



No 4265.353



Mr. Estlin

A LETTER

FROM

JAMES CANNINGS FULLER,

Of Francateles, State of New York,

TO

JOSEPH JOHN GURNEY;

BEING

4265.353

SOME ANIMADVERSIONS UPON J. J. GURNEY'S INSINUATIONS AGAINST THE AMERICAN ABOLITIONISTS, CONTAINED IN A WORK ENTITLED "FAMILIAR LETTERS TO AMELIA OPIE," RECENTLY PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION IN ENGLAND.

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The time allowed for printing the following "Letter" is so short, that I have ventured, without consulting the writer, to make a few verbal corrections, which do not alter his meaning while they make it more clear. I give, also on my own responsibility, an extract from a letter from a zealous friend to the Anti-Slavery cause. It contains some observations which all will admit to be just who are not blinded by respect to persons, or a preference of the interests of sects and parties to the claims of humanity:—

"The language of J. C. Fuller's Letter is strong, but such shameful scandal of abolition lecturers deserves it, and ought not to be passed silently over. It is time that that piece of expediency should be attacked, which Friends uphold when they say that a minister ought not to mention slavery in his public ministrations in the United States, for fear of closing up his way in preaching the gospel; as though a man could preach the gospel and be silent on a crime which involves the breach of every one of the ten commandments. The high standing of J. J. Gurney makes it the more necessary that his misstatements should be corrected and his expediency exposed. It is a wicked stab in the dark which he aims at some of the most devoted of the abolitionists. I have only yet glanced over the first eighty pages of the "Familiar Letters;" but, in a moral point of view, I have seen no passage that I dislike more than this. Speaking of Mount Vernon, (the seat of General Washington) he says:—

"We had no opportunity of visiting this interesting spot, but as we passed by it we could not but pay a cordial mental tribute to the genius of that most extraordinary person. To think of his having been both a soldier and a slaveholder was indeed a subject of deep regret. But we nevertheless know that he was a man of prayer, and his qualities of mind were peculiarly calculated to obtain for him the warm affections of America, and the respect of the world! He is generally regarded as having been the most religious of all the American presidents."

"How can we hope for a regenerated public sentiment on the questions of war and slavery when such a piece of moral obliquity is put forth by Joseph John Gurney?"

True, how can we? If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch together! If one of our ministers talks of slaveholders as "men of prayer"—and another argues that the restoration of an escaped slave is due by us to his master, on the principle of doing to others as we would they should do to us;—if our ministers talk and write thus, may we not plead on behalf of the New England Puritans, that they were amongst the most pious and prayerful of men? They were all "men of prayer," yet they hanged Mary Dyer, Marmaduke Stephenson, William Leddra, and William Robinson. It is an easy matter to obtain the reputation of "a man of prayer" in the eyes of the world—but quite another thing to be able or willing to be the devoted, fearless, self-sacrificing, persecuted, belied friends of the friendless. Such are the American abolitionists. God knows their hearts and will reward their labours.

As to J. J. G.'s charges in p. 8 of this tract, the most offensive of them,—that about husbands and wives, is entirely false. The rest are all incorrect, as he has stated them. There is no difference between the Christian principle of non-resistance, as held by some abolitionists, and the anti-life-taking principle of the Society of Friends. The same may be said of the views held by them as to the moral position of woman in a Christian community. They eschew politics themselves, and are therefore opposed to that which is imputed to them—a desire to turn women into senators, or leaders of armies. As to the treatment of children, they are for training up the child in the way he should go, and, as far as possible, restraining, by example and precept, his evil propensities. They advocate the law of love—not the bludgeon and the cane. In short J. J. G. has caricatured the sentiments he objects to. The early Friends were often persecuted in consequence of opinions that they held, which, though innocent in themselves, conveyed the idea of guilt when misstated by their enemies. His charges, in their nearest approach to truth, hold good with respect to a mere handful of the anti-slavery lecturers—and then, in their private capacity, not as lecturers on abolition. If they were all true, they do not justify or palliate the indifference or hostility of J. J. G. and others to the cause of immediate abolition. But it is only as a cloak to indifference or hostility that they are brought forward. Christianity itself was libelled in its early appearance, in the same way, and with the same objects. Immediate emancipation is an unpopular object in the United States; every one who labours there for its attainment, *as if he were in earnest*, is of necessity unpopular. It rarely happens that popular preachers are the most energetic in their opposition to popular sins.

