price of Tob: that it has made people ship hand over head; I doubt that I shall bee a sufferor by shiping having had such great offers here; but all you have had from me I am sure is good having passd my own eye; and escaped the gust;
Mr Hugh Howard 1725

I understand by Mr Clayton that he has a power to examine Mrs Lucas and myself about some whigs of Mr Lasseres sent here some years ago. Mrs Lucas Lives on the Eastern Shoar of Virga and the great Bay of Chesapeake parting it from the western shoar so that it will bee difficult to get her here; I have writ very pressingly to her to Come over if possible; Mr Clayton will not go to her the voyage being a little troublesome; I must beleive Lassere has not acted honorably or with the least honesty I am satisfyd the wigs &c were his own proper venture and that the Brigadier acted as his freind and no otherwise; the goods were designed for me, but I told Mrs Lucas that there was so many whigmakers in our Citty that they would go of but poorly; I know she sold some and sent home some Tob. for the produce What she Could not sell she sent me and desired me to ship them in some London ship which I did as I remember in the Micajah & Philip Capt Bradby and directed them to Coll Langston having no knowledge of Lasseres but allways took the property to be vested in Lasseres, I had some Letters that would have the matter plain but have lost or mislaid them; have sent you one that positively says the goods of Mr Lasseres, I have now a great many Letters from my dear friend the honest Brigadier by me but none to your purpose but this sent; I should bee very proud to do any service to any of Coll Langstons friends; and if at any time I can serve you in this affair or any other in Virga none whall do it more Cheerfully than Mr Perry 1725

I have recd your dismall Letter of Nov: 8 ultimo wherein you tell a lamentable story of the fall of Tob: but hope it is with you as in other
people in surprizes the first onset of a contagious distemper makes a very deep impression, but when people are a little used to it; it does not appear quite so terrible just so I hope the sudden fall of Tob: will not bee quite so melancholly as you think it at present, because I can see no very great reason for it; I am Sorry to hear you say that I have sent you the worst Tob: that ever was seen; I cannot justify mine because I never saw any of that in Cant but every hd passd the veiw of a sworn receiver and I was obliged to pay him for it who are a parcell of forsworn rascalls; that Cursed Law has ruind abundance of persons in their estates those were obliged to imploy the sworn receivers; and if perjury bee damnable those men stand a poor chance; and will dearly pay for their wages for they passed all upon their oaths, but I beleive you will think me a fool or A mad man to refuse your 30sh ster. pr ct: even for that trash as you Call it, which your agents courted me to take; and indeed it is owing to your encourageing Letters that causd that great oversight in me; but for the future (if I suffer now for my folly) I never will ship another hd Tob: for England; if I can get a living price in Virga. I hope mine in Bradby were not so bad because they were sworn to by a man that makes the world beleive he is very honest; in fine as things are managed our Tob: trade of late has bin as great a bubble as the south sea; and I wish it may not have in some measure the like effects in proportion;

Mr Robt Cary

[ca. April, 1726]

I have by Capt Randolph recd: the account of sayls of six hd: Tob: that James Bradby brought you the last year and beleive you have done
your best for me, this comes to tell you that I have eight hds: in the
Micajah and Philip consignd to you under these marks and numbers OC:
No A: B: *: c: D: E: F: G: H: which this empowers you to take care of
for my use; the reason why I write thus is; because Bradby has put a
trick on all his freighters wee all understood that his freight was £7:
pr Tun but when he had our Tobacco insisted on eight which I beleive will
do him little service hereafter I shall write to Mr Perry his owner
about it and if he will make me pay £8: pr Tun and uphold his Master in
so unnust a thing, I know what I have to do, I will take no bills of
Ladeing\textsuperscript{78} of him; and many more will do the same

I shall send you some more Tob; by the Burwell I have never receed
one thing from the Gardiner you sent by; who says he did not know who
those flowers &c were for; which I think Strange; Mr Secretary\textsuperscript{79} tells me
he beleives all is dead; but if any lives I shall have what escapes the
next spring; the Tulips you sent by Cant are wretched Stuf now blown
I have not so bad a flower in my garden as they best of them; twas the
double tulips I want those Rascalls that sell them think any thing
good enough for Virga the roundafellwas, not one came up; I beleive they
were killld dryd; for they appeared well to the eyes the beans are very
good; and this is the flourishing account\textsuperscript{80} of my garden Cargo--

I have sent you an invoycie of some goods by Buckler and for fear of
miscarrriage sent you a copy only I have added A sain to Catch fish, which
I desire you will be very carefull in buying it--very good and strong
according to directions send £2 of strong twine to mend it, I writ to
you to desire you to send me my account Curt. yearly which I think is
a very good method and what I have bin all ways used to
Mr Perry 1726

I did expect to hear from you by Capt Randolph. This comes to inform you that I have shipped you 8 hds. Tob: in the Micajah under these marks and No. VIZ: JC: No 1 2 3 81 5 6 7; 0 C: No 8: 4; --I have no Bills of Lading for this reason; Capt James Bradby has tricked all his freighters who expect he would go at £7: pr Tun but when he got our their Tobacco insisted on £8: which you will find will make a great deal of uneasiness, he had the assurance to tell me I was the only man complain'd and upon enquiry I find he tells every body that they are the only men that complain; if what he said of me was truth (which is a confounded Ly, I am the only freighter that has a particular reason to think I am hardly used, because to do the ship service in dispatch I early Carted my Tob: from York to James River which is no small trouble or Charge; now I could never bee so foolish if Bradby had not made me beleive I should save 20sh pr Tun by so doing; for I could have had my Tob: taken from my door by the York River ships without any trouble or Charge at £8 pr Tun; then Certainly I must think my self hard dealt by if I must pay the same with all that trouble so that my Case is particular but beleive you will find many more Complaints of Bradbys usage; if he had told every body when he Came in his freight was £8 pr Tun, that would have bin fair; because people were then Left at Liberty but to make us beleive he would go at £7; and when he got our Tob: to insist on 8: is neither honorable nor honest; and Sir if as he says I am the only man that Com- plains (although my Case is particular I willingly submit to pay £8: pr Tun; otherwise I hope you will not justify your Master in so unfair an
action; and wish his folly, may not be more to your prejudice than you may perceive at present.  

Enclosed is an Invoice of goods which I desire you to send me by the first York River ships; and not send my goods so late every year that they are of little use to me, I should be glad to hear of what becomes of all my Tobacco I sent you two years last past; I hope I am not fallen in amongst the broken accounts, which I hear some are, which I doubt will not advance your interest here is great stir about it; you and some others have writ dismall storys of the Fall of Tob: but by Capt Randolph I recd an account of Tobacco made and housed soon after the gust sent last year in the MicaJah to Mr Cary which Clears me £13: od mony pr hd: sold at 10d\(\frac{1}{2}\) and 10d\(\frac{1}{2}\) pr £ which I do not think such a dismall price; tho far short of expectation.

Mr Perry

[ca. June] 1726

Yors of Feb: last by Capt Turner with my account Curt I recd; there is an article of 3sh paid Jno. Clarke for news sent me the 12 of Aug: 1723; I never have had any news papers in my life; nor ever desire any I do not regard who has lost a Spaniell bitch who has died of the pox and such stuff as Gazetts are stuffd with; and if Clark has charged you with any such thing on my account he is A rascal; and expect to have that article allowd me indeed it is a trifle; but it is imposing on me which I will not bear; and desire you never to send me any such thing, or any thing I do not send for--

I am sorry to hear the dismall account you give of the Tob: Trade and am surprizd to find so much of my Tob: unsold; especially that in Posford which was most of it stemd; your market has bin quick and
good; and wish you had not slipt that opportunity; which other people
took hold of; I am sorry I sent any more home this year; since I have so
much on hand; if I had dreamt of such a thing I would have sold it all
in the Country for goods; till times were better but what is past cant
bee recalld I do not doubt but you will do your utmost for me; notwith­
standing the hard stories that go about; to ungratefull to name; your
broken accounts I fear will do you much injury in your business; I
understand; but not till now that you are determind to come into a new
method and to raise £pr Ct: to make good all debts; I must think such
innovations are very hard; and it is what your ancestors would never
have attempted; but if you will insist on it I must submit to it; tho
I think in Law or Justice there ought not to bee any such thing as a
broken account; because you are paid for what you do; this I only hint to
you as A friend; not as I in the least fear any such usage from Mr Perry; and
if you think fit you may charge the £pr Ct: for I never can bear
the thought of A broken account;--

I find you give me credit for £250 belonging to my Children; which
you say Coll Ludwell has orderd you so to do; what Coll Ludwell means
by it I Cannot say; but do assure you I will not bee concernd with that
mony and positively order it to bee struck out of my account; that mony
ought to have bin put to interest as soon as old Coll Ludwell had bin
dead; and have often writ to your Grandfather to do it; and had his
promise that he would do it; and thought it had; I do not want the mony
at present haveing Considerable mony dead in your hands than will clear

passage crossed out reads: all the Tob: I can ever make--so you may do
with their mony what you think for I never will bee calld to an account
by my Credit—any Tob: I shall send you or can make the use of so much mony sure should entitle me to have the best price for my Tob: but really I never found it did me any more good than barely to clear my Tob: the £250 above you may do as you will with it it will bee lookt after one time or other by those that may have A right

James Blair [91] [ca. June 1726]

Dear Sir

I am not A little concernd that I had not the happiness of taking my leave of you before you went home but could not dream you would go before Capt Randolph if I had, should have done my self the honor of kissing your hand at parting—

The irreparable loss not only of particular persons but of the colony in generall of upright Mr Drisdale[92] is beyond all expression; I must beleive that God Almighty can make such another man; but I sincerely beleive he never made[93]a better;[94] all the hope that I have left is that you will use your accustomd care to make us somewhat amends in A happy succession; I dare not flatter[95] my self ever to have a man to come up to honest Mr Drisedale in all respects; but put a abundance of confidance in you to use your utmost interest with the Lord Orkny[96] to send us a man of good principles; the Country owes a great deal to you for two good Governors; go on good Sir in doing so great A good to us; and may the Almighty reward you for it; A great many people are very sure of Coll Spotswood's[97] coming Cheif Governor; if it bee Gods and King George pleasure so be it; I shall long to have A line from you; if it bee only to hear of your welfare; I pray the Almighty to give A
blessing to all your endeavors (for I am sure you will aim at nothing but what is right,) and that you may safely return to us is the unfeyned desire of good sir

{Lyonel Lyde}, 98 Bristol

Sir

The small acquaintance I had with you whilst you99 lived in Virga: encourages me to give you the trouble of 13: hds of Tobacco in Capt Ludlow100 the six no: with Letters are a particular crop that always answers in the worst of times; please to send me 100 bushls. of your white salt, put in a safe place in the ship; and the remainder of the produce of the whole Tob: send me in heavy molders; if possible let each weigh 7: penny weight or moar101 the matter light gold will bee a great loss it going all by weight here; if war insure them; if peace I will run the hazard without insurance; it is the first time I ever ventured to Bristol; and if I have encouragemt shall continue to send there I do not doubt your utmost care for my interest due Respects salute you I am Yors

Mr Rob: Cary

Feb. 1726/7

This comes by Capt Buckler102 and according to your Letter of request have used my utmost interest both by my friends and self to get him loaded and I beleive a good part to due my103 self; I have sent you 20 hds: of Tobacco which I think I may venture to tell you are very good especially all markd with Letter Num:es are fine top Tobacco; and some No: with figures are likewise top Tob: and all the rest when they were viewed here were thought to bee very good; I hope this forward ship will
come to A good market; Tobacco is in great demand here; and great
prizes given for it; wish it may answer with you; I must beg you to take
care that my Tob: bee not pillaged when it comes home by porters Lighter
men &c; I have such intolerable loss of weights of some Tob: I sent Mr
Perry that it is intolerable 2 & 3: hundred in A hd and I must likewise
take leave to inform you that your tradesmen some of them are great
knaves and impost trash on you and me--The Welsh Cotton you sent me
last is charged at 16d pr yd; and that the year before at 13d for better
and from the same man; the Kendall Cottens you sent were the worst I
ever saw so slazy you might dart straws through it; I gave a particular
order to send me A good strong sain to catch fish it is the worst I
ever saw; some threads as small as Common sewing thread and others
again gouty; and notwithstanding very dear which if it had bin good I
had not valued, the Squires elixir is charged A quart, and the bottle
that contains it does not hold quite a pint & half; I wish the Leather
bottles had bin made according to directions with thick glass on the
inside; the rosin will not do; because if any spirituous liquor is
put into them the rosin comes all of and the drink as bitter as gaul
it is fit for nothing but beer and the like that your tradesman knew very
well because he sent me by Mr Perry's order some rosin before which he
well knew was found fault with all; so that they are of no use to me
any more than A Common gourd--I thought fit to give you this account
that I may not bee so used any more;

I have writ to you often to desire my account Curt it is a method I
have bin allways used to and desire you will not fail to let me have it
Mr Perry an I are to come to an Agreeamt which is I am to allow him \( \frac{1}{2} \) pr
Ct on the sails of my Tob: which make in all 3 pr Ct and he runs the hazard of bad debts; as soon as my Tob: is sold I have Credit immediately for the mony; I believe most gentlemen will come in to it if you think well to do so I am willing please to let me know your mind; enclosed is an invoice of what goods I shall want which desire you will send by the first safe conveyance to York River, VIZ: 2 bob: wigs of light horse hair strong buckle and every way well made 2 very fine wire sives to sift the dust only out of weat, those you sent were so coarse they let the weat through £1 of best Jesuit's bark; bought of A honest drugster; that last sent was very good; 1 quart of squires grand elixir bought of the preparer; six bottles of Daffys elixir salutis bought of the preparer; 10 Motly col rugs for Nigros; 1 doz of stock locks and keys [staples?] --of about 1ls: 6d: pr lock; 100: els of brown ozenburgs of 7d½ pr ell; 200 ells of brown rows 2:doz: broad hoes 2 doz: Nar: 1 Doz: good felling axes; 100 yds Welsh Cotten 150 yds of Kendall Cotten 1 peice of white silk [finest?] 1 peice Do: red 1 peice Do: black; 1 peice Do Lemmon color; 1 peice Do: green; 1 peice Do: blew; 1 peice of 6sh black ribband; 1 doz: glasses such as are put over mezitinto prints to preserve them 17: inches long and 12 inches wide carefully packt; 12 yds wading for morning gowns £20 Dutch brown thread--11 yds cloth rug: of A color that will not show dirt triming suitable; 4½ yds: of broad cloth of 16 sh pr yd of A good grey color triming suitable a pocket book with ivory Leaves 3 yds duffill 1 pint spirt harts horn

