

[After some

irrelevant remarks from Mr. Bell and others, Mr. Ruggles arose, and addressed the meeting as follows: *]

MR. CHAIRMAN—

I rise under peculiar emotions of joy and regret, I rejoice that I am permitted to speak for myself touching the matter whereof I am accused, calumniated, and [aggrieved]—while I regret that I have the [unpleasant] [duty of] the [important] [matter politically.]

The resolution adopted by this respectable auditory, signifying a disposition to bear, affords the highest confidence that you will listen to me patiently.

I am no orator, as you all know. If I possessed the eloquence of a Demosthenes or a Cicero, I would not on this occasion attempt to play the orator.

Therefore, in calling your attention to a subject which has for months agitated and pained your mind, in relation to myself and others, I shall endeavor to confine myself to a plain and unsophisticated statement of facts in the matter, and leave you to judge who is "*reckless of principle*" in the affair—David Ruggles, the Committee of Vigilance, or the very Rev. Samuel E. Cornish. In the outset permit me to express the conviction of my mind as to whom in this affair the blame should be attached. I hesitate not to say that all parties are more or less to blame, as must ever be the case when friend rises against friend, and brother against brother, in violent hostility against each other. Therefore, you will understand, that I profess not to be entirely blameless in every respect. I am ready on some points, to enter the plea guilty; but to the charge—"*reckless of principle*," or crime, I plead NOT GUILTY.

The matter to which I shall first call your attention is my connection and "trouble with the Vigilance Committee."

II.—The late "*Libel Suit*" in which we were involved, and the "Colored American."

First, The place which I have occupied as a member, as Secretary and Agent of "The New-York Committee of Vigilance," having rendered me somewhat notorious on some occasions of interest to the cause of human freedom, I am satisfied that a large majority of this respectable audience are acquainted with the speaker, and the fact of his being thus employed to promote the objects of that institution. Therefore, I have only to remark under this head, that as two-thirds of my time, during the first six months of my agency was employed in my book store, two hundred dollars was considered to be adequate compensation for the time I devoted to our great and good cause. But so

* The speaker was interrupted in his remarks by Phillip A. Bell, and W. P. Johnson, who were anxious to obtain the floor. Their speeches are [informed,] and extracts appear in the following pages.

[The Rev. Samuel E. Cornish, Theodore S. Wright, and Mr. William Johnston, Treasurer of the New York Committee of Vigilance, were particularly invited to attend, but did not appear.]

After some irrelevant remarks from Mr. Bell and others, Mr. Ruggles arose, and addressed the meeting as follows: *

MR. CHAIRMAN—

I rise under peculiar emotions of joy and regret. I rejoice that I am permitted to speak for myself touching the matter whereof I am accused, calumniated, and aggrieved, while I regret that I have the unpleasant duty of the important matter politically.

The resolution adopted by this respectable auditory, signifying a disposition to bear, affords the highest confidence that you will listen to me patiently.

I am no orator, as you all know. If I possessed the eloquence of a Demosthenes or a Cicero, I would not on this occasion attempt to play the orator.

Therefore, in calling your attention to a subject which has for months agitated and pained your mind, in relation to myself and others, I shall endeavor to confine myself to a plain and unsophisticated statement of facts in the matter, and leave you to judge who is "*reckless of principle*" in the affair—David Ruggles, the Committee of Vigilance, or the very Rev. Samuel E. Cornish. In the outset, permit me to express the conviction of my mind as to whom in this affair the blame should be attached. I hesitate not to say that all parties are more or less to blame, as must ever be the case when friend rises against friend, and brother against brother, in violent hostility against each other. Therefore, you will understand, that I profess not to be entirely blameless in every respect. I am ready on some points, to enter the plea guilty; but to the charge—"*recklessness of principle*," or crime, I plead not guilty.

The matter to which I shall first call your attention is, my connection and "trouble with the Vigilance Committee."

II.—The late "*Libel Suit*" in which we were involved, and the "*Colored American*."

First, The place which I have occupied as a member, as Secretary and Agent of "The New-York Committee of Vigilance," having rendered me somewhat notorious on some occasions of interest to the cause of human freedom, I am satisfied that a large majority of this respectable audience are acquainted with the speaker, and the fact of his being thus employed to promote the objects of that institution. Therefore, I have only to remark under this head, that as two-thirds of my time, during the first six months of my agency was employed in my book store, two hundred dollars was considered to be adequate compensation for the time I devoted to our great and good cause. But so

The speaker was interrupted in his remarks by Phillip A. Bell, and W. P. Johnson, who were anxious to obtain the floor. Their speeches are [informed,] and extracts appear in the following pages.

