

Boston, Oct. 1, 1844.

My Beloved Friend:

It is sometimes said of a person, that "he ought to be hanged," without meaning any thing very sanguinary by such an expression. In view of my epistolary delinquencies, and of the long, long period that has elapsed since I wrote to you, I feel, not exactly that I deserve to be strangled, but mortified to a most humiliating extent. How it is that you have let me off so easily — without giving me a single reproachful look — without sending me one word of complaint — I am at a loss to imagine; but your forbearance and magnanimity are worthy of eternal renown, and I would certainly celebrate them in immortal verse, if I only knew how. It is utterly idle for me to attempt to palliate my silence, on the plea of occasional ill health — domestic affairs — editorial duties — the responsibilities of the anti-slavery cause — or any thing of the kind. Alas! too long a period of time has elapsed for me to escape under cover of such a plea. It would be useless, too, for me to tell you how many long and affectionate epistles I have projected in my mind, for your perusal, within the present year; but as these were never completed, and have only been mere abstractions, an intelligence of that kind would only serve to aggravate rather than mitigate my criminality. As one steamer after another has left this port, without carrying one word of brotherly love and cheer from me to you, I have blushed, sighed, and resolved that "the next steamer" should certainly not depart, until I had prepared an epistle of astounding length, and filled to repletion with things fresh, novel and interesting. But, alas! when the day of her departure came, it found me such discontented, busy, and me too busy, to think of even subscribing my name to any thing. As it is, I am driven into a corner, and must write in full gallop, if I would not lose the mail which is to close at noon, this day.

You must indulge me in expressions of regret. I am pained to think that, during your long residence in Graeffenberg, not a line was received from me to comfort you while passing through your terrible "water cure," and hissing among a people "of a strange speech." You have been desperately ill — have taken long journeys — have resided for months in Austria — have been restored to health, and almost literally have "passed from death unto life" — and at length have returned back to England — and yet, all this period, I have sent you nothing in the shape of an epistle, to tell you of the mingled emotions of anxiety, alarm, hopes and joy, which have filled my breast. O, this is too bad — it is abominable! And yet you have been as dear to me as the apple of my eye. There is no one, on the wide earth, among the great circle of my friends, for whom I entertain greater love and respect. Your views of the nature, spirit and designs of Christianity, — of the brotherhood of the human race — of the corruption of existing political, religious and governmental institutions — are more nearly identical with my own, than those of almost any other individual. In your welfare — in all your labors and trials — in all that you are endeavoring to accomplish in behalf of the human family — I take a deep, abiding, thrilling interest. God be with you to the end of the conflict here below, and bless you eternally!

Your recovery as it were from the jaws of death, by a process as extraordinary as it has proved efficacious, is a matter of astonishment and delight to your numerous friends on this side of the Atlantic. Have you not heard the shout of joy that has gone up from us? Yet we rejoice with fear and trembling, lest, after all, there may be a relapse, either in consequence of the cure not being radical, or from your want of caution in speaking and lecturing on your favorite themes. We are apprehensive, too, that the climate of England is not adapted to your constitution; for it seems to have exerted a deleterious influence upon you ever since you landed in that country. Do be careful of yourself — see that you are not consumed by the fire of your philanthropy — curb your disposition to labor beyond measure — believe in "the limitations of human responsibility," though not so laid down by that selfish and cowardly teacher of morality, President Wayland.

You must return home! — and with as little delay as possible! This is the unanimous opinion of your friends in this country. We admit that "the field is the world"; we are sure that you are sowing precious seed abroad, that will ultimately produce a rich harvest; we know that the genuine friends of Christian peace, in Europe, are "few and far between"; we perceive many good reasons for your remaining among a people who are so frightfully victimized by the war spirit; yet, notwithstanding all this, we are satisfied that the best position for you to occupy is to be found in the United States. If the peace of this country can be maintained, the peace of the world will follow almost as a necessary consequence. In regard to the cause of negro emancipation, have we not always said that we can assuage slavery more successfully by remaining at the North, than by going to the South? So, in regard to the blessed cause of non-resistance, may we not attack the war spirit to more advantage by occupying a position the least embarrassed by the presence of military power, than we can by going into its presence, and attempting to take the citadel before we have gained a single outpost.

I do not know but the season has too far advanced for you to think of returning home until next spring; and yet to spend the winter in Scotland may be more perilous to your health, than for you to take your chance in our cold, clear, wintry climate. But you must not tarry longer than next spring, unless the voice and the providence of God clearly determine otherwise. In an unselfish spirit, we long to see you again, and to embrace you in the flesh. Give due heed to these suggestions, and decide according to your own convictions of duty; and when you write to me again, let me know your mind on these points.