Mrs. Ester Drysdale

[1727]

Permit me Mad: to trouble you with these few lines which proceed purely from the respect due to you for the many Civilities I often recd from
my dear dear good friend Mr Driesdale and your self; I wish I had any
other way to demonstrate my gratitude; but since the humble station I
am in will not enable me to show the true sense I have of your memories;
suffer this poor paper to tell you how much I think my self indebted to
you; and if it were possible that I can bee any waies serviceable to you
here; I should think it the greatest honor I can ever hope to attain to,--

My good friend Coll Ludwell died of A dropsy the 11 of Jan: I pray
God his place in the Councill may bee filld up with A good man; it is
thought it will bee some of Coll Carters relations—he presiding over
us at present--

The storm that has often threatnd my from Antigua by the barbarous
will of Coll Parke is now coming on me and have more mony demanded of
me than he ever was worth; God only knows the event; but why do I trouble
you with an affair so foreign to you; I pray God grant you all the happi-
ness this world can afford; and I cannot doubt but A Lady of your princi-
pies must bee eternally happy in the world to come which is the sincer
prayer of Mad... your most obedient Servt J C

Mr Perry 1727

I have reed my severall accounts of sales of my Tob: that has so long
lain on hand; and for what they yeild me it would have bin no great loss
if they had laid on hand to eternity; you have sent me a small quire of paper of dutch accounts which neither my self no any mercht I can
find can understand; but my english account makes me to sensible of the
net proceeds; I shall hereafter put it into my Littany from A dutch
account good Lord deliver me; I must confess the Tob: was far from good
but it was such as the year afforded and the sworn receivers on their
oaths passd for merchantable; and the very same Tob: shipt the same
time and full as bad or worse sent to Mr Cary 12 hd: cleared me £139:
15sh: 4d: and 12 hd to you clears: [£] 121 32: 15sh: 2d 122 and other 12,
40: 1: 7d which is so vastly different that I could not have beleived it
unless my eyes had bin my witness and you must give me leave to tell you
that if I had disposed of what Tob: I have sent you these 3 or 4124 years
last past (any other way) it had bin severall hundred pounds in my
pocket, then the vast loss of wieght I find in my accounts125 are intol­
erable 2: 3: and four hundred in a hd difference between the scales
here and with you; which no Tob: can loose fairly the 8: or 10 part;
allowing for what cut of in some hds: damnifyd by the carelessness of
those Rascalles that carry it from the Tob house to the ships; one hd in
particular No. CT Mr Cant which weigh here by the scales 900 net for
which I gave £9: and you gave me an account of but £4: 3/4sh: 2d and it
was good as the year went so that I am about £6 out of pocket for that
one hd; I would not bee understood that I have the least thought of your
wronging me in the weights; but if you suffer it it is the same to me;
you discharge the men from the ships as soon as moord and employ other
men to unlode and give them little or nothing so that they must make up
their wages by pilfering the Tobacco this the sailors in generall126
affirm here; then your cooperers they take what they think fit; so that
by the time it comes to bee sold the owner has but A poor part of his
property to his share; these are notorious abuses, and if not rectifyd
I do beleive it127 will not be endured long; for my part I will try all
the ports in great Brittain; or sell in the Country if offerd any thing
in reason for then I shall have what my Tob: weighs; and if I get but
half what I can with you it will bee as well, when I must loose $\frac{1}{2}$ the weight 128 of my Tob: and stand to risque;--

I am sorry that you took my friendly advise to you ill about Bradbys arbitrary acting in his freight last year at £8 pr Tun; the difference of what Tob: I had in him is a trifle but it does not at all absolve him from being a knave in not standing to his contract which was positively with me at £7 pr Tun; and Sir give me leave to tell you that if you had studied your whole life time to do Bradly and Randolph a peice of service you could not have done it more effectively than you have by upholding your Masters unjust actions; Mr Bradly has struck of the 20sh pr Tun, and Randolph openly declares he scornd to take £8: 129 this will bring over abundance of consignmts to them that you would have had; if you would have done the same; and make as slight of it as you please; I wish you may not find it much to your disadvantage; this is only a friendly freedom which if you take it otherwise than I mean I cannot help it--

Mr Robert Cary

[ca. March or April 1727] 130

I recd my account of sails of my Tob: sent you last year with my account curt which is very right--you tell me you have taken a great deal of pains in the disposall of my 16 hd Tob: last sent, for which I thank you but it is a riddle to me that they should bee more proper for export than home Consumption, when you give it the best character Tob: can have (VIZ) heavy and--waxey; I allways thought that the waxy quality is what was allways desired and I think you have acted honorably by me in selling my Tob: at home that I may have the benefit of my mony designed for that use, I wish others had bin so just to me; it had bin mony in my pocket;
you tell me what Tob: was not black was bright more like the Color of Arronka; it is a particular crop that grows on light sandy ground which flings it out very quick and large and will 'cure of that bright color do what I can old Mr Perry used to covet that Crop, and allways gave me a good price for it in the worst of times; and you are mistaken when you say you never had such from me before; you had 12: hd of that Crop 1724 by Jas: Bradby for which you gave me £139: 15sh: 4d:—

I must now give you thanks for your kind present of Layers of carnations and auriculas; they all perishd as Bradby tells me by the Long passage & bad weather he sent me a Tub: of dirt but not the Least sign of a Layer--I am sorry I have given you this fruitless trouble twice I shall for the future give over the thought of having any such things sent for I find it is in vain; nothing comes safe but bulbous roots, & such things as ranunculars, and those neither ignorance or carelessness can destroy; I should have bin very proud of these had they come safe: but the obligation is the same to you; I thank you for your care in buying my medicines which are very good and cheap; in my invoice sent by Buckler I sent for £1 of Jesufts bark which I would have you omit Mr Perry having sufficiently furnishd me I desire you to send me 3 yds of good duffill I would not have it so fine as I have seen it come in for then it cannot be warm but thick and a long shag and any cloth color except blew or red it is for A riding coat for my self I choose duffil because it is light warm and will keep out rain you may have very good for 5 pr sh--1 pint spirit of hartshorn
Mr Perry

[May, 1727]

Yors by Capt Turner with my account Curt; I have read; and think it very od that you should crowd into my account; contrary to my positive order; my Childrens £250; left them by old Coll Ludwell; but since you will do it; I hope you will make a memorandum what time you Carried that mony to my account; my Children have bin grossly injured some where; by Letting their mony Lay dead so many years when it ought to have bin put to interest as soon as the will was proved; and then it might have bin a good sum of mony by this time; I have your Grandfathers promise from under his hand that the mony should bee put out to use; but orders and promises now adays; are made for the same end as pycrust—

I am offerd 6 pr Ct: for £2000 interest here with Land and Nigros security; but it may happen to create some trouble; if accidents should happen so think it best to put it into the bank of England and desire you on receipt of this to put £2000 ster: of my mony in your hands into the Bank at interest; and do impower you to receive the interest for my use yearly; I shall have enough in your hands besides for my occasions; I have bin a great Looser by Letting my mony Lay dead so long; when I have bin often offerd 6 pr Ct for it here; and I never found my self one farthing the better for it; my goods are Charged as dear as the meanest planter that has not one penny to go to market; and what I think very hard that considering tis but A triffle I send for every year; that my Goods must bee bought for 18 months Credit and often such trash that are good for little; which if my mony was paid down they would come considerably cheaper; if you do not think fit to take the
trouble of manageing my mony as I have directed; please to signify it to me; pr the first; & pay it to Mr Cary and he will; put it into the Bank at interest for me; but I thought fit to giv you the first offer; as being my corespondent the longest

Mr Robt Cary

[May 10,] 1727

The Cheif occasion of this is to acquaint you that I have orderd Mr Perry to put into the bank of England £2000 at interest out of the mony I have in his hands; I do not know whither he will take the trouble upon him he having (as most beleive a mind to leave of business) I desire you to know of him if he has done it; and if he does not think fit; I desire you to receive two thousand pounds sterling of him; and immediately to put it into the bank of Eng: at interest for my use and that you will please to receive for me the interest yearly

[Micajah Perry] June 1727

Sir

This comes to acquaint you that I have shipt 8 hd of Tob: in Capt Cant to you; No: 28 is small indifferent Tob: I did not design to send it to you but by mistake the saylores took it on board; I had sold it well to A north Brittain; and was forced to let him have that designd for you in the room of it I hope it will pass with the rest; I writ to you by Ja Bradby and Buckler which I hope you have recd I desire you to ad to my other invoice those enclosed necessaries which slipt my memory when I writ before; and if the two Perriwigs are not bought I writ for, do not send them the person that desired me to write for them being dead--

Your Kinsman Mr Mitchell is lately marryd to A pretty Country girl
of a very good character; her Father and Mother are my very near neighbors and have bin acquainted with them severall years; they are people of very good repute Mr Peirce who is the young woman's Father being a justice of Peace for the County of York; and do veryly beleive him to bee a man of as much integrity as Mr any body; in fine Mr Mitchell may bee very happy if he and his friends can think him so in a Wife without a Fortune; Mr Peirce Lives very well; but has severall Children; and do beleive it is not in his power to do much for his daughter I hope you will pardon this impertinencey it being the only news I have to tell you, and it haveing some relation to you; hope it may bee the better taken—

Francis Nicholson 143

Summer 1727

Honorable Sir
Permit me to kiss your hand by way of Letter since I have no hopes of haveing the honor to do it myself; I allways rejoyme to hear that you are still alive and enjoy a sound mind with a healthy body may the Almighty continue those blessings to you; till his pleasure to compleate your happiness in another world

You have some lotts in York Town; which I presume will never bee of much service to you; and if it bee your pleasure to dispose of them I humbly beg the favour of you to send me word that you will please to take for them with a power to some one to convey them to me; they shall allways bear your name in memory of you; I hope you will pardon me for giving you this trouble and beleive that no one living is more yr ever most obedient Servt than JC
Mr Perry

Sept 17, 1727

I Recd yours by Capt Boling with an account of Mr Cary paying the fees for my being on the Councill 144 I think I am obliged to him; [and to you for your Kindnesses in that affair] 145 because, I never mentiond anything of it to him I recd A Letter from Mr Cary wherein he tells me you promisd him to give me your answer in putting my mony into the bank; I think you should have done it your self or let him do it for whilst I stay for an answer I Loose so much of my interest--I wonder you did not mention it to me in your Letter; if I have not your answer soon, you must give me Leave to draw on you for the mony payable to them that will bee so kind to do it for me; you seem to hint as if somebody had done you some ill offices in my opinion of you; I do assure you I have still the esteem for you I ever had and will and have endeavourd to serve you allways; if you would have given me Leave; but if other people will sell my Tobacco to a much better advantage, and buy my goods better and Cheaper, and more punctually follow my direction upon second thoughts you can not fault me if I correspond with them for there is no man Living will act against his own interest, and do assure you I have no thoughts of breaking my correspondence with you; if I can have any tolerable usage; I have sent some of my Crops to Bristoll the last year, which I never should have done if you had not sent me those cursed dutch accounts

Mr Cary

7ber 17, 1727 146

I recd both your kind Letters by Capt Bolling, and return you my hearty thanks for your friendly zeal in takeing out and paying the fees for the warrant to bee one of the Councill; it is what I little dreamt of as
for what you writ\textsuperscript{147} in answer to mine of the 10 of May Mr Perry has not
as yet thought fit to give me any answer as he promis'd you concerning put-
ting out my mony I do not understand what he means' by giving me an answer,
he ought immediately to have follow'd my orders, or have paid you the
mony for that use; if I have not a satisfactory answer from him soon he
must excuse me if I draw on him for the mony payable to those that will
follow directions--

I recd all my goods by Capt Boling safe, the moths have injurd my
Cottens but nothing else; I have not more at present to ad save that I
am

The Sarah Capt Renolds\textsuperscript{148} is not yet arrived wish she may bee well

\[Mrs\ Ester\ Drisdale\]

[1727]

Hond Madm

Amongst the hearty friends you have left in Virga: I will allow no one
to have a greater respect for you than I have; neither Can any one more
rejoyce to hear of your wellfare. Mr Commissary and Mr Holloway were
so kind as to tell me that you were pleas'd to give your service to me
in yor Letter to them; which I do not only take as A Kind expression;
but as an honor done me--

I rejoyce to hear that his Majesty has not bin unmindfull of your
merits; and may the King of Kings hereafterward reward you with eternall
peace and felicity; this brings you the news of Coll Nath Harrisons\textsuperscript{149}
death, by which the Auditors place becomes vacant; I am sensible there
will bee great strugling for that office, but that no ways discourages
me from hopeing your interest may prevail in favour of my very good
friend Mr Jno Blair;\textsuperscript{150} if you will bee pleas'd to assist him; perhaps
you may think it od I do not ask it in my own favour, but I assure you
I prefer my friend to my self, it would bee trifling to give you a Char-
acter of Mr Blair; tho I cannot forbear saying that I think him as
Capable to officiate as Auditor as any body in the whole Colony; without
giving any affront; because it is a receivd opinion that he is a nice
accountant which is very materiall in that business; good Madm: pardon
this forwardness which will ad to the many obligations laid on Yor
most obedient servt

