



Respected Friend, Your note, handed me last evening, seems to me to require a few words of reply, to remove misapprehensions under which it appears to have been written. I was surprised to learn from it that my note in answer to yours of the 25th was received as "virtually annulling" my engagement to lecture before the Portland Anti-Slavery Society, for I certainly had no intention of doing so, when I wrote it, & no suspicion that I had done so till your note last evening informed me of it;—or that I was supposed to have done so, till a short time before the hour of meeting last evening. My note was not designed to change at all the relation to your society, which I had assumed by my oral answer to your invitation; nor did it even occur to me that such a thing would be supposed, or that it needed to be explicitly disclaimed. I took it for granted that I was to comply with your request; but it came into my mind almost immediately after your messenger had left me, that I ought to save you the trouble of making application for a house, by telling you that arrangements were already in progress to secure one,— & it was only from want of reflection at first, that I sent my acceptance of your invitation, unaccompanied by this information. I knew nothing then that should cause any doubt in your mind, of my intention to make my note merely supplemental to my oral answer, & not a revocation of it. I had not heard a hint even the most remote, or entertained or had any cause to entertain the slightest suspicion of any want of concert of feeling & action between your society or its board, & the friends, or any of them, through whom arrange-

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(Local Code:

Date: April 28, 1850

Description: Letter to Elizabeth Mountfort of the Portland Anti-slavery Society from C.C. Burleigh.

ments were in progress for my addressing the people of Portland; & the first intimation of any such thing which reached me, was an hour or two before the time of meeting, when, on my return from a ride to a neighboring village, I learned that friend Peck had called to see me, & mentioned that his sexton had been told, by the Committee of the Church, not to open it; in consequence of the withdrawal of your application for it. This puzzled me, for I did not understand what it could mean, & in explanation of what was to me a perfect mystery, I was very briefly informed of what had not before been alluded to in my hearing, that there was not the concert of feeling, which I had hitherto taken for granted as a matter of course, between you & the friends who, at my suggestion, had been getting up a meeting for me. Till then I supposed that the only reason of your application to me after arrangements had been begun for a meeting, was your not having previously heard of my being in the city. My note would not have been written, if I had expected that before its receipt you would have already applied for the same house which I had in prospect.

I think that either you or I must have misunderstood friend Peck's words & action in this matter, if you have the impression that ^{he} was not participating in the arrangements for the meeting. Which is under a mistake I shall not assume to decide, but will give you a concise history of what I know about the whole affair. Before coming to Portland, I wrote to friend Bennett, — the only person ^(except his wife) I knew of in Portland as a personal acquaintance, for I was not then aware of friend Peck's being here, — telling him my intention to visit Maine, & my willingness, if desired, to stop in Portland & lecture on Slavery, Peace, or Capital Punishment; but not fixing the

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day when I would be here, as I could not then do so. He received my letter, & conferred with friend Peck about it, & I understood from them both since I arrived, that they came together to the conclusion that the Casco street house could be had, if wanted, for the lecture. When I was able to fix the time of my coming, I wrote again; but by some mischance the letter did not reach my friend here, till after my arrival at his house. As soon as friend D. knew of my being here, he accompanied me to frd Peck's, & after a short interview, frd P. undertook to secure the house for a Peace lecture the next evening, (which would be Friday evening,) with the purpose of having an Anti-Slavery lecture, soon after as I could return from my excursion further east. But on consulting his committee, he found them unwilling to open the house for me on Friday evening, because it was the evening of their regular meeting, which some of the congregation, they thought, would not like to have set aside. It was therefore decided, as I could not stay till Saturday evening, (having to take Friday night's boat for Bangor,) that the attempt should be given up for the present, & renewed when word should be received from me, as to the time of my return from the eastward, which I could not then determine; & with that understanding on the part of all three of us, I went on my way. As soon as I had ascertained when I could be again in Portland I wrote, directing my letter to both friends Dennett & Peck, in order to increase the chance of its being taken from the office in season, as the whole time I was able to give was very short. This letter frd Peck first received, & conveyed after reading it, — as I understand — to friend Dennett's house, but without finding him in. When he did come in, he went to seek frd Peck, but without finding him early enough to make arrangements for a meeting that evening, though I believe some steps were taken for securing the house; by which of my friends I either was not told or have forgotten. I arrived

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near the close of the afternoon, & spent the night here. The next day, having learned that an appointment which I sent to Bath, had been received & given out there, for meetings in that place on that, (Thursday,) & the next evening, I agreed with friend Bennett that I would lecture here on Saturday evening on Slavery, & on Sunday evening on Peace, (which was changed by another friend's request, to Capital Punishment,) & he was to see friend Peck & inform him of my conclusion, & take measures for securing the house, which frd P. had assured me there was no doubt I could have any evening when it was not in use. It was after this understanding had been come to, that I received your note, & it was in view of these facts that I stated in my answer to it, that my friends D. & P. had arrangements in progress for ^{an Anti-Slavery} meeting on Saturday evening. Whether it was not perfectly natural for me to suppose so under these circumstances, you must judge. Friend Peck's averment that he knew nothing of the arrangement for a meeting on Saturday evening was doubtless made before he had learned on what day I had concluded to avail myself of his promise to help secure the house for what time evening I might fix upon, when his own congregation should not be using it; while my statement was made on the ground of this his general engagement for any evening I might fix, coupled with the fact of my having fixed on Saturday evening & taken measures to have him informed of it. So that the correctness of his statement, does not necessarily conflict with that of mine, I think.

I have thus fully recited what I know of the facts in the case, that you may see that it was with no design of slighting your kind invitation on behalf of the Portland A.S. Society, that I wrote my reply to your note; & also that it was owing to no information or misinformation which any one had given me for purposes, which a stranger is not able to judge. It was from no suggestion whatever, save of my own mind, that I wrote it; & as I have already stated, with no thought that it would be taken as recalling my verbal answer, or "annulling my engagement." I deeply regret that such a state of things exists in Portland as could give rise to any such supposition, & as truly should I regret the belief, on the part of any friend of the slave here, that I, a stranger, would take sides in any differences here, on the causes & merits of which I have no knowledge.

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& no opportunity of obtaining knowledge. Whatever differences may exist here among those claiming the name of abolitionists, I had no suspicion of the existence of any, till late yesterday afternoon, & have made no inquiries since, & received only a very slight amount of information, almost none, & that given only by way of accounting for what was to me before so unaccountable. All that I have heard is very little if anything more than the mere fact of the existence of differences, & the want of that harmony & cordiality which are so desirable, especially among those who are or claim to be interested in a common cause. How extensive this want of harmony is, I know not; ~~for~~ situated as I am, have not thought it proper for me to inquire, & no one has volunteered the information. I heartily sympathize with you in regretting the necessity of explanations on such points as your communication alludes to, & earnestly hope that the causes of that necessity may be speedily removed, whatever they may be. It is my heart's desire to regard as brothers & sisters, all who are engaged in sincere endeavors to promote the cause of human freedom; & whatever offers hindrances to the gratification of that desire gives me pain & sorrow.

Excuse the length of this communication, which much exceeds what I intended; & accept the assurance of my friendly regard, toward yourself & the Society on whose behalf you act; for though you are mostly strangers to me personally, you are united with me in a great & a noble cause which ought to link us all together in the bonds of fraternal love.

Yours most truly,

C. C. Burleigh.

4th mo 28th '50.

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