[The Rev. Samuel E. Cornish, Theodore S. Wright, and Mr. William Johnston, Treasurer of the New York Committee of Vigilance, were particularly invited to attend, but did not appear.]

pressing were the claims and demands of the poor and needy upon the Society for relief, that the Committee decided that from the 20th May, 1836, that the whole of my time should be employed in protecting and relieving such of our endangered countrymen and women as might be found here, illegally aggrieved, or liable to be kidnapped and reduced to slavery.

As my circumstances would not admit of my devoting my whole time to the cause without remuneration, the Committee promised to pay their Secretary adequate compensation for services and labor.

Feeling a deep interest for our shorn race, and confiding in the promises of those with whom he had been so long, and so firmly united by the strong, though tender cords of sympathy and friendship for each other and outraged human nature,—that the claims of humanity were so deeply interesting, that the idea of personal interest was never sufficiently regarded on the part of their Secretary to effect a positive understanding, as to what the Society would consider a just remuneration as salary for time and labor which he was called to bestow, until the 27th of November, 1838, when the opacity which effects his vision compelled the Secretary earnestly to press upon the notice of the Society the importance of their naming a definite sum, and effecting an early settlement, that he might possess adequate means to settle his business, and retire for a season from the exciting field of labor, to a state of quiet in Paris, where he was persuaded by his physician and friends that he could find permanent relief from the threatening malady. At the meeting referred to, the subject of a settlement with the Secretary was taken up and discussed by eight of the members of the Executive Committee. But they decided to remunerate their Secretary with a salary at the rate of \$400 per annum, for two and a half years labor. Though I felt disappointed and dissatisfied at the manner in which the subject was treated, knowing that the Committee had employed Rev. C. Turner on a salary at the rate of \$600 per annum, exclusive of his travelling expenses, and a commission of 20 per cent on all moneys by him collected over a certain sum, for performing the duties of financial agent only.

The dissatisfaction was not entertained in my mind, from the fact, that the Society awarded the Financial Agent compensation equal at least to \$1,000 per annum for his services, but from a sense of manifest injustice towards their Secretary, who had the honor of performing the labor of General Agent, Financial Agent, and Secretary, until he was compelled to yield to the infirmity which has been produced and encouraged in his eyes by the mental and physical excitement to which he has been subjected by the performance of his arduous duties.

The Treasurer of the Committee was requested to settle with the Secretary, on their own terms. After Mr. Johnston, the Treasurer, examined his accounts, he reported on paper to J. W. Higgins, Esq., the amount which he believed to be

pressing were the claims and demands of the poor and needy upon the Society for relief, that the Committee decided that from the 20th May, 1836, that the whole of my time should be employed in protecting and relieving such of our endangered countrymen and women as might be found here, illegally aggrieved, or liable to be kidnapped and reduced to slavery.

As my circumstances would not admit of my devoting my whole time to the cause without remuneration, the Committee promised to pay their Secretary adequate compensation for services and labor.

Feeling a deep interest for our shorn race, and confiding in the promises of those with whom he had been so long, and so firmly united by the strong, though tender cords of sympathy and friendship for each other and outraged human nature,—that the claims of humanity were so deeply interesting, that the idea of personal interest was never sufficiently regarded on the part of their Secretary to effect a positive understanding, as to what the Society would consider a just remuneration as salary for time and labor which he was called to bestow, until the 27th of November, 1838, when the opacity which effects his vision

compelled the Secretary earnestly to press upon the notice of the Society the importance of their naming a definite sum, and effecting an early settlement, that he might possess adequate means to settle his business, and retire for a season from the exciting field of labor, to a state of quiet in Paris, where he was persuaded by his physician and friends that he could find permanent relief from the threatening malady. At the meeting referred to, the subject of a settlement with the Secretary was taken up and discussed by eight of the members of the Executive Committee. But they decided to remunerate their Secretary with a salary at the rate of \$400 per annum, for two and a half years labor. Though I felt disappointed and dissatisfied at the manner in which the subject was treated, knowing that the Committee had employed Rev. C. Turner on a salary at the rate of \$600 per annum, exclusive of his travelling expenses, and a commission of 20 per cent on all moneys by him collected over a certain sum, for performing the duties of financial agent only.

The dissatisfaction was not entertained in my mind, from the fact, that the Society awarded the Financial Agent compensation equal at least to \$1,000 per annum for his services, but from a sense of manifest injustice towards their Secretary, who had the honor of performing the labor of General Agent, Financial Agent, and Secretary, until he was compelled to yield to the infirmity which has been produced and encouraged in his eyes by the mental and physical excitement to which he has been subjected by the performance of his arduous duties.