Mr Perry                        Xber 10: 1727

Yors of 8br 7 152 by the spotswood now lys before me but you make a great
mistake, you directed my Letter to Mr Jno Lowry in Elizabeth Citty
County; you mentiond to me in A Line that enclosd my invoyce that you
had writ more att large by that opportunity I made strict enquiry for
the Letter but could hear nothing of it which made me A little uneasy
but the Last night Mr Lowry was so kind to send it me; with an excuse
for opening it, which any man would have done by the direction; I am
glad you have put my mony into the Bank; I had much rather you should
do it than any one; and desire you will duly receive the interest for
my use; and had I bin sure you would have taken the trouble on you I
should never have thought of any one else; but it was a generall report
here that you would Leave of your Virga business; it is reported that
you are in the Parliament for the Citty; if so; I heartily wish you Joy;
I am sorry to hear your market is so low; here is great prizes given
for Tob: here by the merchts: late from England which is very surprising;
it is generally thought our Crop now on hand is not Large; but I protest
I cannot at present pass any positive judgmt on it--
Coll Nath Harrison is dead, there will bee great struggling for his\textsuperscript{153} Auditors place, and I beleive powerfull Candidates; Mr Jno Blair is one; I have a very great respect for that gentelman and should take it kindly if you could assist him with yor: interest in getting him that Place, as for his qualifications malice it self can make no objection; and if places of profit would go by merit; I think he stands as fair as Mr any body--

I find honest Ja Bradby has left us; his son has bin with me I shall do him, and you, all the service in my power to load him, I shall not trouble you more at present save my best respects to you and your freinds is the [respectfull]\textsuperscript{154} from Yrs JC

Mr Perry

Feb: 3: 1727/8

The Burwell is safe arrived and have reed your Letter by her but am very much surprised at the Contents--I think you have acted quite contrary to my directions which you will find if you please to Look on my Letters; I desired my mony to bee put into the bank at interest but never did design to buy bank stock or any stock else; because I Look on all stocks mere bubbles I am not willing to run any hazard the stocks may fall, and by that means I may bee A Looser; now when my mony is at A Certain interest I run no hazard especially in the bank; if I had bin fond of hazards I could have let my mony out at A better interest here than in England; I think I have hard fate that I can never have my directions complyed withall I desire you will sell that stock so as I may not bee A Looser; and put my mony into the bank at a certain interest; and then I shall be sure of something; I am allltogether A stranger in
this affair, but I am told you have bought very dear; it has made me very uneasy; little dreaming I should ever bee concernd in buying stocks, which has bin the ruin of many A man; I cannot tell what you mean of Mr Carys being a great favorite; if you point at me; I do assure you I value all men as I think they merit; that Gentleman hitherto has used me very well and followd my orders to a tittle; and as long as he continues so to do; I shall make him all the gratefull returns within my Power—and am sorry there is such A Coldness between you & him; the reasons you both best know; and it is no business of mine;

To Mr Jno Starch Merch in Gasgow June 25; 1728

Sir

I have made bold to trouble you with A Bill of Exch: for £20: and desire you to send me the following particulars: (VIZ) ten doz: course plad stockins for Nigros, some very Large, the others middle sizd; sewd strong; the remainder of the bill send in cours plad for clothing for my Nigros; I am told it will not cost above 6d or 7d pr yd—

Mr Nellson recommended you to me and if things answer well, if you think fit will settle A Correspondence with you; Mr Nellson is my very good friend and neighbor; please to send my goods in the first ship for York or James River, but York is most Convenient, or if you send them to Mr Nellson I shall easily get them; direct for me at Williamsburgh in Virga which is the place of my habitation pardon this freedom from Yor: most obedient Srvt Jno Custis

Desire the feet of the stockins may bee long and wide the stockins that come from your parts the feet are generally so small that they are useless
Mr Robt Cary

1719 [1729] 157

Your severall Letters are now before me, in your Last you sent me an account of sails for 20 hd pr Buckler and must think I have but a poor price considering the goodness of that parcell of Tob: which I am very sure was as good as went out of Virga without exception and the reason I am so positive is, because it was my home Crops under my own eye, and may say I saw allmost every plant from the planting to the prizing and shiping of; and was all choice-pickt Tobacco and nothing mean or any like trash You say it was to bright; I never had that complaint before; it grows on quick ground and cured in open houses, which is the reason of the color; you advise me to make it black; I know no way but by wetting it; or prizing in to high Case; and then I am sure you will have a great deal of reason to fault it; Mr Perry says my Tobacco is to dark how to please you both, I should bee glad to know; however I will for the future send you as little of that crop as possible, you are please to tell me, I have the best price the market affords--you must give me leave to differ from you, several of my poor neighbors, whose ground I am sure cannot make good Tobacco, have 8d\(\frac{1}{2}\), and some 9d; and have not one farthing in their Merchts hands--I am sorry I am not so fortunate as other people; I must now take leave to inform you, how you are impose on by your knavish tradesmen, and how I am misused, first; you sent me a parcell of shammy Leatherskins; charged at the most they could bee, and was the saddest trash that ever was seen, they were all sorry Lamb skins and 3 three would hardly line A pair of Britches; Mr Jno Blair had some from Perry charged exactly at the
same price, and are as good as three of yours sent then; you bought
them of Robt Terrell; next I am charged with scarlet in gram shag, and
have sent you A peice of what sent Lett your eyes be judge, with the
shop note; then I am charged 10sh for A Quart of squire's elixir and
the same man charges Mr Perry but 8sh; I measured both bottles, and they
hold--exact alike, have sent both the shop notes for vouchers--then you
sent me A hd: of Beer as it is calld--bought of J J R: Pycroft such trash
was never before brewd; I offerd it my Nigros, and not one would drink
it; the worst Molasses Beer that ever was brewd was A cordiall to it;
I flung every drop away besides the little was tasted, then I sent for
A pound of Mashim; which in plain english is wite wax that shomakers
fair stitch shoes withall, and you sent me a thing which was call a
Muchiw I had it severall months before any body could inform me what it
was or for what use it was for, at Last the Governors sister told me it
was a french device to powder A beau Perriwig; I am very sorry I should
bee thought such an insipid part of the Creation as A Beau besides the
two words are differently spelt; but this I impute to A pure mistake,
but I Cannot call nothing else so; I do assure you Sir I do not complain
for the sake of complaining; and hope I shall have no more such usage
under your managemt--

I have sent you hds$^{160}$ by Buckler, I hope they may come to A
better market or else it will not answer to send Tobacco home; I have
sent an invoice of what att present I can think of which please to send
by the first York ship;--

I come now to thank you for for your kind present of the yellow
Jassamin & ever flowering honysuckles but I have my old fate they were
all dead—by ignorance or Carelessness they were put in the deck and
I suppose the spray of the salt water came on them and killed them they
should have been put in the balast—

Mr Jno Starche

[1729]

I Recd two Letters from you with the stockins and plad; and must beg
Leave to inform you; that I never had such ill usage in all my life;
but considering the fine Character you maintain here have so much Charity
to believe you have bin grossly impos'd on by your Rascally tradesmen; all
the plad except 3 peices bought of your self (which are good) are full
of holes, and innumerable darns and some rotten; must think they have
bin old shop keepers time out of mind otherwise they could not have bin
so full of holes, darns dirty an rotten, it might bee said that the
moth might eat the plad in the ship; but the moth Could not darn up in-
numerable holes, I have sent you two peices that your own eyes may see
how I have bin used, and perhaps you may think they are the worst; but
I assure you it would puzzel a Philosopher to distinguish that, I
neglected sending to England for Cotten for my slaves, depending on the
plad, and Cannot have a supply before cold weather sets in; so that
I am obliged to make use of it as well as I can, otherwise should have
returned it all except 3 peices above mention'd, if I were sure never to
have any reparion I am now makeing it up, and it takes the taylor
more time to patch and darn than makeing the garment and when all is
done my poor slaves will but bee poorly of; if you have not A stricter
eye to your tradesmen, their villany may prejudice you very much in
your affairs; Mr Gay has seen the plad and can give you a full account
of it; I beleive you are very happy in that Gentleman as a factor; I could not without doing my self and you injustice forbear writing this Letter; remembering the old adage (Viz) the sufferer has just liberty to speak; I am with due respect Yors JC

The stockins are very good

[Dunbar Parke] Jan: 25: 1729/30

Sir

I did expect ere now to have seen you in Virga: but understand that you are still of opinion that this estate is Liable to discharge the Late Coll Parks debts; I hope you will pardon me if I am of A contrary judgmt: and that you may see the grounds of my opinion have sent you the will of old Coll Parke the Generall's Father, wherein you you will find the son had but an estate for life; and consequently had no power to dispose of any thing at his death; I have had the opinion of most of the eminent Lawers here, and of some Learnd men in England and they seem to make a wonder any one should make a question that the Late Coll Parke could burden an estate of which he had no right longer than life; all the favor I desire of you is that you would shew this will sent to your Lawers, and must think they will advise you that this estate can no ways be Liable for the Late Coll Parks debts--this may prevent a troublesome, Long and Chargeable Lawsuit; could I see you; I beleive all things could bee easy
To Charles Higgs Esq  

Coronor of Middlesex at  
his house att Hamstead near London  

Sir  
The fair Character my good Friend Majr: Holloway gives you encourages me to ask A very great favor of you; altho I am an entire Stranger to your Person, I hope your goodness will pardon this my freedom; I need not recite particulars, but please to bee referd to the enclosd Papers, I have given directions to Mr Robt Cary Mercht In London to furnish you with Cash to defray the Charges; I shall not presume to trespass any farther on yor patience; only to assure you, that I shall eternally have A gratefull acknowledgmet of so vast and obligation Laid on yor most obedient humble servt JC  

To Robt Cary  

Sir  
This only serves to desire you most Carefully to deliver the enclosd Packet as directed; and to furnish Mr Charles Higgs Esqr with Cash he shall want to defray the Charges he shall bee at on my account, not exceeding £20: tho I hope it will not bee so much; but in Case Mr Higgs should bee dead; I desire you to break up the Packett directed to him, and punctually follow the directions given him; if he bee living what Papers he shall send to you for Me, or Mr Holloway, Carefully dispatch to me by the first safe opportunity; and if he bee dead, when you have done what is required Carefully send me all Papers--your utmost Care in this is earnestly desired it being A matter of very great Consequence, and will infinitely oblige Yors JC
A Copy of Majr Holloway's Letter to Charles Higgs Esqr

Williamsburgh Virga

Aprill 13 1730

Herewith comes to my dearest friend the Case of a Gentleman in my neighborhood who has bin my Client ever since I came hither, He is desirous to have the opinion of one of the most eminent Lawers; he is not willing to part with A greater fee than is necessary, nor would he abridge that, but his cheif desire is (and that is one Reason why I give you the trouble) that he may have the thoughts of one very eminent and yet such as will have leisure enough to consider the Case throly, it being A matter really of great Concern--

Hee will herewith send you his order on my old friend Mr Robt Cary for what the expence amounts to, I beg your particular Care in it, and that when you have the opinion which I recon will easily be had after trinity term, that you will enclose it directed for the Colonell or me, and leave it with Mr Cary to be dispatch hither, our generall Court begins the 15 where I am forcd still to slave, so have no time to say more, than that I certainly am the very same thy most faithfull and affectionate friend Jack Holloway

Wee shall by the next ships send you Another Copy of the Case for another Lawers opinion;

Perry

Gentlemen

Yors: by Capt Turner of March the 20 1729; I have recd with my account Curt; am glad you had not sold my Tob: this last years short Crop which is now comeing to you and a far shorter Crop which must happen this pre-
sent year, occasiond by the flyes eating up the plants in most parts of the Country, must raise Tob; or else nothing will I have advisd you at Large on that subject by Capt Harwood. So need not trouble you now with A repetition; Mr Cary has bin so unkind as to sell my Tob; for exportation, contrary to A repeated order; by which I loose the 10 pr Ct for the discounts; he had the same instructions as you, but is pleas'd not to regard them, which usage I cannot bear, shall not send him one hd this year but shall send what I have to you; except 18 hds I shipt to Bristoll; I am very glad you have bin so kind as to observe directions; which I think must turn to my advantage, Buckler brings you 15 hds: all Bundle except three hds; I am of opinion good bundle Tob; will do, because I presume so little is gone home of that sort; which I have in Bradby & Cant are all stemd and hope will come to A good market; which unless it does do not part with them hastily; for Tob; as I said before must rise, I must inform you that my goods sent last by the Spotswood are dear bought, contrary to order, an some good for nothing my ozen-brigs Charged at 8d3/4 by Atkins &c; who is an extravagant man; and much disliked by a great many Gentlemen here; but have bin told you are so weded to him, that you will buy of no one else; which I think a little od; and if so, will not trouble you to send me any linnens; for I will not bee imposd on by such a sharping fellow; who will do you more injury than you are aware of; Mr Crowly has sent me sixpenny nails; the Cheif-est part of them Lead; I will send you 2 or 3 of them as you may see how greviously you are imposd on; as well as my self, such A bare face Cheat I never heard of; instead of indian Cheap cotten handkercheifs I have a whole peice of very dear silk ones which I never desired,
neither do I know what to do with them; and Mrs Wright has had no cons-
cience in her Bill; that is A Woman as much dislikd as Atkins; and
has that same share in your favors; I hope you cannot take this Complaint
amiss but will endeavor to rectify such proceedings for the future; the
Last year every thing was to likeing; am sorry your tradesmen are weary
of being just;--