The annual meeting of our Non-Resistance Society occurs on the 29th instant. At that meeting, I presume a resolution will be passed, urging your speedy return home to your former fields of labor. The Society, I regret to say, has had only a nominal existence during the past year — and, indeed, ever since your departure. It is without an organ, without funds, without agents, without publications. Yet, I rejoice to add, on the other hand, that the cause of non-resistance is gaining new adherents continually, through the radical character of the anti-slavery movement. At present, that movement is first in the order of progress and reform on this soil, in which every non-resistance is most deeply interested, and which absorbs nearly all our time and means; and this is the reason why our Non-Resistance Society, as such, gets so little of our attention. But should you return, our Board would be inspired to put forth vigorous efforts, and I feel confident that you would be sustained in a pecuniary point of view.

Your letters from Graeffenberg, as published in the Liberator, giving an account of the "Water Cure" and its pleasant founder, have excited a wide and lively interest among all classes, and been extensively copied by the journals of this country. This will be gratifying intelligence to your benevolent mind. Who can tell how many invalids will be saved from an untimely grave by your sickness — or, rather, by the knowledge of the simple mode of your restoration to health? Thus it is ever with our Divine Benefactor:—

"Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face."

And how true it is that

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his works in vain:
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."

Certainly, it has been made very plain in your case; and thus it is that though individual suffering and self-sacrifice, the world is to be redeemed, both morally and physically.

I regard your sojourn in Graeffenberg as of vast importance prospectively, on other grounds than the remedy made known for "the ill which flesh is heir to." Your social intercourse with so many persons from the various nations of the earth — the declaration to them of your peculiar views — the greatness of your spirit as exhibited to them in transcending all geographical boundaries, and pouring contempt on all national pride and glory — the inculcation of the great doctrine of human brotherhood — the presentation of Christianity in a new, glorious, sublime form — what may not follow from all this?

By the last steamer, I received from you a voluminous mass of manuscript, containing several letters, and also the sketches of men and things you made at Graeffenberg, and on your return to England. For this and all similar favors, I return you my warmest thanks; for they give additional interest to the Liberator, and contain the noblest sentiments, expressed in plain and simple language. You will perceive that I have commenced their publication, in order. The remainder will appear in subsequent numbers. Unfaithful as I am on the score of epistolary reciprocity, I trust — knowing that it does not arise from any lack of personal interest or remembrance — you will still continue your favors, and let me hear from you as often as convenient. Through the Liberator, you will be able to address and to influence many minds. Speak out your whole mind on all subjects which concern the redemption of our race, let who will take offence at truth and honesty.

[Politically, the American Anti-Slavery Society has "passed the Rubicon," in regard to this blood-cemented Union; and on its banner is inscribed the motto, "No Union with Slaveholders." No step has yet been taken in our cause, so trying to those who profess to be abolitionists, or that is destined to make such a commotion in Church and State. It will alienate many from our ranks, but their defection will be our gain. "The battle is the Lord's," not man's, and victory shall be achieved not by numerical superiority — not by physical might or power — but by the Spirit of Truth, and the omnipotence of love.]

The adherents of Liberty party, in order to justify ~~vote~~ are impudently claiming the U. S. Constitution, and was intended to be, by those who originally framed and adopted it. Even Gerrit Smith has stultified himself so far as to have written a long letter to John G. Whittier, maintaining the same absurd doctrine. Nay, he has gone so far as to eulogize those diabolical provisions respecting the prosecution of the slave trade for twenty years — the putting down of slave insurrections by the government — the three-fifth representation of the slaves through their masters — as decidedly anti-slavery in their character and tendency! He is now completely absorbed in electioneering in behalf of James G. Birney and the Liberty party, and has consequently gone backward since you left for England. He is a very unstable man, and his course is full of contradictions. He puzzles me to decipher his character more than any other man of my acquaintance. Still, I mean to let charity and patience have their perfect work in regard to him; for, after all, he seems to be a noble-hearted and benevolent man, but his head is often sadly at fault. I wish, if you get time, you would address a letter to him, on his new political career, and his strange interpretation of the Constitution, reminding him of the awful responsibility he is thus taking upon himself, and of the concessions he has made to you, on various occasions, respecting the divinity of non-resistance. In his letter to Whittier, he perseveres in calling the American A. S. Society a Non-Resistance Society, because it will not support a pro-slavery Constitution!

3 [Among those who have left us, on account of our "no union" doctrine, is George Bradburn. Poor man! there is more of the politician than of the Christian in his composition, and therefore he clings to political expediency, even if it must be at the expense of principle. To think of his now being a partisan of the pseudo "Liberty party," and in full fellowship with such men as Sewitt, Birney, Stanton, and the like! "To such base uses do men come at last," who are not prepared to sell all that they have, that they may follow Christ! But I hope our friend Bradburn will get his eyes open, and speedily change his course.]