The Treasurer of the Committee was requested to settle with the Secretary, on their own terms. After Mr. Johnston, the Treasurer, examined his accounts, he reported on paper to J. W. Higgins, Esq., the amount which he believed to be

due, exclusive of the sums which the Secretary had received as salary.

As a difference of opinion existed between the Treasurer and myself as to the correctness of his report, a part only of the amount reported to be due was paid by a promissory note, from J. W. Higgins, dated December 4th, 1838. The Secretary feeling deeply interested at the Treasurer's manifest inability to render a correct account, offered to render him every assistance in his power.

The misunderstanding was in relation to the amount which the Treasurer had paid to the Secretary as salary, to January 1838. In December, my friend, Mr. Williams, who had kindly tendered me a free passage to Europe, departed, leaving me behind. The matter to which I shall call your attention in connection with the expence of the libel suit, became more and more interesting. A part of my salary was to be appropriated to defray the expenses of the suit in which we were involved. Finally, the Treasurer rashly ventured to assume, that he had even paid the Secretary the amount which he acknowledged to be due. Of course the terms of a settlement became *exceedingly* interesting.

Secondly—The "LIBEL SUIT," and the "COLORED AMERICAN."

The course pursued by some of the members of the Committee, with the editor of the "Colored American," was mean, puerile and contemptible. The matter was made a pretext to affect the Secretary, in relation to an affair with the Rev. T. S. Wright, which did not concern the "Colored American," nor the Society. The facts in relation to the suit are as follows:—The "Libel Suit" grew out of the publication of Mr. Gavino's letter, which appeared in the "Colored American," in October, 1837; in which Mr. Gavino communicated certain facts in relation to the fate of three native Africans, who were enticed from on board the brig Governor Temple, of Gambier, in the fall of 1836, and sent to the south on board the vessel Robert Center, where Mr. Gavino states that they were cruelly treated, and that efforts were made to reduce them to slavery. Mr. Gavino having interfered in their behalf, was compelled to leave the vessel at New Orleans, with the Africans, where they were exposed to the mercy of their avaricious inveiglers. Mr. Gavino's letter was dated New Orleans, January, 1837, and directed to "David Ruggles, Secretary of the New-York Committee of Vigilance." The facts were so roughly stated, that the Committee declined publishing the letter in their Annual Report, published in January, 1837, but referred to the facts, which may be read on page 33 of the Report. After Mr. G. returned to this city in August, 1837, he was called upon by a member of the Committee at 22 Rosevelt-street, where his letter was revised, and sent to the editor of the "Colored American," by the Secretary of the Committee of Vigilance, and was published at the time referred to. The person implicated in having shipped the Africans by stratagem, and forced them on board the vessel, sued the Secretary of the Committee of Vigilance, the editor, publisher and printer of the

due, exclusive of the sums which the Secretary had received as salary.

As a difference of opinion existed between the Treasurer and myself as to the correctness of his report, a part only of the amount reported to be due was paid by a promissory note, from J. W. Higgins, dated December 4th, 1838. The Secretary feeling deeply interested at the Treasurer's manifest inability to render a correct account, offered to render him every assistance in his power.

The misunderstanding was in relation to the amount which the Treasurer had paid to the Secretary as salary, to January 1838. In December, my friend Mr. Williams, who had kindly tendered me a free passage to Europe, departed, leaving me behind. The matter to which I shall call your attention in connection with the expence of the libel suit, became more and more interesting. A part of my salary was to be appropriated to defray the expenses of the suit in which we were involved. Finally, the Treasurer rashly ventured to assume, that he had even paid the Secretary the amount which he acknowledged to be due. Of course the terms of a settlement became *exceedingly* interesting.

Secondly—The "LIBEL SUIT," and the "COLORED AMERICAN."

The course pursued by some of the members of the Committee, with the editor of the "Colored American," was mean, puerile and contemptible. The matter was made a pretext to affect the Secretary, in relation to an affair with the Rev. T. S. Wright, which did not concern the "Colored American," nor the Society. The facts in relation to the suit are as follows:—The "Libel Suit"

grew out of the publication of Mr. Gavino's letter, which appeared in the "Colored American," in October, 1837; in which Mr. Gavino communicated certain facts in relation to the fate of three native Africans, who were enticed from on board the brig Governor Temple, of Gambier, in the fall of 1836, and sent to the south on board the vessel Robert Center, where Mr. Gavino states that they were cruelly treated, and that efforts were made to reduce them to slavery. Mr. Gavino having interfered in their behalf, was compelled to leave the vessel at New Orleans, with the Africans, where they were exposed to the mercy of their avaricious inveiglers. Mr. Gavino's letter was dated New Orleans, January, 1837, and directed to "David Ruggles, Secretary of the New-York Committee of Vigilance." The facts were so roughly stated, that the Committee declined publishing the letter in their Annual Report, published in January, 1837, but referred to the facts, which may be read on page 33 of the Report. After Mr. G. returned to this city in August, 1837, he was called upon by a member of the Committee at 22 Rosevelt-street, where his letter was revised, and sent to the editor of the "Colored American," by the Secretary of the Committee of Vigilance, and was published at the time referred to. The person implicated in having shipped the Africans by stratagem, and forced them on board the vessel, sued the Secretary of the Committee of Vigilance, the editor, publisher and printer of the