I thank you for your assuring me that you would bee glad to serve
my son, so I know there is no vacancy at present; but I thought it fit
to desire early your favour in case any thing should happen, the Com-
missary got the Auditors place for his Nephew, by engageing Mr Walpool\textsuperscript{171}
many years before, shall take Care to give you early advise if any thing
happens--

You say you are sorry I should suspect any of your Masters for
Plundering, I my self cannot Charge any of them with it; and do beleive
some of yor Masters would scorn it; but that wee are Plunderd; is
beyond dispute, I have for some years past lost the fourth part of my
Tobacco, by such piraticall usage; and leave it to you if I have not
reason to complain;--

M: Catesby\textsuperscript{172} June 1730

Dear Sir

Yor: kind and most obligeing Letter I have recd: with your pretty
present, than which, nothing that you could have thought of could more
highly oblige me, I will put them into frames and glasses, and keep them
in memory of you, and shall allways esteem them as A very valuable part
of my Furniture; you are pleasd to complimt me concerning my Garden,
which I assure you no ways deserves it; my greens are come to perfection,
which is the chief fruit of my long and assiduous endeavours, we have had 3 or for very bad winters, and hot & dry summers, which demolish all my flowers, and a great many of my best greens, so that I am out of heart of endeavoring any thing but what is hardy and Virginia proof; Tho I must heartily acknowledge your kind offer; and if you will please to let me know in any thing that I can serve you here; I shall cheerfully do my self the honor of serving you; I have given Mrs Holloway some catbirds for you; and send you some young dogwoods from the old stump at the French ordinary the tree is dead those sent are cyons that sprung from the old root; I have 2 more in my garden but they are 4 or five feet high; I thought this an ill time time to move them; but our ships never going from hence in a proper season must be glad of any, you have much the advantage in sending all manner of trees & flowers roots, because the ships come hear in the winter, but go from hence in the summer, but we can send all manner of seeds and the like safely, because they may bee kept a while; I shall allways be glad to hear of your wellfare and esteem it a great favor as often as you are pleas'd to oblige me with a line I am—J. C

[Richard Fitzwilliam] [1770]

Dear Sir

May this find you safe arrived in England, and as I have profess'd a friendship for you, cou'd not omit paying my early respects, and to amuse you with what happen'd after your departure, your protest made a very great noise; and was prosecuted with the utmost vigor; but your friends oppos'd that unaccountable torrent, with the hazard of displeasure, the
warm gent of the house endeavor to address his Majesty (as they dreamt) for reparation; desiring that you might not sit in the Courts of Judicature, or upper house, I told severall of them that they were very forward in pretending to direct their sovereign in the appointing his Councill, in short the warm debate came to a division of the house and there was 28, & 28, so that the speaker was to determine the wild controversy, who was against their flameing address and said he thought the honor of the house was enough vindicated in the resolve they had passd (Viz) that your protest was scandalous false & malitious; which you may see on their Jornalls, your old freinds in our house would have stood by you on all occasions; if any thing had come there, then I doubt they would have bin much overpowerd; I hope and do beleive your enemys powder will bee to weak to do any execution--

The perplexing Tob: Law is past; sure never was more pains taken to give it birth, and such methods usd' as I never saw before; and am of opinion it would never have passd even the Committee, if they had not bin spirited up by all the artfull means imaginable; Passage crossed out reads: and am pretty confident that severall that voted for it, in their hearts abhord it; so far will complaisance and the strongest side; it is for 4 years a time to long for an experimt of so weighty a project; wee had very warm debates in Lowr house to give it life but 3 years but were out voted--the Commissary in private only before Coll Grymes advisd the Govr not to pass it without inserting the Clause that it might not take place till His Majestys pleasure was known, but the Govr would not hear of such a Clause and said it was all-ready approved of at home; but with submission illegible word,
sent home, and the present Law is no more alike than an apple is like an oyster, may 184 it travell to England and like that air so well that it may never return to Virginia, I heartily wish you all health and happiness and that you may safe return to your good friends, above the malice of your enemys; which is the sincere wish of Dear Sir Yor: most sincere friend and obedient servt

Jno Starch 1730

Sir

There comes the Covert of A Bill of Ladeing for 4 hds of Tob: which I commissiond Mr Gay to buy for me purely to oblige you and him; I have no concerns in James River so had not Tob: of my own there, Mr Gay assures me it is very good I never saw it, hope it may in some measure answer, tho there is poor encouragemt to ship to your port, the Merchts of London advising that you bring it there and hawk it for 6d pr £: this I have from under Mr Robt 185 Cary hand and shwod it Mr Gay; I shall not send for anything till my Tob: is sold, save 5 doz: of plad stockins, such as sent the first time, large feet well sewed; I am sorry you sent me no yellow sheilds cloth which was the cheif thing I wanted;

Mr Robt Cary 1731

I come now to answer yours: by Capt Lony, 186 first you say I must not understand your Letters when I say you contradict yourself; I must think I understand english; and do still say I never read a more plain contradiction; and since I recd yours, have showd those parts of your former Letters to other gentlemen, who are entirely of the same opinion,
the places you hint at in your Letter are not the places of contradiction if you observe my Letter it will point out plainly what I said; but—

Let that pass; you say you thought it for my interest to sell my Tob: that you might come into the mony to answer the discounts, I am very sorry I should not have sufficient Cash in your hands to answer the discounts of what Tob: I sent you, I know very well what it will take to clear a Hd of 800 net; and made sure I had credit enough to answer that, if I had dreamt otherwise should not have troubled you with more Tob: than my mony would clear, for that is doing nothing; and am sensible you give 9 or 12 months' Cr but what is that to the purpose; the tradesmen you buy our good of give you as long or longer Cr which is the reason the goods are bought so dear; which if you paid ready mony would come considerable cheaper, that I well know by experience; indeed people that have not mony in their Merchts hands ought to be contented with that usage; but those that Lett their Cash ly dead without interest, ought to be treated in another manner and have the advantage of buying a few necessaries with their ready mony perhaps you may think I say this like a parrot; but I assure you I know it to be fact having formerly lived with old Mr Perry some years and saw the methods he and others usd, here are some people that go to England and buy their goods themselves with ready Cash, and it is surprizing to see the difference betwixt ready mony and the twelve month Cr: if you were a Lord Chancellor; you would give judmt against such unequitable proceedings—
I am surprizd when you tell me my crop before the last was rotten in the middle of the hds: sure, very sure I am that that Tob: sent you was prized in so low case as it could scarce bee handled and was in as good order when it went from my warehouse as Tob: could bee; neither could Tobacco in that condition bee hurt if it were possible to hang the world on the end of the prizing beam; but if it had bin half rotten, it was worth as much or more than you were pleasd to give me for it—

I hope you cannot think I should take it ill when you advise me in the ordering of my Tob: it is so far from that, that I give you many thanks; I assure you I never pretend to give my Tob: a bright color; but sometimes the ground sometimes the year, and sometimes the houses that it is housed in will give some of it A bright Color;

A Copy of Majr: Holloways Letter to Charles Higs Esq

My Dear Friend: Aprill 3: 1731

I recd Sir Philip Yorks opinion upon Coll: Custis Case from you sometime since: Coll Custis has bin long sick which prevented him sending you another slate of the Case, which he now sends you & is very thankfull for the trouble you have allready taken; tho it has happend A little unlucky that you should go to Sir Philip York, because he has bin formerly advised with by our Antagonist and given his opinion under his hand which they sent us as also the opinion of Sir Robt Raymond and one R: Edwards of Lincolns In: I think Sir Philip should have told you he had bin consulted, wee now beg you will go to some other eminent sound Gent: and get his opinion, and if you find any Materiall difference between this new man & Sir Philips; then pray let this Case
bee Copyd and go allso to another Topper, and let us have his thoughts, wee are very desirous to bee fully satisfyd and rightly directed in all our points, and tho wee would not bee extravagant yet our Cause shall not bee starved, I Imagine 2. 3. or 4 guineas each at most will serve the next Gentlemt: but this is submitted to your good managemt, pray get us good and full advise; the rest I leave to the Coll and am my dearest friend very busy but all ways most affectionately Yors without reserve Jno Holloway

[Charles Higgs] April 4: 1731

Kind Sir

Yor most obligeing Letter of oct: 14 1730: I recd; and if I were master of words that might lively represent my gratefull acknowledgmt; I should never think I had writ enough; what shall I say, or what shall I not say, and since all expressions are lame; beg leave to rely on your goodness to make up the deficiency--

Yor kind usage has encouraged me to give you A second trouble and have sent the Case my Case again; which should have waited on you sooner but I have been very much afflicted with sickness ever since last August; which put me by all thought of worldly business it has happend very unluckily that you should Consult Sir Phil York; who sometime Ago gave councill and his opinion to my Adversary which I now have by me; from under his hand, and the very same he has given me now; I must think he ought to have informd you of that affair; the opinion that I have he gave to one Dunbar; who married Coll Parks Naturall Daughter in Antigua; and is about prosecuting me; and I very beleive he has given Byrd his opinion like wise; but that I am not sure of; Dunbar has likewise the opinion of Sir Robt Raymond and one R Edwards
which he sent me; I am willing to bee fully satisfyd in both cases;
Mr Holloway has writ you the needfull on that affair--

I have orderd Mr Cary to supply you with Cash; and am very thank-
full for your Last good husbandry of my mony--beg you will let me have
an answer by the return of the first ship; which I suppose will bee
sometime next fall I beg your pardon for this repeated trouble and am
Yor most obliged & obedient servt JC

[Robert Cary] April the 4: 1731

Sir
Here comes some more Papers directed for Charles Higgs Esq which I
beg you Carefully to deliver as soon as they come to yor hands and to
furnish him with Cash to defray this second Charge; pray bee very
Carefull it being a matter of great Concern and send it me to Majr
Halloway by the first good ship; I have not time to writ of business;
being still in A very ill state of health; Buckler has 20 hd Tob:
for you Yor servt Jno Custis

Perry 1731

Sir
I am sorry, (and sure I am that I have a great deal of reason to
bee so) that I should have occasion to give you an account of the
barbous, and most villainous usage; I have had from one of your
Masters of your ships (VIZ) James Bradby belonging to the Micajah &
Philip; I presume you have heard of his pretension or rather impudence
to court my Daughter; which I allways detested with the greatest abhor-
rence; and have told him so times innumerable; and thought he had
given it over last voyage; but when he returnd to Virga he again made all the friends he could and continually importuned me for my consent; I found he had over perswaded my Daughter to Like him; and myself being very full of pain and so ill that every body dispaird of my life; and thought it would happen if I died; takeing this advantage of me when I hardly knew what I said or did; for the excessive pain I was in; I consented to let him marry my Daughter--for which he seemd to be the most Joyfull and thankfull man alive; but I told him he had better defer it till next voyage; and I would treat with his Father; his answer was he knew his Father approvd of the thing; and earnestly begid I would not insist on so long delay but Lett him bee marryd immediately; Madm Ludwell, with whom my Daughter lived; happend to bee so ill that the Marriage was put of till she was better; I told him I would buy him a good seat of Land stock it with Nigros Cattle, &c; bee at the expence of building only that I would settle what I at present gave my Daughter on her, and the Children she shou'd have by him; and that I had well provided for her in my will; which I gave him my word I would never alter, he seemd to bee very thankfull and sd: my demands was so reasonable that he could not make the Least objection; but still insisted to bee marry'd--tired out at Last in my weak condition with his continuall importunitys; I orderd the weding cloths to bee made, and every thing necessary in order; never so much as inquired into his circumstances; for which I beleive all that know me, must Judge I was not in my right senses; but A day or two before the Marriage; he sent one Mr Booker to me, to know if he might come and talk with me;
I told Mr Booker I admired Capt Bradby should talk at that rate when matters were so far gone at Last Booker told me he wantd other terms, this put me into such a violent passion; that I sent him word that he should neither have terms nor my Daughter; this message, he pretended make him allmost distracted; and immediately sent me a most submissive Letter beging my pardon; and if I would forgive him; how dutifull he would prove I to humor my Daughter writ him a kind answer, and told him would pass by all; and he might have the same terms still; A copy of his Letter I have enclosd this was in the afternoon I recd his Letter; the very next day; he comes to my house; and I thought it was to sign the Licence; but I found it was on purpose to pick A Quarrell with me; his unheard of treatmt is to Long to give a full account of; but he began; he wanted A sum of mony and that he would not except of my other terms; neither would he bee marryd till next voyage adding that he had an old cross graind humorosme Father to deal with; and that he would not run the hazard of disobligeing him; that he himself was worth £3000; and expected a fortune equall, I was for sometime astonishd; att last haveing composd my self as well as I could; I told him I thought this was strange usage--and bid him remember; that at first; I very much insisted to stay till next voyage, that I might treat with his Father he had the impudence to my Face to deny that, and to tell me he never designd to marry till next voyage, and that he had never insisted to bee marryd sooner, I was amazd att his impudient intolerable Lies; he haveing teizd me allmost out of my life for my immediate consent times innumerable but
but it happens I can prove him the greatest Lyer and most perjur'd
villain that ever lived by abundance of people to whom he has expressd
his Passion, and desired them to speak to me in his Favor; some of
which are of great distinction--

I desired him to lett me have A Little quiet; for that he had bin
the occasion of A great deal of my pain and uneasiness; I went into
my closet to show him his Letter he sent the day before; but before I
came out; he took up his hat; and went slyly out of my door; never bid
me fairewell; nor used any common civility; every word I have write;
I do protest on my word and honor is sincerely true; though I well
know he woud deny and forswear all to my face; which I have had a very
good proof of my self and my Daughter he has exposd to the uttmost;
I could say a great deal more; and not deviate A tittle from the truth
but his villanys are so great that it would require more time;
then I have att present to set forth; I Leave you to Judge wither
such A monster is fit for yours or any good mans empoy; or to associate
with mankind, and do assure you Sir that some Gentlemen that are your
friends and are considerable in your interest offerd not to ship a
hd of Tob; in him I thought that would bee doing you a great injury
who know nothing of his rougery; but some have told me that if you
continue him in your employ, that he shall never Carry another hd for
them and I beleive some will give it you from under their own hand, as
for my self, if you will encourage and harbor such a rascal in your
service; I never will ship one hd; and will perswade all my freinds
to do the same; but it would have bin doing you the greatest injustice
to have showd any resenmt in that nature this year:--