R. D WEBB.

A LETTER, &c.

3, *Ashley Hill, Bristol*, 11th Month 3rd, 1843.

My dear Friend,

JOSEPH JOHN GURNEY:—

I have not forgotten thy visit to the western part of the State of New York, nor the satisfaction experienced in attending with thee many "public meetings," as well as all the meetings of Friends in that section of the State. I also remember thy promise, that shouldst thou print anything on the subject of thy visit to America, thou wouldst give me a copy. I suppose thou wilt not forget that my son Samuel, about two years since, at my request, made known my wish to procure a copy. In reply to his application, thou informed him thou hadst not had recourse to the press. Since thy return from the continent of Europe, I suppose thou art aware that, shortly after my arrival in England, I renewed the application. From this thou mayst infer that, when I heard thy "Familiar Letters" were in circulation in this city, my curiosity was excited to get a sight of what I supposed would gratify me much. Through the kindness of a friend I obtained the work, and hastily ran my eye down its columns, a very few hours being all the time I then thought I could afford previous to taking my departure for home.

In that freedom which ought to exist, and in that love which I apprehend constrains me, on behalf of injured and down-trodden humanity, as well as for the defence of the advocates of the Abolition of Slavery in the United States, I now address thee. The reputation of those advocates is common property to all who love the cause, and all such have an interest in defending it when unjustly assailed, be

the standing, the influence, or the motives of the assailant, what they may. Circumstanced as I am, silence would be base, were I, through fear of offending thee, to allow some parts of thy letters to pass unnoticed or unrebuked. Pleased should I be could we have met and talked over the matter, so that by comparing our own observations and our knowledge of facts, we might have endeavoured to ascertain the true state of these matters, on which thou hast so largely, and in my apprehension so unkindly, as well as unjustly, dilated.

I have heard of an extraordinarily gifted minister, to whom, when he went from this land to America, the yearly meeting of ministers and elders, among other matter, gave this endorsement on his certificates—"Weak as a man, powerful as a minister." This idea impressed my mind as being applicable to thyself, so far as regards human rights, or thy manner of treating of them and their most devoted advocates, as I hastily scanned thy pages to ascertain how far thou had become their champion, or had cheered them on to their final triumph, in that land which thou visited in the high character of an ambassador of Him who came to break every yoke, and to let the oppressed go free. The disappointment of these expectations was sad. Before coming to the 50th page, I found thy testimony to be, that "undoubtedly there are many humane slaveholders." I hope Friends in their meetings for discipline in this land never did, nor ever will knowingly liberate a friend to travel where Slavery prevails, if they entertain the most distant idea that their fellow-member so liberated could become the apologist for Slavery or the Slaveholder. *A humane Slaveholder is a non-entity, a mere fiction.* How can a man who robs his fellow-man of self ownership be humane *to him*? A humane Slaveholder is as appropriate a definition as to call Satan an angel of light,—“no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”—this transformation does take place, but the other is impossible, and will continue so to be until there can be found a humane murderer!—an honest thief!

If the best aspect of Slavery thou saw was in the public meetings thou held for worship, in which thy coloured brother, if permitted to attend, was on account of his colour forced to occupy the side galleries, glad should I have been had thou made an attempt to inform thy readers under what aspect slavery appeared the worst; but perhaps it is unbecoming to find fault with what an unpublished book does *not* contain. But deeply do I regret to find one of the most