Colored American, for publishing against him a libel. A meeting of the members of the Committee of Vigilance was invited at the corner of Hudson and Broome streets, for the purpose of taking measures to defend the suit; three members only, (who formed a quorum, however,) attended the meeting, viz.—T. S. Wright, William Johnston, and David Ruggles. They decided, after examining the case, that it was the duty of the Committee to defend the persons who were involved, by sustaining the expense of the suit, and authorized the Secretary of the Committee to engage R. & T. Sedgwick, Esqrs., as counsel in the case, in behalf of the New-York Committee of Vigilance. A note was accordingly addressed to them, soliciting their professional services in the suit. In the Report of the Committee, published in January, 1838, the libel suit is particularly referred to.—From that period to the 15th October, 1838, the libel suit was defended and sustained by authority, and at the expense of the NEW-YORK COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE. The expense of the suit in July was \$45.00, and was paid on the 11th by the Committee. The cost of the suit in October, was \$65.25, which was paid by the *New-York Committee of Vigilance*, independent of the expense of subpoenaing witnesses from time to time in behalf of the defendants. The case was tried on the 15th of October, and the verdict was against the defendants, owing, as was generally believed, and as the *Colored American* informed its readers, to *prejudice in the jury-box*. I have not the least doubt that the name “David Ruggles,” being so odious at that time to the minds of the jury, from the false statements by the commercial press in relation to the “*Darg case*,” was the main ground upon which the verdict was rendered against us. Subsequent to the 15th of October, a meeting of the Committee was held at 18 Liberty-street, for the purpose of adopting measures to defray the expense of the *Libel Suit*—present, George M. Tracy, William P. Johnson, J. W. Higgins, T. S. Wright, S. E. Cornish, and the Secretary. G. M. Tracy in the chair. It was voted that the committee should *raise the necessary means to pay the expense of the Libel Suit*. S. E. Cornish, George M. Tracy, W. Johnston, T. S. Wright, and J. W. Higgins, were appointed a committee to collect the sum required. For this purpose, appeals were made to the public through the columns of the *Colored American*, which were responded to by our friends in this city, in Rochester, in Pittsburg, in Ohio, and in other parts of the country, who sent their donations to extricate the Committee of Vigilance, and the *Colored American* from the unrighteous responsibility in which we were involved. Meeting after meeting was held in this city, by the Committee, and attended by their friends, many of whom are present. The last public meeting upon the subject was held on the 20th of November, and addressed by James G. Birney, S. E. Cornish, Wm. Johnston, T. S. Wright, and J. W. Higgins, in behalf of the Committee of Vigilance, and a collection taken up and pledges received, to aid the Society in defraying the

Colored American, for publishing against him a libel. A meeting of the members of the Committee of Vigilance was invited at the corner of Hudson and Broome streets, for the purpose of taking measures to defend the suit; three members only, (who formed a quorum, however,) attended the meeting, viz.—T. S. Wright, William Johnston, and David Ruggles. They decided, after examining the case, that it was the duty of the Committee to defend the persons who were involved, by sustaining the expense of the suit, and authorized the Secretary of the Committee to engage R. & T. Sedgwick, Esqrs., as counsel in the case, in behalf of the New-York Committee of Vigilance. A note was accordingly addressed to them, soliciting their professional services in the suit. In the Report of the Committee, published in January, 1838, the libel suit is particularly referred to.—From that period to the 15th October, 1838, the libel suit was defended and sustained by authority, and at the expense of the New-York Committee of Vigilance. The expense of the suit in July was \$45.00, and was paid on the 11th by the Committee. The cost of the suit in October, was \$65.25, which was paid by the New-York Committee of Vigilance, independent of the expense of subpoenaing witnesses from time to time in behalf of the defendants. The case was tried on the 15th of October, and the verdict was against the defendants, owing, as was generally believed, and as the *Colored American* informed its readers, to *prejudice in the jury-box*. I have not the least doubt that the name “David Ruggles,” being so odious at that time to the minds of the jury, from the false statements by the commercial press in relation to the “*Darg case*,” was the main ground upon which the verdict was rendered against us. Subsequent to the 15th of October, a meeting of the Committee was held at 18 Liberty-street, for the purpose of adopting measures to defray the expense of the *Libel Suit*—present, George M. Tracy, William P. Johnson, J. W. Higgins, T. S. Wright,