What I am now a going to tell you is out of pure friendship he Bradby has reportd that he has free recourse to all your Books, and that he knows every Gentlemans circumstances that corresponds with you, and that in particular Coll Page, 216 and Coll Byrd owe you £4000 debts; all this I solemnly protest I heard him say; and thought it then strange you should suffer such A fellow to bee privy to the Gentlemens Circumstances who are your consigners; no man is willing to have his affairs exposd, especially if he is so unfortunate to bee in debt; I have endeavord to hush this report; which I am sure if it should spread and bee Creditted; would do you a very great injury; perhaps you may think I tell you this out of prejudice to Bradby; but I assure you it is out of sincere friendship to you; I told Capt Cant of it, long beefore that fellow had treated me so barborously; which if you ask Cant he will inform you; I hope you will pardon this long scrawl; and think I have reason to show the greatest resenmt--

(Unknown Addressee)  Jan 7: 1731/2

Sir

My son having acquainted me with the Love & affection he has for your Daughter Mrs Betty; is the occasion of this trouble; he thought it his duty first to acquaint me of it; and I think it mine to impart this affair to you; before there is any other proceedings; observing the golden rule to do as I would bee done by; I presume you are not A stranger to my sons circumstances; all Coll Parkes reall estate, and my Paternall reall estate is entaild on him; and what God has bin pleasd to bless
my own endeavors with; is not contemptible; I have but 2 Children
who must have my all sometime or other; I design to do kind & handsomely
for my son whilst Living, and do not doubt but you will do the part of
A kind Father by your Daughter; I like Mrs Betty as well as my son does
if you & she can but like him as well I hope they may bee happy I have
so much vanity as to think that his Character will answer even envy
it self; tho I beleive he is not without some bosom enemys if you
will please to lett me know your mind fully on this weighty affair;
with your Leave, my son in a proper time will wait on your Daughter;
but his time will bee yours and the young Ladies, I hope you will
excuse this trouble and let what will happen, I shall allways bee
proud to bee accounted Yor sincere friend & most obedient humble
Servt JC

[Mrs. Evelyn Pepper] 217 [1732]

Hond Madm
I recd yors of Sept: 29 last; which favor I acknowledge; you are pleasend
to say that the Lawers with you and those here differ in their opin-
ions about your haveing any title to your Fathers estate in Virga:
with submission to your Lawers Judgmt if they say you can possibly
have any right to that estate; I say they do not understand either the
Laws of Eng: or common reason; and must bee so vain to think myself
Lawer enough to Judge of A case so very clear and plain tho out of
curiosity I have the opinion of some of the greatest Lawers in Eng:
who wonder anyone shoud question so plain a case; I cannot tell what
you may think of our Lawers; but I do assure you wee have some very
eminent skillfull men, as the Kings Attorney and some others; whose
opinion with those in Eng: are exactly the same in effect; the Late Coll Parke my Father in Law was but tenant for life and could not dispose of any part of his Fathers estate; and had he gave it to you; or any one else, but his Daughters the devise had bin voyd; and presume you think that estate much greater than it is; I have nothing of old Coll Parkes but 600 Acres of worn out Land: Coll Byrd has the residue in right of his Wife; by the opinion of the Kings Attornys in Eng: Sr G Northy and that is no great matter; the Nigros are all dead and past their Labor; but let it bee little or much, if I thought you, or any of the Family had any just claims to it; I would not keep it from you; I thank God I have a very good Paternall estate of my own; otherwise I should think my self but in poor circumstances of what I possess of the Estate by my Wife; and shall bee allways proud to live in amity with your Family; I am now sued in C for £6000, by a Mr Dunbar in Antigo who pretends my Father Parke owd so much in those Islands which if he were Alive I dare say no one would dare tell him so--I must think it collusion; it will bee A tedious expensive suit and tis ods if I live to see the end of it; and wish I may not leave my son entangled in A suit of Law to spend a reall estate in defence of an imaginary one; I am pretty sure they can never recover a sixpence of me; only put me to A deal of trouble and Charge; I having already paid a great deal more than the Value of the estate I possess in right of my Wife; and it had bin happy for me; and well for my Children; if I had thrown up the whole estate to the Creditors when I first recd the unhappy news of Coll Parkes death; for I have under-
gone more trouble that I would again for 6 times the Value; but in honor to my Father in Laws memory; I endeavour to keep what I could of the estate in his Family I hope your goodness will pardon this digression;

Mr Steward informed you right when he told you I expressed a kindness for your Family; it is natural to believe I most always value a Family to whom my two dear pledges are so near allyed; I do not remember I then expressed anything of matching my daughter to any one; for I am sure I had then no such thoughts, so that Mr Steward must misapprehend me; your son may deserve a better match than my Daughter; but the distance of Place; and the consanguinity would render such a thing impracticable; she has since bin engaged to a man very much against my inclination; and so near that the weding cloths were made but the business is all over; and she protests she will never marry; him or any one else; my son, I believe is fixd in his affection only we think both to young as yet; it is an unhappiness that my Childrens relations by their Mother, are so placd so far distant; I agree with you that it might do him good to make you a visit & see the world; but I could not spare him so far from me whilst I live; if he might have the Empress of the universe for a wife; with the whole Creation for a fortune; my Children are all the Comfort I have in the world for whose sakes I have kept my self single; and am determined so to do as long as please God to continue us together; I do not doubt of my young kinswomans virtues and qualifications, and heartily wish her a husband equall to her merits; I hope Mr Pepper will accept of my best respect; the same salutes you I am Hond Madam
Mr Loyd

I recd yours by Capt Barns, wherein you seemd alarumed at Virga being desirous to bring Tob: under and excise; our Gover: servd the Councill some proposals last fall; and seemd to favor the thing very much; but for my part I did not understand it; neither do I as yet; but now the generall Assembly seem very fond of it; and you will find a memoriall and petition to the Kind & parliamt send home; I wish it may answer the ends proposed; but indeed it is time to look about us; for the Merchts have got an act of Parliamt Passd; (and it is sd you and Mr Perry are the Cheif promoters; of that cruel and unjust act,) I must Call it so, because it does not give us the liberty of our fellow brittish subjects; but inverts the whole course of the Law--makeing ex parte evidence, which the Law abhors, good evidence against us; the Merchts going before the Cheif Magistrate and swearing to his account, by that act is good evidence here; which is very cruel; then your subjecting our Lands for book debts is contrary to the Laws of our Mother Country; which cannot touch real estate without A specialty and as wee are brittish subjects wee might reasonably expects brittish liberty wee desire nothing else than to bee subject to the Laws of our Mother Country but wee have great reason to think you aim at our possessions who have got most of your possessions by us; for my part I am at present free from the effects of your act; owing no one in England a farthing; but have mony owing me, so that you cannot think what I say is self interest; but purely the result of my thoughts; and however you may flatter your selves to bee gainers by that act you will find that you have so incensd the Country; that
you will force them as soon as convenient to have nothing to do with you; I heartily wish that you and my good Freind Mr Perry had not bin so active in this unhappy affair; I hope you will pardon this freedom which proceeds from pure sentiments unmixt with the least interest, so shall Leave it to your Consideration

Now to business; I have sent you 10 hd pr Ludlow; one is bundle the rest stemsd; wish I could have sent you more; but this fine Tob: Law which you are so very fond of has prevented me, and I must beleive that it will bee impossible to make Tob: there being so many diffi­culties in the Law and so much subjection to the arbitrary inspectors, the Law comes home to you mended; as it is said; but I beleive it is like sour ale in summer if it must still bee imposd on us: abundance must seek some other 224 way to live than by Tob: I need not tell you of the uneasiness of the Country you will understand that by the burning so many warehouses; and the taxing the people to pay for all Tob: so burnt; which wish the maintaing that delicate Law is very heavy; I must be subject to it; but can never 225 have the least favor­able thought of it; some people will get estats by it (VIZ) the Clergy secretary Clerks and all publick officers; and those and only those are the people that the Country must labor for, I hope providence 226 will stand the Countrys friend and order all things for the best; you will find but A short Crop come home to you; and a much shorter now on the ground; there cannot bee $ A Crop made this year the season being so dry; and plants so much wasting; I think wee have no need of A Law; God altmugt seems not to bless our endeavors, and Tob: will bee scarce enough without all this burning and uneasiness;--
and I believe you will not find your ships under your favorite Law
to have more dispatch and cost you less than usuall

Mr Fitchwms

Sir

This just comes to ask you how you do; & as I have always professed
A friendship for you; could not forbear giving you the trouble of a line; and if it be my fortune never to see you more, shall always take the greatest pleasure in hearing of your health & prosperity; as for news here there is Little but what the late assembly affords the journals sent home will fully inform you of that; Mr Jno Randolph comes home the Country agent the assembly have given him two thousand two hundred pounds as a reward to present A memoriall to the parliamnt, a petition to the King and a Letter to the Lords of the treasury; in order to redress the grievance the Country lyes under; and the hardships the Merchts impose on the planters &c; you will fully informd of it when Mr Randolph comes home for my part I do not well understand the project; so can pass no judgmt on it The Tob: Law comes home emended as some dream; but I think it mends like sour ale in summer, at least the amendments (if any) is not worth the severall thousand pounds it has cost, by A tedious chargeable assembly convend on that purpose; and if our superiors should think fit to continue it must bee satisfyd; tho A great part of the Country are very uneasy; I hope you will pardon this trouble and beleive that I am sincerely Yors sincere friend
and most obedient servt JC

—Dunbar goes vigorously on with his bill in Cancery; but I beleive it will not bee ended so soon as he imagins My Lawers assure
me he never can recover one farthing I my self am satisfyd neither
he or his Lawers know very little of the matter; and if his bill were
truth he might injure me; but there is scarce A word of truth in it Mr
Randolph will have the best help and advise he can get when he comes
home

Mr Perry

[ca. July, 1732]

This comes by Capt Cant, with 20 hds: stemd Tob: an an invoice of what
goods I can at present think I shall want; I have writ you very fully
by Buckler which I hope you will receive before this can arrive, Buckler
has 9 hds: to you of Leaf; and Capt Robt Talor\(^{228}\) one stemd; I am
deeply engaged in the suit between Dunbar & myself; and my Lawers tell
me they never can recover a farthing of me--They make very sure of the
case, but I am satisfyd they are very ignorant of the truth of the
Case Mr Jno Randolph\(^{229}\) is one of my Lawers, and comes home; will get
the best advise and assistance can bee had in England; I most earnestly
entreat you to assist him what you can--in this troublesome affair;
and make him fully sensible by your books what monys Coll Byrd has paid
in dischargeing Coll Parkes debt & Legacies; likewise how Whitchurch\(^{230}\)
was sold to Whom & for what--and fully inform him of every thing you
know relateing to it; and all matters relateing to Coll Park that
I may make the best defence I can and furnish Mr Randolph with what
necessary mony he shall want for my service in that affair; and if
Mr Randolph & you should have any misunderstanding; (as I hope you will
not) in other affairs, good Sir let it not in the Least be any impediment
to my important affair; and what kind services you can do me in it;
shall bee eternally gratefully acknowledgd as the most superlative peice of friendship--

Mr Randolph is my very good friend and verily beleive he will do his utmost for me--

Jno Randolph 7br 5: 1732

Dear Sir:

May this find you safe arrived at your desired port and in health Athletick; I could not let the ships all go home without scribling to you, the only way I have at present to express my affectionate res- pects; I have bin lately over all yor plantations this side york River; and gave the needfull directions; the rains has much injurd your Tob; by makeing it come into house to soon; but it could not bee avoyded it fired so much, it is allmost every body's case; but hope you will make a tolerable crop still; if no other accident happens; I shall faithfully take all the care I can of your concerns in my reach; but have something to do to preserve your Corn at the Colledge landing the fence being so bad, I have given the Nigros effectuall orders, to keep out those forefooted pyrats who must dy unless they reform I have got what help I could and am diging your [illegible word]; tho tis a very busy time; but unless it be done out of hand it will not conveniently be done this winter,

I hope when I hear from you to have some comfortable news about my suit; and that you will answer the great Mr Hopkins'231 most dreadful bill; he has pawnd his salvation that he will get the course, and says I have no right to any thing of Coll Parkes, if Dunbar was not
in the way because I have not by act of Assembly Calld my Son by the name of Parke he is Christend Parke which I hope will doe; he like-wise says that what Coll Byrd has paid; cannot bee said to bee paid by me; and I shall not bee allowd one farthing of it; the Lands he says that were the Late Coll Parkes own purchase are lyable; because the will says the Debts must bee paid out of my estates in Hampshire and Virga: which word estate includes all he dyed possesed of; those qurys I trust you will fully bee resolved in shall Leave all to your prudent managemt; assureing myself that you will do your utmost for me; but if you meet with Dunbar; and can make the matter up so secure that I shall never have farther trouble I will go as far as £500: rather than take A Voyage to England which I cannot see how I can avoyd let it go how it will here; yor family is all well; shall not trouble you farther at present only must and will assure you that I am Yor most faithful friend and most obedient Servt JC