humiliating and debasing effects of slavery exhibited on a Briton's mind, on the mind of him who professes to be an anti-slavery man at home—one who from his purse, with his wonted liberal hand, sustains the cause on British soil. This is shewn in the fact that he, when on a Christian mission, under an apprehension of the constraining love of the gospel to visit foreign lands, where "Slavery" may be seen "as it is," writes to his friend at home, that in public meetings for worship, "of course the subject of slavery could not, with any propriety, be adverted to."* This sentiment affords most painful proof of the blinding power of slavery over the moral perceptions wherever this hateful system prevails. Of old, the unclean spirit cried out, saying, "Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth, art thou come to destroy us?" This query arose from the doctrine which Christ preached in the synagogue of Capernaum; and now the time has come when a Quaker minister, who professes to be in his ministration under the immediate influence and guidance of God's Holy Spirit, God speaking by and through him to his people, can yet testify that "Slavery could not, with any propriety, be adverted to" in meetings for worship, in the States of Virginia and North Carolina. Is there not here, my friend, *primâ faciê* evidence, that thou didst not declare "the whole counsel of God," that thou didst not "teach as one having authority?"

Now, what is really the condition of things in the States of Virginia and North Carolina? In the year 1836, the "Virginia Times," a paper which ought to know, and which has no motive to overrate, states that the number of slaves exported from Virginia in one twelve months, amounted to one hundred and twenty thousand! An agent of the Virginian Bible Society declares of the white inhabitants, that in divers parts of the State, "its inhabitants are generally found almost entirely destitute of the bible"; and in other portions of the State, "that the bible is literally an unknown book, and the present generation have reached manhood without religious instruction of any kind." Thy testimony respecting North Carolina, in page 66 of the "Familiar Letters," is, "that labour is no longer a source of profit; the negroes themselves are now the only profitable article on the estate, and to breed them for sale insensibly

* See the "Familiar Letters to Amelia Opie." This however will be no easy matter, for the book was never published and is very scarce. Its unfair insinuations against the American abolitionists are likely on this account to be the more dangerous because more insidious.

“ becomes the regular business of the country, so that not less than a million of dollars had been expended the year before, in the single county of Caswell, for the purpose of exporting negroes on speculation.”

Alas! alas! that things should be thus, and that propriety forbid thy advertent to it. My heart, my brother, mourns on thy account; for if the Father of all flesh sent thee into those parts of his footstool to declare his counsel, his law of love, to the Slaveholders, and thou hast been swayed by the “propriety” of not advertent to Slavery even in a whisper to the ears of the Slaveholder, or addressing in the fullness and freedom of the Gospel of Christ the victims of their cupidity, avarice, and lust, I fear that their blood, should they die continuing in the sin of Slaveholding, may be required at thy hands. How awfully responsible is the station of a minister of Christ sent to those benighted parts, for I may add to thy testimony, that in North Carolina one in every seven of its white inhabitants over twenty years of age can neither read nor write. The fact of so large a proportion of the white community being ignorant of letters and instruction, (which are denied to the coloured people,) loudly calls on the oral minister, fearlessly and faithfully to proclaim the word of the Lord, and the more so, for he knows that it will not return unto him void, but that it will accomplish that whereunto it is sent. There is, I believe, scripture testimony for this.

Thy work doubtless came under the notice of John Pease, Isabel Casson, and Rachel Priestman before they left England.* The former, while I am writing, is in a slaveholding State, in all probability in the city of Baltimore, which contains 100,000 inhabitants, not one of whom endeavoured to sustain the claim to freedom of that person thou saw imprisoned in the slaveholders’ jail, who asserted he was free-born, and yet was about to be sold as a slave! Where or on whom has fallen the mantle of Elijah Tyson, through whose efforts to sustain the rights of men not fewer than 2,000 persons were snatched from slavery’s insatiable jaws?† Yet I suppose both Friends and Hicksites in that city are doing as thou sayest Friends in Virginia and North Carolina are doing, “bearing, as a Christian body, a conspicuous though quiet and inoffensive testimony to the

* Three English Friends now travelling in the United States in the work of the ministry.