S. E. Cornish, and the Secretary. G. M. Tracy in the chair. It was voted that the committee should raise the necessary means to pay the expense of the *Libel Suit*. S. E. Cornish, George M. Tracy, W. Johnston, T. S. Wright, and J. W. Higgins, were appointed a committee to collect the sum required. For this purpose, appeals were made to the public through the columns of the *Colored American*, which were responded to by our friends in this city, in Rochester, in Pittsburg, in Ohio, and in other parts of the country, who sent their donations to extricate the Committee of Vigilance, and the *Colored American* from the unrighteous responsibility in which we were involved. Meeting after meeting was held in this city, by the Committee, and attended by their friends, many of whom are present. The last public meeting upon the subject was held on the 20th of November, and addressed by James G. Birney, S. E. Cornish, Wm. Johnston, T. S. Wright, and J. W. Higgins, in behalf of the Committee of Vigilance, and a collection taken up and pledges received, to aid the Society in defraying the

expenses of *their* LIBEL SUIT.

About this time, or soon after, T. S. Wright and myself had trouble, about which you have already heard too much—where all the humbugs and crickets, and other “*blundering*” things were hatched from five to seven years of age, which has enabled the editor of the *Colored American* to furnish his readers with so much interesting matter in connection with my name. The clouds collected thick and black—the lightning flashed—the thunders rolled—the storm threatened instant annihilation. So a caucus meeting of the Committee of Vigilance, was gotten up on the 11th January last, in the absence, and without the knowledge of the Secretary, who was *then* and *there* accused, arraigned, denounced, *calumniated*, and condemned, as he has been informed, in a manner too shocking to relate.— Mr. Cornish expressed his suspicions, Mr. Johnston expressed his convictions— Mr. Wright confirmed their opinions, and laughed in his sleeve—he could not now remember that the Secretary was authorized at the meeting referred to in October 1837, to employ counsel to defend the Libel suit. Mr. Johnston ventured to assume that the suit did not belong to the New-York Committee of Vigilance, and it was placed upon the head of David Ruggles, where it has remained from that period to the present, although my letter to G. M. Tracy, Esq., President of the New-York Committee of Vigilance, resigning the office of Secretary and Agent is dated January 12th, 1839. I had no knowledge of the dark proceedings of the caucus meeting referred to, until after the 19th of January, when the editor of the *Colored American*, assassin like, believing as he remarks in his paper, that his victim was “*on his back*,” reached over the committee in an article under the caption “*The Libel Suit*,” and stabbed me. He informed the public that the Libel Suit neither belonged to the Committee of Vigilance nor to the *Colored American*, but to David Ruggles, or to *Ruggles & Russell*. He then (consistent with *Arnoldism*,) bid for a bribe, by pledging himself to the public to “have nothing to do with” his brethren, (R—s and R—I,) if they would send him a few dollars. Although I had been informed on a particular occasion by the Rev. T. S. Wright, that the Libel suit would be made a personal matter to effect my reputation, I had no suspicion that the editor of the *Colored American* had taken so deep a part in the tragedy, until after he exposed my confidential letter to him, expressing grief and surprise at his course, and stating some facts, explaining reasons why I could not contribute more towards defraying the expense of the Libel Suit. The letter referred to is marked No. 1, and reads thus:—

expenses of their LIBEL SUIT.

About this time, or soon after, T. S. Wright and myself had trouble, about which you have already heard too much—where all the humbugs and crickets, and other “*blundering*” things were hatched from five to seven years of age, which has enabled the editor of the *Colored American* to furnish his readers with so much interesting matter in connection with my name. The clouds collected thick and black—the lightning flashed—the thunders rolled—the storm threatened instant annihilation. So a caucus meeting of the Committee of Vigilance, was gotten up on the 11th January last, in the absence, and without the knowledge of the Secretary, who was *then* and *there* accused, arraigned, denounced, *calumniated*, and condemned, as he has been informed, in a manner too shocking to relate.— Mr. Cornish expressed his suspicions, Mr. Johnston expressed his convictions— Mr. Wright confirmed their opinions, and laughed in his sleeve—he could not now remember that the Secretary was authorized at the meeting referred to in October 1837, to employ counsel to defend the Libel suit. Mr. Johnston ventured to assume that the suit did not belong to the New-York Committee of Vigilance, and it was placed upon the head of David Ruggles, where it has remained from that period to the present, although my letter to G. M. Tracy, Esq., President of the New-York Committee of Vigilance, resigning the office of Secretary and Agent is dated January 12th, 1839. I had no knowledge of the dark proceedings of the caucus meeting referred to, until after the 19th of January, when the editor of the *Colored American*, assassin like, believing as he remarks in his paper, that his victim was “*on his back*,” reached over the committee in an article under the caption “*The Libel Suit*,” and stabbed me. He informed the public that the Libel Suit neither belonged to the Committee of Vigilance nor to the *Colored American*, but to David Ruggles, or to *Ruggles & Russell*. He then (consistent with *Arnoldism*,) bid for a bribe, by pledging himself to the public to “have nothing to do with” his brethren, (R—s and R—I,) if they would send him a few dollars. Although I had been informed on a particular occasion by the Rev. T. S. Wright, that the Libel suit would be made a personal matter to effect my reputation, I had no suspicion that the editor of the *Colored American* had taken so deep a part in the tragedy, until after he exposed my confidential letter to him, expressing grief and surprise at his course, and stating some facts, explaining reasons why I could not contribute more towards defraying the expense of the Libel Suit. The letter referred to is marked No. 1, and reads thus:—