Loyd 1732

Sir

Yors of June the 10 I Recd with account of sales of 12 hd of Tobacco; I must tell you that I never had such a scandalous account from any body in my whole life; in yrs of Nov: 31: you told me you had recd that Tob: that it was good; I am very sure the bundle was as good as ever was made it being my own home Crop and the stemd was not bad; you then likewise tell me that the $\frac{7}{2}$ & $\frac{8}{2}$ were the then prices for leaf & stript; and that you choose rather to keep mine than sell for such prices; but to my surprise you have sold that Tob: for less; there is but one hd at $\frac{8}{2}$, some of the stemd at $\frac{7}{2}$ and not with-
standing you said the Leaf was so good you sold some of it for 7:d and none much higher; which I wonder you could say you hoped would content me; you say I hope I will send you A good quantity this year; indeed I have fine encouragement; I have not sent much; but were it to do again I should think it A great deal to much; for the prices you are pleas'd to give me will not bear the Charge of makeing it; and had I sent it to any part of Great Brittain it could not have done worse—

I think yor account is very extraordinary you charge me 12d pr hd average; for which I see no reason; again I find some dammage which I see I pay no custom for; but I ought to have credit and the ship should make it good; but that is our fate when we consign our Tob: to the owners of the ship; it is designd a peice of service; but proves our Loss; you will find a short Crop come home this year, and in all probibility a much shorter next year; Maryland will make but a very little; and the first part of the year was so excessive dry that few got in their Crops; and this latter part has proved so wet that the Tob: fired away before it was half ripe; all which things put together I must beleive it will bee in you Gentlemen in the trades power very much to raise the price of Tobacco unless you do not desire it; should ever bee a price again-- enclosed is A copy of my invoice sent by Ludlow only only some few things added

Mr Perry

Sir

I have writt fully by other opportunitys; but this is a business of the greatest Concern (VIZ) concerning my Lawsuit with Dunbar; you will
find a packet directed to Mr Higs, with papers of great Concern, which I beg you will carefully and speedily deliver to him or send them by a safe hand; and please to furnish him with what needfull mony he shall have occasion of for my use; Mr Randolph is my Lawer against Dunbar; but desire you will not give him the least hint of this affair with Mr Higs; it is of another nature; and Mr Randolph in that is against me; therefore I desire he may know nothing of the Matter; Mr Higs will give you a packet in answer to what I desire of him when he does send it me by the very first safe opportunity; & with all the secrecy imaginable; I am involved in abundance of trouble; I pray God send me well out of it;--

I have drawn bills on you for £300: £100 to Mr [illegible] Whiteing and 200 to Doctor Blair which please to honor, you will find a short Crop of Tob: comes home; I believe in all probability a much shorter this next year--for it has bin the most unseasonable one that ever was known; the fore part of the year was so excessive dry and plants so scarce that few got in their whole Crops; and most of it very late; and the latter part of the year so excessive wet; that the Tob: Moulters and fires a way before it is half ripe; Maryland makes little or none; all those things put together I think Tob: must rise; I shall not trouble you more at present save my best respects I am--

Mr Randolph

8br 4:1732

Sir

I writt to you by the Micajah & Philip; this being the last opportunity that I know of by which I can pay my respect to you, your plantation
business goes on tolerably well; only some of yor Nigros and parti-
cularly Simon at Chichomanoy has bin a little sullen and run away
having a notion he had no master; but upon complaint of the over-
seer, I went immediately up; and undeceived him to his cost; and since
every body is at present; in good order, at the overseers have made
a beginning to strip Tob: some of it is much spotted but well qualifyd
every other way: how it will set on the inspectors stomachs, I cannot
say but if they will not pas spotted Tob: they must burn half in
the Coloney; Mrs Randolph I suppose will write to you by this oppor-
tunity and will give you a particular account of your immediate domes-
tick affairs; she has bin sick but is tolerably well as to health
at present; wee are not makeing all the force wee can to carry on
your building, having met with some unavoydable disappointments; wee
flatter ourselves here with a mighty price for our Tob; wish the
Merchts may do their parts not to dampt our buding expectations;--

I hope ere you receive this that you will know what the Lawers
think of my cause; which Mr Hopkins has proposed abundance of people
will go against me; I think the greatest thing that will injure me is
makeing the Lands lyable; I askd Mr Holloway about that particular;
and he seems to think the will bee Lyable by the words of the will;
saying that he that will claim an estate by A will; must bee subject
to all the hardships of that will; though he owns your reasons of its
being entailed is A good argumnt that the testator never designed it;--

Mr Hopkins has agreed to stay for my answer till next Aprill but
says he will stay no longer; Let the court impose what fine she pleases
on me I will not have it tryd till you come back; which I pray God
may be safe and as soon as possible it will suit you conveniency; & may heaven give you success in all your undertakeings; and send you soon to us; is the sincere desire of—

Mr Cary 1733

Sir

I recd yor severall Letters with my goods most of the iron work was good in its kind but but eaten out with rust especially the locks, 2 doz Chalkt lins entirely so rotten that they would fall to peices all most with touching them, I never knew that Ironmongers sold things of that nature; neither is it proper to pack any thing with iron because it will surely rot; you very much mistook me in the fender when instead of haveing it rise a foot you have sent it a foot at the ends; which is fit for nothing but old iron and is of no manner of use besides and charged very dear and good for nothing you have Charged me for 2 shammy skins, and a pair stockins twice, the stokins 8sh the skins 3sh: 6d you have charge me with them in my invoice by Buckler, and again in another invoice by Capt Randolph, which mistake I hope you will rectify; I sent to you for 20 Ells of holland at 5sh pr Ell; instead of which you have 28½ Ells at 6sh 9d: and very poor stuff I have some from Mr Perry at 5sh pr Ell far better Its strange your tradesmen have the impudence to impose on any one at such A rate they ought to follow orders; and not send their trash out of their own head, I beleive they think mony grows hear on the tops of trees, or else that wee are such sotts and Cant distinguish the linnen was not for my self and the person I sent for it, will not have it but turns
it on my hands it being not good and Contrary to orders, I have offerd
it at first Cost but cannot get it of; so the loss must bee my own,
I hope I shall have no more such usage

Mr Loyd 1733

I recd three Letters from you this year and observe the Contents,
especially that of Oct: 31 werein you seemd concernd (& I think you had
not a little reason) at the false malitious report; of your being very
active in those acts of parliamt; that was so highly resented here; I
carried your Letter in my pocket till I allmost wore it out; and took
all opportunitys to show it to everybody at Courts and other publick
places; and as I think you very innocent; so I verely beleive every
body else are of the same opinion; I beleive those that first spread
it; were far from being your friends; but their powder was to weak to
do any execution; I recd my salt by the Juliana; but sure the brute242
that commands her was suckled by A Tyger, or some she Devill—for he
is certainly one of the most ill contrived creatures that ever lived
he would deliver none of his goods when at York till he came to his
moreings on Pomonky River; all the boats were hired to go on board
him; in particular Mr Ambler243 hired a boat and sent aboard that
bear and begd to have his goods; but he surlily refusd him and Carryd
all up the River; which put every body in these parts to a great ill
conveniencey; but that honest good natured Tar; Ludlow; sent his boat
on purpose and brought every bodys goods down that Collis would vouch-
safe to deliver; for which good naturd Ludlow was no looser; for every
body will remeber such a kind voluntary offer and helpt him in his
loading; I immediately gave him an order for 10 hd; in fine Ludlow
has more humanity and good nature in him; than all the Masters that comes from your port; but Collis is an originall; he may pray God that he never comes here in freight; I am sorry to hear that your market is so dull; and that the rumor of the excise should make such abussore I do not understand it so can say little to it; but I am sure there never was a fairer view for Tobacco riseing than last year and this present; crops being so short; as you will find by the return of the ships now in the Country; Tob: is very high here; and would have bin higher had not the frightfull excise reachd us; you tell me you have 5 of my hds yet unsold should have bin glad if you had signifyd how they fared that were sold; I had great temptations to sell in the Country; but hope I shall not bee A Looser by the refusall; indeed had not I passd my word to severall Masters for my Tob; beleive I should have taken 25sh pr Ct Sterl as I was once offerd, some people have a notion that the Merchts will bee in so ill an humor about the excise that they will give very little for our Tobac: we send this year by way of revenge; but I cannot have so ill an opinion of you. & if you were even so bad as A certain great man says you are;--

You will find 10 hd of Tob: in Ludlow consignd to you; do not doubt your care for my interest in the sale of them likewise an invoice of what goods I at present can think of; the sane you sent last year was of very good twine; desire this now sent for may bee of the same; but better corked; the corks were so thin and rotten that they all came of; and the ropes so bad that I was forced to buy new ropes of Mr Chamberlain; pray take particular Care that this bee better; and
exact according to the dimensions the last was nothing like or order--
you sent me some horse Collers two years ago that were so little that
the Choaked the horses; pray let those sent for bee larger and better,
you know what horses wee have very well--

Perry 1733

Gentlemen

I have recd nothing from you since by Cant with my goods--severall
of which are charge surprizing dear; I will instance one particular
it is a peice of gorgoroon boot of Atkins & Windam charged as you will
see by the within note; £5: 16sh: Mr Hacker in this Town sells just
such or rather better as many yds; price as cheap; for curt mony of
this county; and has near lent pr ct 1/6 on his goods as I am charged
sterling for my ready mony; which is A burning shame; Mr Willson:
Cary has a better price from one Boden for £3 Ster: and if you
will please to give me leave will inform you that you have a generall
character here of buying goods the dearest of any Merct in England I
must beleive it is a rascally imposition of yor tradesmen and that
Atkins &c has the character of A sharping fellow; Mr Jno Blair I
beleive will complain of him for I am he has a great deal of reason
having chargd him £6: for such another peice only calld it by another
name VIZ--padosway; but wee compared mine with his and they are exactly
the same; if goods can bee bought here for our mony as cheap and a
large pr ct on them as cheap as wee are charge for ster: at full
cost it is a folly to trouble the Merchts: to buy goods; I could wish
you would examine into this matter and I think it will bee as much for
yor credit and interest as for ours:--
I understand the Excise is damnd; to the great joy of the Majority of the nation; some here were very fond of it and seemed sorry for its miscarriage; but for my part, my weak understanding could never give me the least favorable thought of it; and am heartily glad it is knockd in the head; I believe it has much disturb'd you in your business, because you have omitted sending in accounts curr this year which I never knew you fail of before; in yours by Cant you informed me you had sold all my Tob: at 9d½ but have never yet recd the account; I hope what sent this year will come to a good market the crop being some thousands hds shorter than last year; so that I should think it in your powers to give us A good price; Sir Jno Randolph is arrvd; and tells me he saw my mortall enemy Dunbar, who is so puff'd up; with the certainty of getting all his demands that he makes A jest of any tolerable composition; but Sir Jno Assures me in his opinion; he will bee egregiously disappointed; my whole dependance is on providence who I hope will not suffer so much injustice done to A Lawfull Issue; it has bin; and is the greatest vexation to me; that ever happend especially when I consider that I have spent the best part of my life in fatigue & trouble have to enrich a kennell of whores and bastards, and I wish that base wretch the Author, has not dearly paid for his unnaturall and unchristian like usage;--

I find Coll Lee & Lightfoot are our new Councillors--am sorry you could not succeed in behalf of Mr Blair who without lessening any gentlemen's character deserves that seat as richly as any man in this colony; and must think you had not extraordinary kind usage in the affair of Mr Burwell--
I have sent you Bills of Exch Amount: 249 pounds and 250 Tob.

by this ship do not dout your friendly endeavors for my interest in
the disposal of them; likewise an invoice of what goods I can at
present think I shall want--

My Son tells me he is in your debt £13:12sh 4d: which charge me
with, and give his account Cr he would have writ but has not bin in
town some time; he was in A fair way of being Married and going from
me; but the Lady did not use him very handsomely; and the match is for-
ever broke of; which causes his continuance with me whenever he leaves
me dare say he will trouble you with his business

Cary

Sir

I make no doubt but you have heard of that troublesome law suit I
have had some years; which is now come allmost to A hearing between
one Dunbar of Antigo, who marryd a by blow of Coll Parkes whose
family I unfortunately married into; and by my Father in Laws unnaturall.
will, he gave his whole estate in the Leeward Islands in value £30000
to that bastard of his, and gave his Virga estate to his Lawfull
children one of which was my wife; and in his will says my Wife must
pay his debts; I have paid all his debts in England & Virga amounting
to near £10000: which was severall thousand pounds more than that
estate is worth; now Dunbar thinks by the will I am bound to pay his
debts in the Leward Islands, amounting to 400 or like I think I am
not and that is the present dispute; I have paid severall thousand
pounds more than I ever had of his estate allready; and it is very hard
and cruel for me to pay the Islands debts when his base Issue has
all that estate; Mr Montague I beleive can tell you the whole story;
which cannot bee containd in the compass of A Letter; there will bee
an appeal for England Let the cause go how it will here; I cannot say
whiter I shall come with it my self; if not shall entrust the whole
managemt of that weighty affair to your self & Mr Perry whose deligence
and fidelity I make no question of; at present I only desire you to
retain Mr Sharp as A Sollicitor for me against Dunbar and others;
that Gentleman has a very great character here; desire you will signify
to me the receipt of this, and what you have done in it which will--
ininitely oblige Yors
NOTES FOR THE LETTER BOOK

1. Micajah Perry, a leading London merchant. See Appendix II.

2. Hole in Ms.

3. Hole in Ms.

4. Hole in Ms.

5. Ms. blotted.

6. Hole in Ms.

7. A hogshead is a wooden cask in which tobacco and other commodities were packed and shipped. In the 1730s a hogshead of tobacco weighed about 800 lb., but by midcentury it might weigh 1100 to 1400 lb. Ralph Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (London, 1962).