† For an extremely interesting account of the Life and Labours of Elijah Tyson of Baltimore, see the Appendix to Joseph Sturge’s account of his Tour in the United States, recently published.

eternal principles of justice in reference to this subject." Even in the Northern States the time was, and I speak from experience, when a quiet and inoffensive testimony, and yet a *conspicuous* one, could not be exhibited without exhibiting results most offensive to those who bore the testimony, and how much more so would it have been, and now may be, at the South? I fear that causes similar to those which have deprived Northern ministers of religion of clear vision, may also have obstructed the clearness of thy perception. For instance, when the professed ministers of the Redeemer have had occasion, as thou hast had, to put up at hotels like that of Major —, at the Sulphur Springs of Virginia, and when the hotel-keeper, as in thy case, "has summoned his neighbours and servants (*quere*, does *servant* mean *slave*?) to your meetings, and entertained you handsomely for the love of the Gospel, *free of all expense!*"* This is a trap into which many have slipt, and one which once beset my path, but "propriety" forbade my being entangled by it.

I have supposed that thy "Familiar Letters to Amelia Opie" will probably come under the notice of these English friends now travelling in America, in the character of ambassadors of Christ, and I have dreaded the tendency of thy book to corrupt or weaken their singleness of eye towards Him who sent them, and to turn their hearts from their duty towards the most oppressed of God's heritage. No tongue can tell how diffusive the evil tendency of these letters may be, either on this or the other side of the Atlantic; of course I allude only to their tendency as to the abolition of slavery. It may be felt to the extremities of the earth and the end of time, so that thy misconduct (in this respect) may not only be injurious, like Adam's, to all thy posterity, but to innumerable others. "Man's moral responsibility is immense; every one is bound to consider the consequences of his actions to their full extent; that the evil of actual transgression is magnified by its diffusive nature, and that the sin of *omitting* the opportunities of good is multiplied by the number of those who might have been benefitted by its operation." "There is a moral reaction, a rebound of good and evil. The evil which we do, the good which we leave undone, may not merely be fatal to another, but the fatal consequences may be reflected on ourselves."

This brings me to notice thy remarks in p. 175. "It

‡ See the "Familiar Letters" for J. J. G.'s account of his reception by the Virginian Hotel-keeper.

“ must be confessed that in the train of the abolition move-
 “ ments in New England, some dangerous sentiments have
 “ been advanced and advocated. I allude to the new
 “ fashioned notions which have been of late so much in
 “ vogue respecting the rights of women, passive non-
 “ resistance, the immunity of children from punishment,
 “ and even of the equalization of property. On these dif-
 “ ferent topics there has arisen of late years an uncontrolled
 “ wildness of sentiment, which, were it to prevail, would
 “ soon be found to be utterly inconsistent with the most
 “ fundamental principles of civil, social, and domestic order.
 “ When male and female itinerant lecturers are heard
 “ declaring that women have in all respects the same civil
 “ and political rights and duties as the stronger sex,—
 “ that no resistance ought to be made, even by peaceable
 “ legal proceedings, to the violence of the thief or the
 “ murderer,—that no allegiance is due from the Christian to
 “ any civil government whatsoever,—that children are at
 “ liberty to follow their own courses, and that it is unlaw-
 “ ful for a parent to punish them,—that wives and hus-
 “ bands may lawfully separate when they are weary of each
 “ other’s society,—and that the agrarian law of olden time
 “ ought now to remodel the whole affair of property; when
 “ all these anomalous ideas are let loose, each in its turn,
 “ on an imaginative public, one cannot but tremble in the
 “ view of the consequences. One is brought home more
 “ than ever to the conclusion that ‘it is not in man that
 “ walketh to direct his steps,’ that unless he comes under
 “ the restraining influence of Christian principle, the ‘ima-
 “ ginations’ of his heart will be only evil continually in the
 “ sight of God.”

After a residence of nearly ten years in the United States, wherein I have travelled as much as most men, and have associated both at home and abroad with “itinerant” Anti-Slavery lecturers, I have yet to learn their characters, and what spirit they are of, *if* thy testimony of them *be true*.