Office, 36 Lispenard Street,
New-York, Jan. 19, 1839.

REV. S. E. CORNISH—

Dear Sir—This comes to you from a *deeply injured* and afflicted friend.

How could you publish the innuendo against me, that appears in the "Colored American" of to-day, after stating as I did my case to Mr. Bell, the other day, who doubtless informed you and Mr. S. of my embarrassment for want of means! I think, sir, that you evince an *anti-christian spirit*, by reaching over the Committee to stab me. They have resolved to confer with you, and to raise the sum necessary to relieve us all from the unrighteous responsibility devolved upon us. I am not on that committee, though were I not so afflicted, the money would have been raised without delay.

Were it not for the poverty of the Vigilance Society, and its tremendous responsibilities in the Dixon case—the case of our kidnapped fellow citizens—the libel suit, and the pressing daily claims upon it, I should be able to do more than I have done.

When they came to settle with me a few weeks back, for two and a half years' service, to enable me to settle my affairs to go to Europe; contrary to my expectations, and their expressed feelings, they were compelled to yield to the dictates of poverty, and award me a salary at the rate of \$400 per annum—\$200 less than they allowed their Financial Agent, Mr. Turner. This has, of course, disarranged all my plans; five hundred dollars is to me an important item. Independent of my expenses in the unrighteous Durg case, this sum, with \$250 which I yet expect, would enable me to discharge all my pecuniary obligations.

Did I not know* the men who compose the Committee of Vigilance, and their great responsibilities, I should grumble—but ours is emphatically the cause of humanity, and we must labor for the flock, and not the fleece.

I have written to a friend to sell the last scrap of property I have in the world, that I might adjust my affairs, and by the kindness of friends, seek relief from the infirmity that threatens my sight. But rather than to see you and Mr. S. suffer, I will appropriate it to your relief.

Were it not for the fact, that there is too much personal quarrelling among us, I should reply to the article under the caption "The Libel Suit." But for the sake of the cause, I bleed in silence.

Yours truly,

DAVID RUGGLES

P. S. Mr. Sedgwick has rendered his bill to me. I shall take it to the Committee, who will doubtless discharge it; if they do not, I shall endeavor to do as I have to do in the Durg case—foot the bill, if I have to sell my old socks for the money. For it is cruel that you and Mr. S. should shoulder damages that were awarded by prejudice against me and the Committee of Vigilance. D. R.

After the exposition of this letter, I was confidentially led into the secret of the conspiracy which had been concocted against me by Messrs. Wright, Cornish, and others, since a certain misunderstanding took place between myself and Mr. W. Hence I addressed another letter to Mr. Cornish in the following words, marked No. 2.

* When this letter was written I had no knowledge of the meeting which was held on the 11th January; neither had I detected the fact that the Treasurer had not paid the amount of my order in favor of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which was charged to me in his account. In William Johnston I am deceived!

Office, 36 Lispenard Street,
New-York, Jan. 19, 1839.

REV. S. E. CORNISH—

Dear Sir—This comes to you from a *deeply injured* and afflicted friend.

How could you publish the innuendo against me, that appears in the "Colored American" of to-day, after stating as I did my case to Mr. Bell, the other day, who doubtless informed you and Mr. S. of my embarrassment for want of means! I think, sir, that you evince an *anti-christian spirit*, by reaching over the Committee to stab me. They have resolved to confer with you, and to raise the sum necessary to relieve us all from the unrighteous responsibility devolved upon us. I am not on that committee, though were I not so afflicted, the money would have been raised without delay.

