was apparently in good health at the time — in full possession of his faculties — & neither he nor his friends expected that his invaluable life was so near its close. He wrote me a letter enclosing the protest. I have sent it with a multitude of others, to his son, who is writing his life. If it were here, I would forward it to you, as the best of all proofs that the vigour of his understanding was not impaired. You are at liberty to make any use you please of this contradiction. We are now daily expecting intelligence from Jamaica, as to the way in which the first of August passed. You know that I had little confidence, or rather no confidence at all in the apprenticeship system. I trust it will speedily be supplanted by the simpler — the wiser — the more natural plan of labour for wages. In the interim, I fervently pray that there may be no convulsion in the colonies.

I have neither time nor room to tell you how anxiously, & with what deep feelings of interest we turn our eyes to the subject of slavery in America. I have long been intending to commit some observations on that great subject to paper for the purpose of circulation in America. Much business, & a variety of duties, public & private, have hitherto interfered; but I hope soon to begin that task. I know I must write so as not to [give] offence to your Countrymen; but between ourselves it is not easy to speak of the existence of slavery in your free states with moderation. It is, in fact, the most marvellous inconsistency that ever the world saw. My daughter was married on the first of August. My wife desires to be kindly remembered to you, for I assure you, I entertain a very high sense of your zeal & fidelity in our good cause.

Yrs. very truly, my dear friend,

T. Fowell Buxton.

MS A. 9.2. vol. 7 The Weston Papers
Nos. 40-41 George Thompson to Robert Purvis

[18]

My dear friend...

... When we met in New York, we were both so hurried, that although there were many things to talk about, and some of them of much importance, we had no opportunity. I regret this, but that ere long, we shall meet again, & then enter fully into the present state of anti-slavery affairs. Our prospects are encouraging, but we have arrived at a juncture requiring special wisdom, zeal, & devotion. Every man must be at his post. None can be spared. No strength must be mis-directed or suffered to lie unemployed. The coloured people claim our special attention. They can greatly help us and help themselves. All then must fall into the ranks; become disciplined abolitionists & go forth to battle in consolidated array. Shame! upon any soldier, who, during the campaign, shall seek for ease, or ask for leave of absence. Disgrace and infamy rest on any who desert, however hot the strife, — however forlorn the expedition! We want recruiting officers. We want Directing minds. We want captains of hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens. You my friend must buckle on your armour — uplift your banner rally your forces, and onwards to the field. The how and the where we must discuss when we meet. — Before that pleasure arrives, however, there is one topic, which I must recommend to your prompt, kindly & anxious consideration. It is the present state & prospects of the Liberator. I have recently had a good deal of conversation with Mr. Garrison, and have been inexpressibly grieved to find that he seriously contemplates giving up that paper, in consequence of his inability to make it pay its expenses. He has a large number of subscribers but a very great many of them are in long arrears. There are upwards of $2000 outstanding subscriptions, which he knows not how to obtain, and for want of which, the paper is in danger of destruction. There are few things which would pain me so much as the downfall of the
Liberator. I am willing to strain every nerve & make every possible sacrifice to sustain it. I have just taken about 1,500 copies of various past dates, from the beginning of the present year, & have agreed to take 125 copies weekly from the first of January 1834. I have also got orders for 100 copies weekly in New York. There are many powerful reasons why the Liberator should be sustained, and sustained efficiently.

1. It is conducted with talent & zeal; & is guided by thorough-going abolition principles.

2. It is the only paper which unsparingly denounces hypocrisy, meanness, & expediency; & without respect of persons, exposes the naked deformities of the system at the South; & the wickedness & guilt of the saintly prejudices of the North.

3. It is highly probable that most of the apparent boldness of some other journals is attributed to the unflinching honesty, & rettributive severity of the Liberator & that if it were suffered to expire, they would fall below the mark of "immediate abolition."

4. It is, as you well know, a paper that stands very high in G1 Britain; and if it were to sink, I know not what the friends there would think, nor what I should be able to say.