I have heard or known but of three female public Anti-Slavery lecturers; of two of them it may be sufficient to mention their names—Angelina and Sarah M. Grimke, daughters of the late Judge Grimke of South Carolina. These “fellow helpers” travelled and held meetings with the full sanction and unity of the American Anti-Slavery Society, previous to its being severed by priestly influence into Old and New organization. The other female is Abby

Kelley, to whom reference is made by thyself [page 180] as conducting a large school at Lynn with "admirable propriety and success." Let me tell thee, and without fear of contradiction, that the two first-named individuals, as well as the last, are on too high a pinnacle, that they are too well known, and too much beloved for their moral and public worth, for any arrow from thy bow to hurt, wound, or lower them in the estimation of those who truly love the slave. These dear women have been blessed with the understanding of the unity of the brotherhood of mankind; they can, in feeling, descend to its lowest depth, to its most degraded condition, and see in the poor forlorn slave a brother—a sister—human beings created in God's image; they see in them those whom Christ died to redeem, and have not hesitated to declare these things to their brethren and sisters, calling on them to assist to elevate to the platform of humanity those blood-bought subjects of God's creation.

As to the "itinerant" lecturers of the other sex, bear with me if I express myself strongly, even if I do so as the "advocate of truth in its keenness." I feel both for them and for the rights of injured humanity which they advocate so faithfully and fearlessly. Whilst thou wert in America, I saw what I considered to be unjust reflections cast on thy character in public print; through the same channel I attempted to exhibit the truth, by simply stating facts; and now, when I see thee, a man of polished education, a Quaker minister, descending so low as to bear false witness against thy neighbours, thou must bear with me, as thy opponents did when I became thy voluntary defender. To say that the above quotation from page 175 of the "Familiar Letters" is a libel, does not prove it to be so, nor does thy stating the particulars prove they are true; but let me tell thee, that to all the catalogue of crimes thou hast charged on male and female "itinerants," publicly engaged in the advocacy of the anti-slavery cause, I enter the plea of *not guilty*. I am not about to endorse all the private opinions of anti-slavery lecturers; it may be that on many points I differ from them, and they from me; all the unity required of abolitionists is, the belief and corresponding action, that slavery is a sin against God and man, and therefore ought immediately to be abolished, and that the weapons of our warfare are "moral, religious, and pacific."

Thou never endangered the soiling of the soles of thy shoes by attending an anti-slavery meeting, during all the years thou wert in America; therefore thy accusations must

be grounded on hearsay ; and yet to English readers they appear to be the result of well ascertained facts, when the truth of the matter is, that they are all asseverations grounded on something, or it may be on nothing.

From personal acquaintance with, I believe, most of the "itinerant" lecturers in New England, and having met them in "council, and in war," I do declare that I never heard any of them promulgate such doctrines as thou hast charged them with. It is deeply to be regretted, that in a work circulated amongst the "higher orders" in England, the statement should be made by a person of thy standing in society, that the abolition movement in New England is conducted by male and female "itinerants," who publicly declare, among other things, that "children are at liberty to follow their own courses, and that it is unlawful to punish them,—that wives and husbands may lawfully separate, when they are weary of each other's society."

In the year 1827, I attended the yearly meeting held in Dublin ; at that time I know not any Friend's house in that city which was not open to receive me. This spring I also attended that yearly meeting ; with the exception of three or four families of friends who are interested in the anti-slavery cause, there were very few houses to which I was welcomed : and I have good reason to believe that my anti-slavery character prevented that proffer of hospitality which members of our society are so apt to exhibit towards each other, and which are as a cordial to the traveller when heartily given. Since seeing thy "Familiar Letters," I have thought they may have acted as bars and bolts to many a Dublin door, preventing my ingress. I doubt not some alarm was felt on so insignificant a personage visiting that yearly meeting, as I have been told that an Irish friend, in corresponding with one in Bristol, informed him "that James C. Fuller was not so much of a wild beast as they had anticipated."

