

W. L. Garrison

Boston, Sept. 14, 1857.

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My Dear Friend:

1857—

Yours of the 12th is just received. I thank you for your criticism upon my criticism, and for your reproof of my censure of Gerrit Smith. It is another proof of your friendship, and more to be prized than a personal panegyric. But the right which you thus assert, I also claim for myself; and though, in its exercise, I may at times greatly err, still, I must use it on my own responsibility.

In the half a dozen lines of comment which I made on Mr. Smith's appearance at Burritt's Compensation ^{Convention} ~~Conventions~~, I concentrated what might have been diluted to the extent of a column. You say 'it was contemptuous,

and therefore not fitted to do him or any body else any good." In my judgment, it was descriptive, and not contemptuous, and therefore warrantable. It did not impeach his motives, his philanthropy, or his anti-slavery intentions: it described him as eccentric, unstable, inconsistent. Have I not a right to say this in plain terms? And if this is to hold him up to ridicule, is it my fault? or am I therefore to say nothing about it?

But you add, "More than that - it was untrue." What is untrue? The charge that Mr. Smith's course has been erratic? I think not. Even you admit - "On several points, Mr. Smith's opinions seem to me strange and inconsistent." I say the same thing, in a little different phraseology. It may be true, that he has always been a compensationist; but this does not

disprove my general statement. —
I cannot possibly reconcile his various
declarations and positions, and
give up the attempt as hopeless. What
if he is "sincere"? I have never raised
that question. Sincerity does not make
what is crooked straight.

I thank you for your plainly
expressed opinion of my dealings with
Mr. Smith at Syracuse. You think
I treated him very unjustly, and say
it alienated friends from me. It is
neither my design nor wish to alienate
any one from me, or from the anti-slav-
ery cause; nor would I consciously
be guilty of injustice to any one; but
there are occasions when even a Peter
is to be sharply reproofed to his face,
and strong moral displeasure is to
be displayed. I was true to my con-
victions of duty on that occasion, and
performed it, painful as it was;

and both in the manner and language of Mr. Smith, I thought I saw ample justification for what fell from my lips. He seemed to me to be playing fast and loose with unchanging principles, and to be lowering the anti-slavery standard to a very low point, in endorsing and embracing slaveholders as Christian brethren. But I have neither time nor room to go into this matter.

I thank you, also, for enclosing Mr. Smith's letter to you, for my perusal. It is evident that ~~to~~ my brief criticism has very deeply wounded his feelings. His love of approbation is overmastering at times, and he is too sensitive to rebuke. When he intimates that it is cruel in me to censure or satirize his course, because he has always eulogized me, - and when he says that abolitionists ought to have confidence in one another, - I feel all the more inclined to criticize, to avoid the appearance of a friendly bias. But I postpone other remarks till I send you his letter. "Sixty years old" - are you? Think of Adam in 1857! You are young yet!
Sincerely yours,
W. L. G.