5. Lastly, it was the first paper which in this country blew the blast of immediate emancipation without expatriation, and called into life, & then valued, organised, and cheered onwards, the true friends of the coloured people, enslaved & free. And shall it now sink? Sink! Surrounded by thousands, who owe their first right views, & warm feelings, to its luminous reasonings; its glowing & irresistible appeals? Sink! when the principles it was the first manfully to enunciate & defend – & that too with the certain prospect of persecution, & poverty & contempt – have become widely recognised & made the bases of action?

Sink! while publications which started into being long after it had boldly braved the battle & the breeze, are living & flourishing by the advocacy of opinion copied from its pages?

Sink! at a period when we especially need it, as a beacon light to guard & guide our precious cause amidst the shallows, & whirlpools that surround it!

Sink! – No. It must not – it shall not sink. Forbid it, every feeling of gratitude, justice, & magnanimity in the breasts of true hearted American abolitionists. It must be rescued from danger, established & supported....

Come then my dear brother & fellow labourer join with me in holding up the hands of Wm. L. Garrison. Let us determine to relieve him from a weight of care & apprehension which like an incubus oppresses & paralyses him. Will you do what you can? Consult your friends. Get the paper as widely into circulation as possible. Get persons to become responsible for a certain number of copies [& etc.?]. Garrison is now attempting to make some arrangements with the New England Anti-Slavery Soc'y. upon the subject. He wants to get rid of the book-keeping, money-getting part of the business: & I think the sooner he does so, the better. Write him an encouraging letter & say what it is likely may be done in Pennsylvania after the expiration of the present year.

It is likely I shall be in the City of New York in the first or second week in December for the purpose of delivering an address and doing other business. Could you meet me there for the purpose of going more fully into this & other matters? It is likely also that I shall be passing through Philadelphia at the end of December on my way to Washington to attend the meeting of the Colonisation Society. If so I shall expect the pleasure of an introduction through you to Mrs Purvis, Mr. Foster & many other friends. In the meantime give my respects to all...

On Tuesday I attend a Convention at Concord N.H. On Saturday & Sunday I expect to be at Haverhill, Mass. On Wednesday the 19th I am to be at Providence. R.I. After that at Salem, & Lowell, Mass.

I feel happy in my work. I have already had abundant proofs that I have not laboured in vain. I am willing to spend and be spent in the hallowed undertaking. I thank God that I live in a day when the cause of humanity is finding friends & winning triumphs.

You will learn that many noble spirits have entered the field since you left. A Birney & a Weld are already engaged as agents in the cause & will go forth unfettered & inflamed to spend the holy fire that shall consume the scourgles of oppression.

Write me immediately according to the address at the head of this. – Don't be offended at this long scrawl. I have written you out of the fullness of my heart, with all possible freedom because I esteem and love you, & because I believe Your heart is as mine.

May every blessing be yours! – So prays your fellow labourer & affectionate friend

Geo. Thompson.

1. Stephen Symonds Foster (1809-1881) worked for several years as an anti-slavery agent and lecturer. He was a close friend of Garrison and shared all his radical views. After his marriage to Abby Kelly (see below) he settled on a farm near Worcester, Massachusetts, and though both continued to work for abolition, they were also active in promoting other reforms.

2. James Gillespie Birney (1792-1857) had been a well known Southern lawyer. Sympathetic to anti-slavery principles, he had first been an agent of the Colonization Society before being converted by Theodore Weld to immediate abolition. He worked with Weld in the 1830s as a lecturer, travelling through the Mid-West and New England, and allying himself with the American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1840 and 1844 he stood for office as the Presidential Candidate of the Liberty Party. He became an invalid in 1845 and spent the last years of his life in retirement. For an appreciation of his work see Dwight L. Dumond (ed.) Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857, 2 vols. New York, 1938.

3. Theodore Dwight Weld (1803-1895) was one of the most influential of the Mid-West group of abolitionists. He toured the country in the 1830s as head of a band of lecturers, but his excessive modesty made him refuse any office in abolition circles. After 1840 he was particularly influential in guiding the work of the Washington Lobby, a political section of the anti-slavery movement. See G.H. Barnes, The Anti-Slavery Impulse 1830-1844. New York, 1933; and G.H. Barnes and D.L. Dumond (eds.), Weld-Grimke Letters, 2 vols. New York, 1934.