8. Ms. blotted.


10. Hole in Ms.

11. Custis sometimes used £ to indicate lb.

12. Philip Lightfoot, attorney and wealthy merchant. See Appendix II.

13. Ms. blotted.

14. Edge of Ms. torn.

15. Ms. blotted.

16. Edge of Ms. torn.

17. Dunbar Parke, formerly Thomas Dunbar. See Appendix II.

18. Daniel Parke II, Custis's father-in-law. See Appendix II. Custis also refers to him as the General.

19. Frances (Parke) Custis (1686-1715), elder daughter of Daniel Parke II and Jane Ludwell. She married John Custis IV on May 4, 1706. See Custis biographical sketch.
20. The bill was passed November 1711. Waverly K. Winfree, comp., The Laws of Virginia: Being a Supplement to Hening's The Statutes at Large, 1700-1750 (Richmond, Va., 1971).

21. White Church is a village in Hampshire, 58 miles from London, near which Daniel Parke II owned an estate. Actually William Byrd II sold the estate and paid the debts mentioned here. See n. 24 below.

22. Daniel Parke I, secretary of state for Virginia and planter, was Frances (Parke) Custis's grandfather. See Appendix II.


24. The articles of agreement between Custis and Byrd were published, "Letters of the Byrd Family," VMHB, XXXV (Oct. 1927), 377-379. See the Custis biographical sketch for details on the arrangement between the Custises and Byrd.

25. Ms. blotted.

26. Earlier law suits relating to the Parke estate involving Custis include an action by Perry and Lane in Chancery to recover debts Parke owed them and another in Virginia by James Taylor and Sarah (Burley) Taylor against Custis to recover money from the Parke estate. Public Record Office, photocopy in the Virginia Historical Society, and a Nov. 30, 1714, receipt for payment by Custis to the Taylors, in the Custis Family Papers, Va. Hist. Soc.

27. Ms. blotted.


29. Edge of Ms. torn.

30. Edge of Ms. torn.

31. Catherine Chester of Antigua, wife of Edward Chester. See Appendix II.

32. Lucy Chester of Antigua, natural daughter of Daniel Parke II and Mrs. Catherine Chester. She was heiress to Parke's estate in the Leeward Islands.

33. The section within the double brackets was written at the close of the letter marked for insertion here.

34. John Holloway, attorney. See Appendix II.
35. John Randolph, attorney. See Appendix II.

36. John Clayton, attorney. See Appendix II.


38. A schedule of the debts Byrd paid is found in the Emmett Collection 6077, New York Public Library; Addtl. British Ms. 36217, fol. 161-171.

39. Daniel Parke Custis (1711-1757), only son of John Custis and Frances Parke. See Custis biographical sketch.

40. Frances Parke Custis (1709-1744), only daughter of John Custis and Frances Parke. See Custis biographical sketch.

41. Probably James Bradby master of the Spotswood, owned by Micajah Perry, a York River ship. Another James Bradby, master of the Micajah & Philip, also owned by Micajah Perry, which was a James River ship, is mentioned in later letters. P.R.O. C.O. 5/1442.

42. This letter was published in Marion Tinling, ed., The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776 (Charlottesville, Va., 1977), I, 351-352.

43. Robert Cary, London tobacco merchant. See Appendix II.

44. The first paragraph of this letter was published in E. G. Swem, Brothers of the Spade: Correspondence of Peter Collinson of London, and John Custis of Williamsburg, Virginia, 1734-1746 (Barre Gazette, Mass., 1957), 21.


46. Probably John Cobb, owner and master of the Willis, a York River ship. P.R.O. C.O. 6/1442

47. Edge of Ms. torn.

48. Edge of Ms. torn.


50. That is, October.

51. Moiders, or Moidore, a gold Portugese coin that was current in England, worth approximately 27s.

52. Hole in Ms.
53. By home, Custis meant England; he referred to Virginia as the country.

54. Hudibras, a satirical poem (1663-1678) by Samuel Butler, named for its hero, a Presbyterian justice in the Commonwealth who sets out with his squire, an Independent, to reform abuses, and enforce the observance of the laws for the suppression of popular sports and amusements. This anti-Puritan poem gave rise to the adjective hudibrastic, meaning mock heroic. William Rose Benét, ed., The Reader's Encyclopedia (New York, 1955), 523.

55. Custis wrote daughters, then crossed it out substituting childrens.


57. Hole in Ms.

58. Micajah Perry (d. 1721), a leading London merchant; by 1673 he and Thomas Lane were dealing in Virginia tobacco and were politically influential. His son Richard Perry (d. 1719) was also active in the trade as were his grandsons Micajah and Philip with whom Custis corresponded. Elizabeth Donnan, "Eighteenth Century English Merchants: Micajah Perry," Journal of Economic and Business History, IV (1931-1932), 70-98.

59. William Byrd II had four children by Lucy (Parke) Byrd: Evelyn, Parke, Philips William (died as an infant), and Wilhelmina.


61. James Bradly, a London merchant active in the tobacco trade, who also owned merchant vessels.

62. Samuel Cobs (d. 1757) of Williamsburg, married Edith Marot, daughter of Jean Marot, a French Huguenot innkeeper in Williamsburg. He was the armourer 1716-1727 and magazine keeper 1726. He later removed to Amelia County and was a burgess for that county 1742, 1744-1747, and 1749. WMHB, XXXIII (Oct. 1925), 382-398; WMQ, 1st Ser., XIX (July 1910), 51-56; and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Research Department files.

63. There were two kinds of tobacco grown in Virginia, oronoco and sweetscented. Oronoco was stronger in flavor and could be grown all around the Bay, while sweetscented was largely confined to the banks of the James, York, Rappahannock, and Potomac rivers. The penin-
sula between the James and York rivers, where Custis's home plantation was located, grew some of the best sweetscented, which was favored for consumption in England and brought higher prices. About 1724, however, oronoco began to replace it on the English market. Arthur Pierce Middleton, Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era (Newport News, Va., 1953), 97-98.

64. This letter was published in Tinling, ed., Correspondence of the Three Byrds, 352-353.

65. Henry Duke (d. 1713), member of the Virginia council 1702-1713. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712 (Richmond, Va., 1941), 480.

66. The section within double brackets was written at the close of the letter and marked for insertion here.

67. Maria (Taylor) Byrd (1698-1771), William Byrd's second wife. They were married May 9, 1724. Pierre Marambaud, William Byrd of Westover, 1674-1744 (Charlottesville, Va., 1971), 279.

68. The first paragraph was published in Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 21-22.

69. John Buckler, master and owner of the King George, a York River ship. P.R.O. C.O. 5/1442.

70. John Carter (d. ca. 1742) of Shirley, Charles City County, was secretary of state for Virginia 1722-1742 and a councilor 1724-1742. Anderson, "The Governors' Councils of Colonial America," 320.

71. Ms. torn.

72. Ms. torn.

73. Ms. torn.


75. Ms. blotted.

76. Ms. torn on edge.

77. Isham Randolph, master and owner of the Williamsburgh; he was also a planter, merchant, and public official. P.R.O. C.O. 5/1442; Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 157n.

78. The bill of lading was a formal receipt issued by a shipmaster acknowledging receiving the specified goods onboard and binding him to deliver them as stated to the individual and place named on
payment of the stipulated freight. Normally copies were made for the shipper, the shipmaster, and the consignee. W. E. Minchinton, ed., The Trade of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century (Bristol, 1957), 73.

79. That is, John Carter, secretary of the colony, see n. 70.

80. Ms. blotted.

81. Hole in Ms.

82. Cf. William Byrd to [Addressee unknown], June 27, 1729, in Tinling, ed., Correspondence of the Three Byrds, which this author suspects was addressed to Micajah Perry because Byrd wrote: "The last favour of old Bradby is still remembrd to your prejudice, and tho' it be now and old story, it is not old enough to be forgot." (417-418)

83. By broken accounts, Custis meant accounts of tobacco sales for which the buyers had not paid. Since the tobacco was sold on consignment for the planters, they also assumed the risk of bad debts.

84. John Turner, master of the James, owned by James Bradley in 1726, and of the Regard, owned by Thomas Revett Company in 1730; both were James River ships. P.R.O. C.O. 5/1442 and 5/1443.


87. Perry has evidently offered to assume the collection of the debts for Custis's tobacco that he sold on consignment in return for a higher commission.

88. Hole in Ms.

89. Philip Ludwell, grandfather of Frances (Parke) Custis, see Appendix II.

90. Custis made sure that his merchants had enough money to his credit to pay the customs duties as soon as the tobacco arrived in Britain so that he could earn the discounts granted for prompt payment.

91. James Blair, see Appendix II.

92. Hugh Drysdale (d. July 22, 1726), lieutenant governor of Virginia, 1722-1726, is generally considered to have been a competent administrator of unquestionable integrity, who earned the respect and friendship of the Virginians. Custis would have been especially fond of him since Drysdale recommended his appointment to the Council. See Madeleine Curcio Kaduboski, "The Administration of Lieutenant-Governor

93. Ms. blotted.

94. Ms. blotted.

95. Ms. blotted.

96. George Hamilton, earl of Orkney. See Appendix II.

97. Alexander Spotswood (1676-1740), lieutenant governor of Virginia 1710-1722 under the nominal governor Lord Orkney; after being removed from office, Spotswood remained in Virginia on a large estate in Spotsylvania County and was appointed deputy postmaster for the colonies in 1730. See the Custis biographical sketch for his relationship with Spotswood. Leonidas Dodson, Alexander Spotswood, Governor of Colonial Virginia, 1710-1722 (Philadelphia, 1932); and DNB.

98. Lyonel Lyde, Bristol merchant engaged in the tobacco trade. See Appendix II. An account of tobacco sales in the Custis Papers in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, confirms that Custis shipped 13 hogsheads of tobacco at this time to Lyde.

99. Edge of Ms. torn.


101. Ms. blotted.

102. Ms. blotted.

103. Ms. blotted.

104. Welsh cotton, a kind of woolen cloth with a nap.

105. Kendall cotton, a kind of green woolen cloth.

106. Squire's Elixir, a popular patent medicine.

107. Ms. blotted.

108. Jesuits bark, the medicinal bark of a species of Cinchona, also known as Peruvian bark, introduced to Europe by Jesuit missionaries in South America.

109. Daffy's elixir salutis, a proprietary medicine, invented by Rev. Thomas Daffy ca. 1650. A London kinsman, Anthony Daffy (d. 1750) sold it for ailments such as gout, colic, scurvy, dropsy, consumption,

110. Motly, or motley, multi-colored, variegated, checkered.

111. Ells, a measure of length, about 45 inches in England.

112. Ozenbrig, obs. for Osnaburg, a kind of coarse linen originally made in Osnabürc in North Germany.

113. Rowls, obs. for roll.

114. Do., abbreviation for ditto.

115. Ms. blotted.

116. Spirit harts horn, hartshorn, the substance obtained by rasping, slicing, or calcining the horns of harts (deer), formerly the chief source of ammonia.

117. Mrs. Ester Drysdale, widow of Lieutenant-Governor Drysdale. Kaduboski, "Administration of Lieutenant-Governor Drysdale."

118. Robert Carter (1663-1732), president of the Virginia council and therefore acting governor in the absence of an appointed governor. He was also known as "King" Carter. DAB

119. Quire, a set of four sheets of parchment or paper doubled so as to form eight leaves.

120. By Dutch accounts, Custis meant accounts of sales of tobacco to Holland.

121. Ms. blotted.

122. Ms. blotted; it could be 9 rather than 2.

123. Ms. blotted.

124. Ms. blotted.

125. Ms. blotted.

126. Ms. torn.

127. Ms. blotted.

128. Ms. blotted.

129. Ms. blotted; it could be 9 rather than 8.
130. Part of the second paragraph was published in Swem, *Brothers of the Spade*, 22.

131. Oronoco, a variety of tobacco, probably originated in the vicinity of the South American river of the same name and still survives today in the varieties called oronoco and Pryors. *Middleton, Tobacco Coast*, 97.


133. Ms. blotted.

134. Ms. blotted.

135. Suggested reading; Swem renders it as "but bulbous roots, and thses, not which, ignorance and carelessness can destroy;" apparently ignoring Custis's insertion above the line. *Brothers of the Spade*, 22.

136. Hole in Ms.

137. Duffill, or duffle, a coarse woolen cloth having a thick nap.

138. Hole in Ms.

139. Hole in Ms.

140. Two years later, six percent was the highest interest rate allowable under the 1730 act for restraining the taking of excessive usury. *Hening, IV*, 294-296.

141. The clause enclosed by double brackets was written at the close of the letter marked for insertion here.

142. Edge of Ms. torn.

143. This correspondent's identity was suggested by John M. Hemphill; Bruce T. McCulley confirmed that Nicholson owned lots in Yorktown, which were part of his estate when he died early the next year. See Appendix II. the tone of the letter is such that only a correspondent of Nicholson's prestige is likely; cf. letters to James Blair, Mrs. Drysdale, and Richard Fitzwilliam. Presumably Custis would have been on good terms with Nicholson since his father did not take part in the opposition to Nicholson as governor. See the Custis biographical sketch.

144. Custis had been recommended by Governor Drysdale and took office in September 1727.
145. The clause enclosed by double brackets was written at the close of the letter and marked for insertion here.

146. That is, September.

147. Hole in Ms.


150. John Blair was appointed auditor general for Virginia in 1728. See Appendix II and Custis biographical sketch.

151. That is, December.

152. That is, October.

153. Ms. blotted.

154. Ms. blotted.


156. There is no indication where this sentence should be inserted in the body of the letter.

157. The last paragraph of this letter was published in Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 22.

158. Prizing, or prising, compressing cured tobacco in a hogshead.

159. Ms. blotted.

160. blank space left in Ms.

161. Hole in Ms.

162. A factor was usually a salaried employee of the British merchant put in charge of a store maintained in the colony. A chief factor, who might be in charge of several subordinate factors, might
earn a commission along with a salary and might be a partner in the employing firm. The factors would buy tobacco in the colony to be shipped to Britain; planters dealing with factors would not have to assume the same risks as those like Custis who consigned their tobacco to be sold for them in Britain. The Glasgow merchants came to rely more and more on their colonial factors after the 1740s. Jacob M. Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775," WMQ, 3d Ser., XI (Apr. 1954), 179-199.

