

Harriet Martineau,

TO ELIZABETH PEASE.

[The date of this Letter shows it to have been written soon after the attempt to destroy the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1840. As long as the warfare then begun against the American Abolitionists, by the organization of a hostile society, and carried on under the name of a "Liberty Party," shall continue, so long will this Letter be as useful to the cause of the Slave, as it is beautiful and true in general principle, and noble and faithful in individual deed.]

TYNEMOUTH, NORTHUMBERLAND,

February 27th, 1841.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I HAVE read the statements in "*Right and Wrong among the Abolitionists of the United States,*" with respect to the differences between the two Anti-Slavery Societies of America, with a strong and painful interest. I wish I could adequately express my sense of the duty of every one interested in the cause

of the Negro — of human freedom at large — to read and deeply meditate this piece of history. I am not more firmly persuaded of any thing, than that those who, on the present occasion, listen to one side only, or refuse to hear either, are doing the deepest injury in their power to the Anti-Slavery cause, and sowing the seeds of a bitter future repentance.

I am aware how distasteful are the details of a strife. I know but too well, from my own experience, how natural it is to turn away, with a faint and sickening heart, from the exposure of the enmities of those whose first friendship sprang up in the field of benevolent labors. I fully understand the feelings of offended delicacy which would close the ears and seal the lips of those who have been fellow-workers with both the parties now alienated. Among all these causes of recoil, I see how it is but too probable that the Anti-Slavery parties on the other side of the Atlan-

tic may be left by many of their British brethren to "settle their own affairs," to "fight their own battles." But if I had a voice which would penetrate wherever I wished, I would ask, in the depths of every heart that feels for the Slave, whether it should be so; — whether such indifference and recoil may not be as criminal in us as dissension in them; — whether, in declining to do justice to the true friends of the Slave, (on whichever side they may appear to be,) we may not be guilty of treachery as fatal as compromising with his enemies.

Those who devote themselves to the redemption of an oppressed class or race, do, by their act of self-devotion, pledge themselves to the discharge of the lowest and most irksome offices of protection, as much as to that of the most cordial and animating. We are bound not only to fight against foes whom we never saw, and upon whom our sympathies never

rested; not only to work for millions of poor creatures, so grateful for our care that they are ready to kiss the hem of our garments — this kind of service, however lavish it may require us to be of our labor, our time, our money, is easy enough in comparison with one which is equally binding upon us — it is also our duty to withdraw our sympathy and countenance from our fellow-laborers, (however great their former merits and our love,) when they compromise the cause. It is our duty to expose their guilt, when, by their act of compromise, they oppress and betray those brethren whose nobleness is a rebuke to themselves. This painful duty may every friend of the Negro in this country now find himself called upon to discharge, if he give due attention to the state of Anti-Slavery affairs in America. If he does NOT give his attention, it would be better for him that he never named the Negro and his cause; for it is surely better to stand aloof

from this philanthropic enterprise, than to mix up injustice with it.

The first movers in the Anti-Slavery cause in America, those who have stood firm through the fierce persecutions of many years, who have maintained their broad platform of catholic principles, who have guarded their original Constitution from innovation and circumscription, — Garrison, and his corps of devout, devoted and catholic fellow-laborers, with the Bible in their heart of hearts, and its spirit in all their ways, are now in a condition in which they need our support. They have been oppressed, betrayed, pillaged, and slandered. Not they, but their foes, are the innovators, the bigots, the unscrupulous proselyters, the preachers of a new doctrine, modified to propitiate the pro-slavery spirit of the country in which they live. No one will call my words too strong, my accusations exaggerated, who will read the evidence relating to the transfer

of the "Emancipator," (for one instance,) or, casting an eye upon the statement of accounts of the American Anti-Slavery Society, will perceive who voted into their own pockets the money by which the "Emancipator" might have been sustained, under whose commission the assailants of the old organization crossed the Atlantic, and at whose expense they travelled throughout our country, sowing calumnies against Garrison and his faithful companions throughout the length and breadth of our land. When the friends of the Slave here are told of treachery, pillage, and slander, will they hazard being a party to the guilt, for want of enquiry, even though the London Anti-Slavery Committee, and their organ, the "Reporter," at present appear to stand in that predicament? If they would avoid such a liability, let them read and consider the statement by which the case is placed fully before them.

No one is more ready than I to make allowance for lapse in the friends of the Negro in America. I have seen too much of the suffering (not conceivable here) consequent upon a profession of Anti-Slavery principles, to wonder that there are but few who can endure, from year to year, the infliction from without, the probing of the soul within, which visits the apostles of Freedom in a land which maintains Slavery on its soil. From my heart I pity those who, having gone into the enterprise, find that they have not strength for it, and that they are drawn by their weakness into acts of injustice towards such as are stronger than themselves ;— for those who are not with the thorough-going are necessarily against them. We must regard with even respectful compassion the first misgivings, before they have become lapse. But what then must we feel, — what ought we to do — for those who *have* strength, — for those who *can* suffer to the

end, — for those who are, after the pelting of a ten years' pitiless storm, as firm, as resolved, as full of vital warmth as ever, — as prepared still to abide the tempest, till the deluge of universal conviction shall sweep away the iniquity of Slavery from the earth? Shall we refuse to hear the tale of their injuries, of their justification, because others have refused, or because the story is painful? May we dare to call ourselves workers in the Anti-Slavery cause while thus deserting the chief of its apostles now living in the world?

All believe that the truth will finally prevail; and you and I, dear friend, have a firm faith that therefore the old organization, with Garrison at its head, will prevail, at length, over the base enmity of the seceders. But we ought not to be satisfied with their prevailing *at length*, till we see whether they cannot be enabled to stand their ground *now*. Not a moment is to be lost. Not for a moment

should their noble hearts be left uncheered ; — not for a moment should the Slave-holder be permitted to fan his embers of hope ; — not for a moment should the American Slave be compelled to tremble at the adversity of his earliest and staunchest friends, if we can, by any effort, obtain a hearing for the cause. Let us urge and rouse all who are about us, — not to receive our mere assertions, not to take our convictions upon trust, — but to read, search out, and weigh the evidence, and judge for themselves.

This is all that is needed ; for I believe there is not a friend of the Slave, in any part of the world, who, knowing the facts, would not make haste to offer his right hand to Garrison and his company, and his voice and purse to their cause.

I am, yours very truly,

HARRIET MARTINEAU.