I would have thee know that I am not writing in my own defence ; if anti-slavery be promoted by attacks on me, or on my character, I bid them welcome ; yet the character and moral standing of anti-slavery advocates in America are of too much worth for me justly to estimate, and I feel very tenacious on their account ; the more especially as thy defamation may flow only in such channels as may make it impossible that the injured parties should know whence it came—they may feel the effects of the poisoned arrow without being aware from whose quiver and bow it came. Should Amelia

Opie, or any of the readers of thy "Familiar Letters," visit the New England States, how could they, consistently with their views of propriety, associate with such monsters as thou hast made the "itinerants" of the anti-slavery society appear to be? It well becomes thy private as well as ministerial character to do these injured ones justice: the way and manner I need not point out.

The bank at Norwich is firmly founded, as are its various ramifications in the county of Norfolk, yet were some person of equal standing and influence with myself to disseminate in every part of the country, that the stability of the parent bank was shaken, if not destroyed, would not its character be so affected as to cause a general "run?" Although all demands might be met *instantly*, and its standing be preserved, yet it might meet with such a shock in selling out of the public funds, and realizing its securities, as to cripple its future prospects and blast its anticipated profits. If thou hast undermined the standing and character of the Anti-Slavery lecturers in America, the public opinion engendered in this country by the reading of thy "Familiar Letters," may afford an abundant supply of combustibles, so that when they explode, it may reasonably be calculated that not a shred of good character will be left them. One who has read thy letters, seriously told me that "*they* [the abolitionists] *were a bad set.*" So much for the first fruits. It appears to me that thou hast been the parent of distrust, and hast in degree contributed to blast the future prospects and anticipated results of the Anti-Slavery host, and to roll back the onward car of freedom, and, it may be, the year of jubilee: for great is the influence of man upon man.

The day of emancipation must inevitably come; man may retard it, but come it will, in mercy or in judgment. For the well being of the oppressed slave, and of my adopted country, most devoutly do I desire the former, and deprecate the latter; but if slavery must be destroyed by terrible things permitted to be done, should I live to see the time, may I be clear of having done any thing whereby slavery has been permitted or continued. May we for the future stand in our right allotments, with our loins girt with righteousness; and may ability be given, both to thee and to me, to become more and more the defenders of the rights of human kind. That Christianity is but a *sham*, which does not most fully recognize and stand up in defence of these.

I suppose thou hast found it an easy thing, in the company of others, to converse with the crowned heads and aristo-

cracy of Europe; but it is an apple off another tree to see "Slavery as it is," and to feel, when professedly under the divine anointing, in the character of an ambassador of our Holy Redeemer, that "the subject of slavery itself could not, with any propriety, be adverted to." It is an easy thing at Earlham Hall* to write down, or attempt to write down, the characters and standing of some of the purest minded and most self-sacrificing philanthropists it has ever been my lot to associate with. Some give of their substance to promote the good cause; but the public lecturer against slavery goes forth from his own quiet home, leaving wife, children, and near connexions; carrying, as it were, his life in his hand. Are these to be lightly had in remembrance? I have been a witness to the drawing of cold steel when an "itinerant" was engaged in publicly lecturing in the city of New Haven. Gerrit Smith was the lecturer, and the students of Yale College, one of the schools for manufacturing priests, were the assailants and mobocrats. The cold steel of New Haven, I believe, promoted the good cause; but had it not done so, in my estimation it is less to be feared than some of the contents of thy "Familiar Letters."

As thy letters are addressed to our mutual friend, and the slaves' friend, Amelia Opie, I think I do right in desiring that this communication may be shown her. I shall endeavour that anti-slavery lecturers in America, particularly those of New England, become acquainted with its contents.

As I have simply taken up the defence of great principles, and of the advocates of great principles, I must ask thee to believe that I feel no want of love for thee, and shouldst thou ever re-visit Western New York, I shall be pleased to render thee such assistance as thou mayest need and I can furnish. In that love which should unite all mankind into one holy undivided brotherhood, I desire to subscribe myself thy affectionate friend,

JAMES CANNINGS FULLER,

OF SKANEATELES.

* J. J. Gurney's mansion near Norwich.

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