

Anti-Slavery Office,

New York, Dec. 4, 1857.

70

Dear Garrison,

I accept, in good faith, your explanation of the action of the Executive Committee in my case, and your assurance, on your own and their behalf, that the measure was adopted not willingly but with reluctance, for pecuniary reasons only, and not intended, either in substance or manner, to be unkind to me. Nevertheless, it was unkind in them, at least in appearance, to take such a step so suddenly and to announce it to me in a manner so perfunctory. They should have remembered that the ties which bound me to the Standard were ties of the heart, which could not be severed without pain on my part, even though the act were done with every demonstration of a

friendly spirit and dictated by an uncontrollable necessity. The duty of making such an announcement to me should not have been assigned to the member of the Committee who was best acquainted with me and therefore least likely to appreciate its effect upon my mind. I do not, however, blame Mr. Bowditch in the least. He was scarcely acquainted with me, and naturally told me the facts of the case with official brevity; and besides, he may have thought that some other member of the Committee, who knew me better, would promptly enlighten me in regard to the circumstances under which they acted.

The resolution of the Committee dismissed me with a pen-stroke, with as little apparent reluctance as they might be expected to exhibit in turning off a porter or an errand boy. On reading it I was first astonished, and then deeply grieved. Sincerely, said I to myself, the Committee must have changed their estimate of the value of my services since

the time when they sent after me to Philadelphia and entreated me to come hither.

Reading it again, I found no word indicating a consciousness on the part of the Committee that the cause was to lose any thing by my discharge. Mr. Gay was ~~told~~ asked to "resume his former duties," and told that, "with the large literary aid now employed" [that is, as I understood it, with the aid of Miss Griffith's stories for the fourth page, which, requiring much revision to fit them for the press, increase rather than diminish the labors of the editors], he would find no difficulty in so doing!

As, according to the Committee, Mr. Gay, <sup>would</sup> ~~would~~ find no difficulty in taking the exclusive charge of affairs at this Office, was not the inference natural, that my services were no longer deemed essential to the efficiency of the paper, and that I was regarded as "a fifth wheel to the coach," that might well enough be dispensed with? This allusion to "literary aid," in such a connection, looked, moreover, as if Miss Griffith's contributions to the fourth page had been

4

accepted as preferable to my aid in the  
Office.

I am sure there is not one of the  
Committee who would not, in my circum-  
stances, have been affected precisely as I was  
by Mr. Bowditch's letter, and I cannot hon-  
estly charge myself with undue sensitiv-  
ness in feeling and writing as I did. The  
fact, moreover, that such action had been  
taken not only without premonition to  
Mr. Gay or me, but without consulting the  
Pennsylvania Committee, seemed inexplic-  
able, except upon the hypothesis that my  
connection with the paper was considered  
of so little consequence that it might be  
sundered at any moment when a plau-  
sible excuse should present itself. In this  
view of the case, the request to me to ~~name~~  
intimate how long a notice I thought the  
Committee ought to give me if the time of  
my departure, instead of offering itself as  
an alleviation, seemed worse than indis-  
icate.

I am grateful, however, for the  
assurance your letter affords that the Com-  
mittee did and do esteem my services of

8  
value to the cause, and they voted  
with regret to dismiss me; but I can-  
not help thinking that they were unjust to  
themselves as well as to me, in that they left  
me, at such a moment, to take all this  
for granted.

You mistake the import of the allu-  
sion, in my former letter, to the circumstance  
under which I came to the Standard and to  
what was then said of the probable per-  
manency of my connection with it, if you  
suppose I intended to deny the right or question  
the duty of the Committee to discharge me, if, in  
their judgment, the exigencies of the cause should  
require them to do so. My complaint is not  
that I was removed, but that the act was done  
in a manner adapted to wound my feelings;  
and the allusion above referred to was  
simply intended to strengthen my arguments  
against the precipitancy of the Committee.

It has been my joy and pride to  
serve the anti-slavery cause for these many  
years for a smaller salary than I could have  
obtained elsewhere. If it had been in my  
power, I would have served it with still  
greater joy and pride without any, or in

6  
pensation at times, and that while due to the soul of every man who consecrates himself unselfishly to a great and good cause. It has been an exquisite pleasure to feel that my labors were esteemed of greater value to the cause than the money they <sup>have</sup> cost its friends, and that I had the confidence and affection of my fellow-laborers. Herein is my wealth; in all else I am poor. To touch these precious jewels is to touch the apple of my eye.

But I will say no more of my personal relations to the ~~cause~~ <sup>Society</sup>, except that I shall submit cheerfully to the judgment of the Committee. I will prepare to leave the office at any day which they may fix. In doing so, however, I shall make the greatest sacrifice of my life - not a sacrifice of silver ~~and~~ <sup>or</sup> gold, for it is probable that my pecuniary <sup>interests</sup> will, on the whole, be promoted by the change - but of feeling and choice. If I could see any reason to hope that this sacrifice on my part would inure to the benefit of the Society or the cause, or if I could even feel

9  
that it was unavoidable, I could endure  
it with resignation and even with alacrity.  
But I will frankly confess that I think the  
Committee are under the influence of a panic,  
and that they have yielded too soon and  
too readily to discouragement. I fear, more-  
over, that, absorbed as they are with the care  
of the cause in Massachusetts, they do not  
fully realize the importance of the work in  
New York. If we only could carry ~~the~~<sup>the</sup>  
~~Society~~<sup>Society</sup>, ~~salvage~~, by a great effort, through the pre-  
sent crisis, which, in the nature of things,  
must be temporary, we should place our-  
selves in a position to strengthen the mee-  
dle amazingly and thus reap the fruits  
of past toil. The Society is out of debt, and,  
even at the present rate of expenditure, the  
pinch will not come till some months  
hence, when, if the times should improve,  
we ought to be able, by a special effort, to  
collect funds to meet, in part at least,  
the emergency. Even if we should have to  
borrow a few hundred dollars for a time,  
would not that be better than to ~~wreck~~<sup>cripple</sup>  
our operations at this important point?

8  
I know there has long been a doubt on the part  
of some of its Committee, of the wisdom of  
maintaining the Standard at so large an  
expense, and I fear that, in this crisis, others  
may be insensibly affected by this objection.  
The more I think of it, the greater is my wonder  
that the Committee, before taking ~~any~~  
~~steps~~ deciding upon such a measure of im-  
portance, did not consult with friends here  
and in Philadelphia.

But I will not pursue the subject  
further, ~~and~~ <sup>for</sup> indeed I know I ought to dis-  
trust my own judgment when I find  
myself differing from those whose clear-  
sightedness in all that relates to the cause  
has been so often and so strikingly demon-  
strated.

I remain, dear Garrison, with the kindest  
regards for the Committee, one and all,  
and with unabated esteem and affection  
for yourself.

Your faithful fellow-laborer,

Oliver Johnson;