Were it not for the poverty of the Vigilance Society, and its tremendous responsibilities in the Dixon case—the case of our kidnapped fellow citizens—the libel suit, and the pressing daily claims upon it, I should be able to do more than I have done.

When they came to settle with me a few weeks back, for two and a half years' service, to enable me to settle my affairs to go to Europe; contrary to my expectations, and their expressed feelings, they were compelled to yield to the dictates of poverty, and award me a salary at the rate of \$400 per annum—\$200 less than they allowed their Financial Agent, Mr. Turner. This has, of course, disarranged all my plans; five hundred dollars is to me an important item. Independent of my expenses in the unrighteous Durg case, this sum, with \$250 which I yet expect, would enable me to discharge all my pecuniary obligations.

Did I not know* the men who compose the Committee of Vigilance, and their great responsibilities, I should grumble—but ours is emphatically the cause of humanity, and we must labor for the flock, and not the fleece.

I have written to a friend to sell the last scrap of property I have in the world, that I might adjust my affairs, and by the kindness of friends, seek relief from the infirmity that threatens my sight. But rather than to see you and Mr. S. suffer, I will appropriate it to your relief.

Were it not for the fact, that there is too much personal quarrelling among us, I should reply to the article under the caption "The Libel Suit." But for the sake of the cause, I bleed in silence.

Yours truly,

DAVID RUGGLES.

P. S. Mr. Sedgwick has rendered his bill to me. I shall take it to the Committee, who will doubtless discharge it; if they do not, I shall endeavor to do as I have to do in the Durg case—foot the bill, if I have to sell my old socks for the money. For it is cruel that you and Mr. S. should shoulder damages that were awarded by prejudice against me and the Committee of Vigilance. D. R.

After the exposition of this letter, I was confidentially led into the secret of the conspiracy which had been concocted against me by Messrs. Wright, Cornish, and others, since a certain misunderstanding took place between myself and Mr. W. Hence I addressed another letter to Mr. Cornish in the following words, marked No. 2.

* When this letter was written I had no knowledge of the meeting which was held on the 11th January; neither had I detected the fact that the Treasurer had not paid the amount of my order in favor of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which was charged to me in his account. In William Johnston I am deceived!

[The letter* is excluded for want of room.]

The appearance of the article on the 85th page of the *Mirror of Liberty*, operated upon our neighbor of the Colored American like a bolus upon the patient. The poisonous exhalations from a distempered brain—a black heart and ulcerated stomach, appears in the Colored American of the 23rd February. As time may not permit me to analyze the stuff, let us pass on to the intolerable “recklessness” manifested by the Treasurer of the New-York Committee of Vigilance, in relation to the settlement to which your attention has been called. I suggested that the matter should be left to an arbitration of friends. After much hesitation on the part of the Treasurer, the Rev. J. Leavitt, John Brown, M. D., I. T. Hopper, H. R. Percy, and H. Dresser, Esqrs., were mutually appointed as the arbitrators. Now the matter in dispute was in relation to the sum paid to, and received by, the Secretary as compensation for his services; and the difficulty appeared in the account which had been kept anterior to the 16th of January, 1838. You will see by a reference to the printed reports of the Committee, to the 16th of Jan. 1838, that no difficulties could exist between the parties, in relation to their accounts between the Society and the public: it was in relation to the sum paid by the Treasurer to the Secretary as salary.

The case was at length referred to the gentlemen whom I have named as arbitrators, on the 19th of March, at 6 o'clock, P.M., at H. Dresser's office, when and where the Treasurer assumed that the Secretary had no claim against him under the stipulated salary, but on the contrary, he was over paid. You will perceive that had this declaration been true, no blame could have been attached to Mr. Johnston the Treasurer, as my salary was not definitely fixed until the 27th of Nov. last, within a short period of the time when I resigned my place as Secretary and agent of the Society. But we are now before the arbitration.

The Treasurer's position is assumed—the Secretary states his case. The point is admitted and settled that the matter in dispute is in relation to the amount paid by the Treasurer, and received by the Secretary, anterior to the 16th January, 1838. As the president, G. M. Tracy, Esq., testified that he had audited the accounts between the Society and the public, to the time referred to, the arbitrators expressed the opinion that *that* point was settled. After correcting some errors in the Treasurer's accounts, which he called “mistakes,” (!) and discovering the loose manner in which he had kept his accounts between himself and the Secretary, they suggested that a paper be executed by the parties, referring to them the whole

* About the time the letter referred to was written, I was made acquainted with the move of some of my neighbors in relation to the caucus meeting referred to, and that a decree had gone forth, and was being executed by Messrs. Wright and Cornish against me. They were aware that the Treasurer of the Vigilance Committee and myself had a dispute in relation to certain items charged against me in his account as salary. Mr. C. called upon Mr. Johnston, and abused his mind.—Subsequently the caucus meeting was held, and the game played of “you tickle me and I will tickle you.”

