204. October 11, 1711. Letter from Runckel: He inquires briefly about his communication of September 13 and more urgently about that of August 2, 1711. He reports that the deacon, Hans Gerber, who exerted himself so strongly against the departure of the Mennonites, has been captured and shall be sentenced either to death, life imprisonment, or the galleys. The government is on the track of several who have fled during the journey to Holland and returned to Bern. Daniel Rychen, to his surprise, lets him hear nothing. A very bitter enemy of the Mennonites, von Graffenried, suddenly fell to his death.

[page 1]

Schaffhausen,[[1]](#footnote-1) October 11, 1711.

Very worthy, etc.

My highly honored Sirs!

My last letter was from the 13th of the last month, which I hope has safely arrived and that from it you have learned in detail what various delays I have had. Since then I have not received an answer to that communication yet even today; in the meanwhile, however, time goes on without my being able to proceed with my billing, much less send in the accounts. So with this I would ask my highly honored Sirs for an answer, at your pleasure, and yet earnestly, that according to the obliging pledge made to me, you might please generously support the very submissive request [I have] submitted to their High and Mighty Lords, our most gracious Government, through your very valid intercession and recommendation in the most forceful and impressive manner, and that as soon as possible. For I have received assured intelligence from The Hague that [page 2] this request of mine will be brought up for discussion in the very near future.

Also I should give notice further to my highly honored Sirs that a report has been received from Bern regarding a certain Hans Gerber[[2]](#footnote-2) from the Aspi parish of Langnau, a well-known deacon of those Anabaptists who are the so-called Lower or Reistian congregation and who, according to the preacher Peter Habegger, is one of the most outstanding instigators.[[3]](#footnote-3) [The report holds] that the Anabaptists of this congregation have granted absolutely no consideration to the Christian, brotherly, and loving requests of my highly honored Sirs and others, but persist in their own thought and

opinion. So the government at Bern, aroused to extreme wrath, some time ago captured [Gerber] in this country and brought him to Bern to a severe imprisonment, examined him, and took him to trial before the Sovereign Council. Then, there were three opinions there, namely, a sentence to death, to life imprisonment, or transfer to the French galleys; the final sentence was postponed until St. Martin’s Day. Since one of these three punishments will be inexorably decided for him, he will be held meanwhile in irons and shackles.

Moreover, I am informed that the illustrious Canton has sure information that some of those last banished Emmentalers, who have slipped away on route against the stern [page 3] prohibition of the government, have again crept into the country. The government has thereupon issued a strict order that an attempt be made to capture such persons by every possible means. If this occurs, it will turn out exceptionally badly for them.[[4]](#footnote-4) Also, the longer it goes, the more bitter the high officials of the land become and may thus bring extreme misfortune on the innocent along with the guilty.

I have already written twice to Daniel Rychen, but never received an answer. This surprises me, as well as all other friends, not a little. Above all, everyone is curious to learn how things are going for the honorable Oberlanders—where they are and how they have distributed themselves [in their new land]. Also, let him know at once, if it is not too much trouble, that around four weeks ago the gentleman on the Anabaptist Commission, who has always been his greatest opponent, that is, Mr. von Graffenried,[[5]](#footnote-5) former mayor at Thun, unexpectedly fell from his house to death, breaking his neck at Milden[[6]](#footnote-6) in the French-speaking area.

With this, besides a mutual commitment into God’s powerful, gracious protection, and the best commendation of myself and mine to your devoted

prayer continually I remain,

My highly honored Sirs’

Most devoted servant

Johann Ludwig Runckel.

1. 204 This document is translated into Dutch in Vorsterman’s Relaes (A 1392) on pp. 236-237. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Müller, p. 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. or, founder. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Vorsterman says, “welke jndien het geschied boven maten slegt met haer sal aflopen.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The patrician and noble family von Graffenried of Bern is mentioned frequently among Bernese officials from the 1300s on. Laura Mosiman of the Burgerbibliothek Bern in a letter of October 4, 2012, reports that Albrecht von Graffenried (1656-1711) was Councilor in 1691 and Mayor of Thun in 1698, and that he fell to his death in the Castle Carouge. He was Lord of Carouge and Joint Lord of Mezières. “Rodt Genealogie,” manuscript in the Burgerbibliothek Bern, pp. 208-209. See note in Document 119 and also Kurt Guggisberg, Bernische Kirchengeschichte (Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1958), pp. 277, 349, 353, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Milden is the German name of Moudon in Waadt (Vaud) 11 miles, or about 18 kilometers, north-northwest of Lucerne. Geographisches Lexikon der Schweiz III, p. 452. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)