163. Hole in Ms.
164. Ms. blotted.
165. Hole in Ms.
166. Ms. blotted.
167. For further information see Charles Higgs to John Holloway, Dec. 21, 1731, and Holloway's undated draft of a reply, Custis Family Papers, Va. Hist. Soc.
168. Philip Perry as well as Micajah inherited the firm from their grandfather, and evidently he took over corresponding with Custis and other planters as Micajah's political career developed.
170. Hole in Ms.
171. Presumably Robert Walpole (1676-1745), later first earl of Orford, first lord of the treasury and chancellor of the exchequer. DNB.
172. Mark Catesby (1682-1749), naturalist, brother of Elizabeth (Catesby) Cocke Holloway. He was in Virginia 1712-1719 and was a friend of Peter Collinson with whom Custis later had an extensive correspondence. Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 154-155n.
173. Ms. blotted.
174. Elizabeth (Catesby) Holloway (d. 1755) was the wife of John Holloway, treasurer of Virginia, and the sister of Mark Catesby, the naturalists; she was also the widow of William Cocke, secretary of the colony. Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 157n.
175. French Ordinary, a tavern built about 1680 on the road from Yorktown to Williamsburg on the ridge between the head of King's Creek and the head of the western branch of Felgate's Creek. Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 157n.

176. Richard Fitzwilliam, fellow Virginia councilor. See Appendix II.

177. Fitzwilliam had entered a paper in the Council Journal containing "Reasons for his Dissent to a Resolve of the Council Concurring with a Resolve of this House for paying the Burgesses Wages and all the Charges of this Session of the Assembly in Money." He evidently thought that payment should be made in tobacco. See H. R. McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia 1727-1734, 1736-1740 (Richmond, 1910), 97-98.

178. Hole in Ms.


180. John Grymes (1692-1748) of Brandon, Middlesex County, was deputy auditor general for Virginia 1718-1724, receiver general 1723-1745, and a councilor 1726-1748. He married Philip Ludwell's daughter Lucy. Anderson, "Governors' Councils of Colonial America," 325.


182. Ms. blotted.

183. Edge of Ms. torn.

184. Hole in Ms.

185. Hole in Ms.

186. Possibly Will Loney, master of the Smith, owned by Jonah Forward, a Rappahannock vessel. P.R.O. C.O. 5/1442.

187. Hole in Ms.

188. Hole in Ms.

189. Hole in Ms.

190. Hole in Ms.
191. Hole in Ms.

192. Hole in Ms.

193. Sir Philip Yorke (1690-1764), first earl of Hardwicke; he succeeded Sir Raymond as attorney general in 1724, was member of Parliament, became chief justice and privy councilor in 1733, and was also raised to the peerage that year. He had a distinguished career in politics and an excellent reputation as a jurist. DNB.

194. Sir Robert Raymond (1673-1733), Baron Raymond of Abbot's Langley, Hertfordshire, lord chief justice and privy councilor, was raised to the peerage in early 1731. "Raymond was a man of great learning, and, though he does not rank with the most illustrious of the sages of the law, left an enviable reputation for strict, impartial, and painstaking administration of justice." DNB, XLVII, 346.

195. Topper, one who "tops" at dice; a cheating gamester.

196. Ms. blotted.

197. Hole in Ms.

198. Ms. blotted.

199. Ms. blotted.

200. Ms. blotted.

201. Hole in Ms.

202. Ms. blotted.

203. Hole in Ms.

204. Hole in Ms.

205. Hole in Ms.

206. Judging from the surviving shipping records, Bradby normally entered the Upper James River District sometime between January and March and cleared that port between June and August, which gave him ample time to pay court to the daughter of a wealthy planter.

207. Hole in Ms.

208. Edge of Ms. torn.

209. Probably Hannah (Harrison) Ludwell (1678-1731), wife of Philip Ludwell (1672-1727). She was Daniel Parke Custis's godmother and may have been the same for Fanny. See the Custis biographical sketch.
210. Ms. blotted.

211. Ms. blotted.

212. Hole in Ms.

213. Hole in Ms.

214. Ms. blotted.

215. Hole in Ms.

216. Mann Page (1691-1730), a planter of Rosewell, Gloucester County, was councilor 1719-1730. Anderson, "Governors' Councils of Colonial America," 333.

217. Mrs. Evelyn (Parke) Pepper, Daniel Parke II's eldest sister; she was the wife of Gilbert Pepper, a commissioner of the sick and hurt in Ireland. Ruth Bourne, "John Evelyn, the Diarist, and His Cousin Daniel Parke II," VMHB, LXXVIII (Jan. 1970), 3-33.

218. Ms. blotted.

219. That is, Thomas Dunbar, who married Parke's natural daughter and assumed the name Dunbar Parke. See Appendix II.

220. Ms. blotted.

221. James Bradby, master of the Micajah & Philip, see Custis's letter to Mr. Perry, dated 1731.


224. Hole in Ms.

225. Ms. blotted.

226. Edge of Ms. torn.

227. Richard Fitzwilliam, see Appendix II.

229. John Randolph was in London acting as an agent for the Virginia Assembly. See Appendix II.

230. White Church, England, a village in Hampshire, 58 miles from London, near which Daniel Parke II owned an estate.

231. William Hopkins (d. 1735), one of the Virginia General Court lawyers, was Dunbar Parke's chief counsel. Freeman, George Washington, II, 289; and Tinling, 3d., Correspondence of the Three Byrds, I, 475.

232. Ms. blotted.

233. Edge of Ms. torn.

234. According to John Holloway's draft of a letter to Charles Higgs, Custis was trying to find out if he could hold Byrd responsible for the debts in the Leeward Islands under the terms of their earlier agreement about the Parke estate. See the Custis biographical sketch. Va. Hist. Soc., Custis Family Papers.

235. Ms. blotted.

236. Ms. blotted.

237. Archibald Blair (1685-1733), physician and merchant, was brother of Commissary Blair and father of John Blair. He lived in Williamsburg on Nicholson Street and was Custis's fellow Williamsburg alderman and vestryman of Bruton Parish. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, I (New York, 1915), 187-188; Colonial Williamsburg Official Guidebook, 78-79.

238. Hole in Ms.

239. Ms. blotted.

240. Chalkt or chalked, marked, rubbed, mixed with chalk.


244. Henry Hacker (1689-1742), a wealthy Williamsburg merchant, who settled there about 1720. WMQ, 1st Ser., II (Oct. 1893), 83.

245. Wilson Cary (1702-1772) of Richneck in Warwick County, son of Miles Cary. He was appointed naval officer of the Lower James
River in 1726 and owned lots in Yorktown as well as other property. WMQ, 1st Ser., IX (July 1900), 104-111; and Tyler, Encyclopedia of Va. Biography, I, 206.

246. According to Richard L. Morton, Micajah Perry, then a member of the House of Commons and head of an organization of London merchants active in the tobacco trade, helped lead the fight against the tobacco excise that John Randolph was promoting in London for the Virginia Assembly. Colonial Virginia, II, 519-520.


248. Philip Lightfoot was a Virginia councilor 1733-1747. See Appendix II.

249. Blank space left in Ms.

250. Blank space left in Ms.

251. Ms. botted.

252. By-blow, one who came into the world by a side stroke, an illegitimate child.
APPENDIX I

TWO EXTRANEOUS ITEMS
INCLUDED IN THE CUSTIS LETTER BOOK

[Folio number 24a]

Sir
You'll Oblige Me very much if you inform me what Number of acres
you bought and what you gave for Capt. G. Lightfoot's Land; Not
from an impertinent Curiosity, but because in the Sale of my own
it may possibly be some Light to Sir your obedient and Most humble
Servant John Fox Octo.

[Some numbers are written on the verso in no discernible order,

[Folio number 34a]

8br 23 1726
Rec'd of Jno Custis one pound six Shills: for the use of Jno [Washer?]
the marke of Francis Duffin

[Verso of folio number 34a]

Mrs. Driesdale Dr
To grinding 3½ Barls: weat 0 8: 9
To 2½ Barl of white crop weat 4: 10: --
£4: 18: 9
APPENDIX I NOTES

1. Possibly John Fox (1706-ca. 1764), attended the College of William and Mary in 1724, became master of the Indian school operated by the college in 1729, in 1731 took a leave of absence to go to England where he was licensed for Virginia, returned to the College until 1736 when he went to Ware Parish, Gloucester County. Susan Louise Patterson, "Biographical Sketches of Anglican Clergymen Trained at the College of William and Mary, 1729-1776: A Study of James Blair's Plan and Its Results" (M.A., Thesis, College of William and Mary, 1973).
APPENDIX II

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES

James Blair (1655-1743), commissary or deputy of the Bishop of London with the authority to supervise the clergy of Virginia; councilor 1694-1743; rector of Bruton Parish, Williamsburg, 1710-1743; founder and first president of the College of William and Mary; was instrumental in the removals of Governors Andros, Nicholson, and probably Spotswood. In 1726 he was ostensibly going to England on college business. Parke Rouse, Jr., James Blair of Virginia (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1971).

John Blair (1678-1771), son of Archibald Blair, nephew of James Blair, became deputy auditor-general of Virginia on August 15, 1728. He became a councilor in 1745 and was a close friend of Custis's. DAB

William Byrd II (1674-1744) of Westover, councilor 1709-1744, was John Custis's brother-in-law. He was in England from the fall of 1722 until the early spring of 1726 as agent of the House of Burgesses and in search of a wealthy second wife. Pierre Marambaud, William Byrd of Westover, 1674-1744 (Charlottesville, Va., 1971), 44-47.

Robert Cary (1685-1750) of London and Hampstead, Virginia merchant, did business with many prominent planters. Jacob M. Price, "Who Was John Norton? A Note on the Historical Character of
Some Eighteenth-Century London Virginia Firms," WMQ, 3d Ser., XIX (July 1962), 401.


John Clayton (1686-1737) of Williamsburg, who was appointed attorney general in 1714, acted as a lawyer for William Byrd II, Robert Carter, Benjamin Harrison, and Micajah Perry as well as for Custis. He was also the father of the well-known botanist. Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, John Clayton: Pioneer of American Botany, 17-20.

Richard Fitzwilliam (d. 1732) was appointed surveyor general of the customs for the Carolinas, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, the Bahama Islands, and Jamaica in 1727 and was a member of the Virginia Council 1725-1731 as well as a councilor in Jamaica and South Carolina. James La Verne Anderson, "The Governors' Councils of Colonial America, A Study of Pennsylvania and Virginia 1660-1776" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1967), 324.

George Hamilton, earl of Orkney (1666-1737), governor general of Virginia 1710-1734, remained in England appointing lieutenant governors to serve in Virginia. DNB

John Holloway (ca. 1666-1734), lawyer, first mayor of Williamsburg, vestryman of Bruton Parish, speaker of the House of Burgesses, 1720-1734, and treasurer of the colony 1723-1734. He is said to have charged high fees. DAB
Philip Lightfoot (1689-1748) of Sandy Point, Charles City County, a councilor 1733-1747, was an attorney and merchant. Anderson, "Governors' Councils of Colonial America," 329.

Philip Ludwell (fl. 1666-1704), governor of Carolina 1689-1694, Virginia Councilor 1675-1677 and 1680-1697, and held many public offices in Virginia. His second wife, Frances Culpeper, was the widow of Governor Berkeley. He died in England and was Frances (Parke) Custis's grandfather. DAB.

Lyonel Lyde (1683-1745) of Bristol, a Virginia merchant, was the father of Sir Lyonel Lyde (1724-1791) and Cornelius Lyde, a Virginia planter. VMHB, XLVI (July 1938), 244-245; and VMHB, LXXXV (Jan. 1977), 19n.

Francis Nicholson (1660-1728), lieutenant-governor of Virginia 1690-1694 and governor of Virginia 1698-1705. After being recalled, he campaigned against the French in Canada, was appointed governor of Acadia in 1713 and of South Carolina in 1719. He returned to England on leave in 1725 retaining the nominal governorship until his death on March 5, 1728. In the controversies surrounding his recall as governor of Virginia in 1705, John Custis III had not sided with the opposition. DAB.

Daniel Parke I (1628-1679), secretary of state 1678-1679, was a Virginia councilor 1665-1679. He married Rebecca Evelyn and was the grandfather of Frances (Parke) Custis. Anderson, "Governors' Councils of Colonial America," 333.

Dunbar Parke formerly Thomas Dunbar (d. 1734) of the Leeward Islands, married Lucy Chester, Daniel Parke II's natural daughter, and took the name of Parke as stipulated in Parke's will when he married her, when she was apparently 11 years old. His brother was Charles Dunbar, solicitor general of the Leeward Islands. Freeman, George Washington, II, 290.

Micajah Perry (d. 1753), London merchant active in the tobacco trade, had inherited his firm from his grandfather Micajah Perry along with his brother Philip. He was politically influential, was elected a Member of the House of Commons in 1727, served as Lord Mayor of London 1735-1739. His firm failed in the 1740s. Swem, Brothers of the Spade, 154n; Jacob M. Price, France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of Its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1973), I, 659; Elizabeth Donnan, "Eighteenth Century English

John Randolph (ca. 1693-1737), king's attorney of Virginia and speaker of the House of Burgesses, born at Turkey Island in Henrico-County, was the most distinguished lawyer in Virginia in the first half of the eighteenth century. He was sent to England in 1728 to present the address of the Virginia Assembly to the king and their petition to Parliament requesting repeal of an act of Parliament prohibiting the shipping of stripped tobacco. Again in 1732 he was sent by the Assembly to England to recommend their plan for an excise collected through a bonded warehouse system in substitution for the import duties on tobacco (in which he failed). He was knighted in 1732, the only Virginian to be so honored in the colonial period. DAB.
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