4 [The anti-slavery cause is moving on majestically, "against the wind, against the tide," notwithstanding the incumbrance of Liberty party. We are in the midst of another Presidential campaign, and the rival parties are holding immense mass meetings in all parts of the country, to ensure a triumph. The democratic party is committed, body and soul, to the slavocracy; and the whig party, having Henry Clay at its head, is scarcely less committed on the same side — though, so far as the annexation of Texas is concerned, its tone is very different from the other. It is extremely uncertain how the election will turn, though the chances rather incline to the side of Clay. You must not be surprised, however, if Polk should be elected by a decided majority. Just at this moment, we are reserving our anti-slavery strength, and preparing ourselves to make an onslaught on public sentiment, as to the disunion question, as soon as the Presidential campaign shall have terminated. The Liberty party is increasing numerically, made up of the selfish and superficial, with some exceptions, and will probably cast in this State twelve thousand votes, and in the whole country ~~two~~ hundred thousand. A more unscrupulous man than Joshua Sewitt is not at the head of the press in this country. Whittier is editing a Liberty party journal at Lowell, but it is a tame affair politically; for he has too much decency, self-respect and conscience to make a prime politician.]

The Anti-Slavery Standard, in the hands of Quincy, Chapman and Gay, is radical and spirited, of course, and will do good service.]

6 [Dear Rogers is still driving his inimitable pen with railway speed, though I think he occasionally runs off the track, and sometimes mistook a mole-hill for a mountain. He now avows unmitigated hostility to every organized society, and regards a president or chairman as an embryo Caligula or Nero. Just at this moment, there is a most unpleasant ^{controversy} going on between him and young French, the printer of the Herald of Freedom, on the one side, and S. S. Foster and the Executive Committee of the N. H. State A. S. Society on the other. It relates to the ownership and management of the Herald. I hope it will be amicably settled, and without any impeachment of character.]

7 [Wendell Phillips and his wife are yet protracting their summer residence at Nahant, but will soon return to the city. She is still a poor debilitated invalid, requiring almost his constant presence, so that his anti-slavery sphere of labor is necessarily quite restricted. They both have my tenderest sympathy and warmest love.]

8 [John A. Collins is at the Skaneateles community, except when he is travelling and lecturing in its behalf. He no longer takes any apparent interest in the anti-slavery enterprise, but rather regards it as a very small affair. Theoretically, he is afloat on the dark ocean of atheism, without compass, chart, or rudder, or solitary star at night for guidance. He subscribes to Owen's philosophy, that man is the creature of circumstances, and therefore not accountable — not worthy of any praise or blame for any of his actions. Yet,

... he has much to say about the regeneration of the world, and claims to have found in his theory, coupled with his "no property" doctrines, a panacea for all the ills of life. Alas! for his delusion.]

In August, I had the pleasure of seeing your wife and Mary and Dr. Stickney, in Philadelphia. They were then in good health, but longing for your return; and their eyes brightened when I told them that I meant to throw a lasso across the Atlantic, by which I was in hopes soon to bring you back, a captive to my loving skill and prowess.

We have had another bereavement in our family. Our venerated and estimable mother, Mrs. Benson, paid the debt of nature a short time since, and was buried at Providence. Sister Ann died a year ago at Northampton - sister Mary and my brother James the year before. Sister Sarah's health is very frail; she has a bad cancer on her breast, and is probably to tarry but a short time here below. But these, though of fleeting, are natural events; and to us, as well as to others, must come at last "the inevitable hour." Let it come, in God's good time, and a good life shall make it any thing but a gloomy event.

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... do not hesitate to inform me of the fact.

My own health is tolerably good, but will not admit of any laborious effort. The disease in my left side is gaining ground, and greatly distending it, causing me much pain, and threatening serious consequences. I must give up public lecturing, and hold my peace for some time to come, if I would not cut short the thread of my earthly existence. I am about to put myself under medical treatment - a mixture of homoeopathy and hydropathy - for as we have no hydropathic establishment in this country, the latter process can only be imperfectly carried out.

Dear Helen is in very good health; so are the children. George Thompson is at the Northampton Community, getting his education. But my sheet is filled, and I have no room for domestic particulars. All send their loves.

I have served R. D. Webb and wife, (O, admirable couple!) R. Allen, James Haughton, Elizabeth Pease, John Murray, William Lincel, &c. as badly as I have you, in regard to my correspondence. Say to them all, that I pine in spirit to see them, and love and esteem them highly. God bless you all! Yours, lovingly, faithfully, to the end, Wm. Lloyd Garrison.