[The letter* is excluded for want of room.]
The appearance of the article on the 85th page of the *Mirror of Liberty*, operated upon our neighbor of the Colored American like a bolus upon the patient. The poisonous exhalations from a distempered brain—a black heart and ulcerated stomach, appears in the Colored American of the 23rd February. As time may not permit me to analyze the stuff, let us pass on to the intolerable “recklessness” manifested by the Treasurer of the New-York Committee of Vigilance, in relation to the settlement to which your attention has been called. I suggested that the matter should be left to an arbitration of friends. After much hesitation on the part of the Treasurer, the Rev. J. Leavitt, John Brown, M. D., I. T. Hopper, H. R. Percy, and H. Dresser, Esqrs., were mutually appointed as the arbitrators. Now the matter in dispute was in relation to the sum paid to, and received by, the Secretary as compensation for his services; and the difficulty appeared in the account which had been kept anterior to the 16th of January, 1838. You will see by a reference to the printed reports of the Committee, to the 16th of Jan. 1838, that no difficulties could exist between the parties, in relation to their accounts between the Society and the public: it was in relation to the sum paid by the Treasurer to the Secretary as salary.
The case was at length referred to the gentlemen whom I have named as arbitrators, on the 19th of March, at 6 o'clock, P.M., at H. Dresser's office, when and where the Treasurer assumed that the Secretary had no claim against him under the stipulated salary, but on the contrary, he was over paid. You will perceive that had this declaration been true, no blame could have been attached to Mr. Johnston the Treasurer, as my salary was not definitely fixed until the 27th of Nov. last, within a short period of the time when I resigned my place as Secretary and agent of the Society. But we are now before the arbitration.
The Treasurer's position is assumed—the Secretary states his case. The point is admitted and settled that the matter in dispute is in relation to the amount paid by the Treasurer, and received by the Secretary, anterior to the 16th January, 1838. As the president, G. M. Tracy, Esq., testified that he had audited the accounts between the Society and the public, to the time referred to, the arbitrators expressed the opinion that *that* point was settled. After correcting some errors in the Treasurer's accounts, which he called “mistakes,” (!) and discovering the loose manner in which he had kept his accounts between himself and the Secretary, they suggested that a paper be executed by the parties, referring to them the whole

* About the time the letter referred to was written, I was made acquainted with the move of some of my neighbors in relation to the caucus meeting referred to, and that a decree had gone forth, and was being executed by Messrs. Wright and Cornish against me. They were aware that the Treasurer of the Vigilance Committee and myself had a dispute in relation to certain items charged against me in his account as salary. Mr. C. called upon Mr. Johnston, and abused his mind.—Subsequently the caucus meeting was held, and the game played of “you tickle me and I will tickle you.”

matter in dispute. They adjourned to meet on Monday the 25th of March, at six o'clock P.M., when the parties met the arbitration, and, in accordance with their suggestion, the proposed paper was presented and signed, by myself—Mr. Johnston refusing to sign it.

Mr. Johnston the Treasurer, declined further proceedings on *moral* grounds, before the arbitration of friends; and stated that he would have the matter referred to *referees* under a LEGAL order, and very abruptly backed out from the arbitration. As I was desirous of having the matter settled, I accepted his terms, and decided to meet him on legal grounds. The matter was subsequently referred to J. W. Mulligan, L. Tappan, and H. Dresser, Esqrs., under an order from the Court of Common Pleas.

Now, whether it was in the mind of the Treasurer, William Johnston, who was bred to the legal profession, when he insisted before the arbitrators upon a *legal* adjudication of the matter, to shelter himself behind legal technicalities, I will not undertake to say. But the sequel furnishes ground for suspicion at least. If Mr. Johnston has with him the law, justice is with me. It may be *legally* right to hold a slave—would an Abolitionist decide it to be *morally* right?

That I may not be misunderstood in relation to the settlement of the accounts referred to in January, 1838, permit me to call your attention to the published report of the Committee, containing their receipts and expenditures from January, 1837, to January 1838; it reads as follows:

TREASURER'S RECEIPTS.

BALANCE FROM ACC'T. 1836, \$29.81 (!)—Third Presbyterian Church collection, 22.80; From the Effective Com., collections at a meeting at the Phoenix Hall, 9.34; Do. do. Asbury Church, 6.59; Do. do. Phoenix Hall, 5; Do. do. Union Church, 5.92; Do. do. Broadway Hall, 31.40; Do. do. A. Zion Church, 84.23; Do. do. Frankfort-street Church, 18.36; Do. do. Asbury Church, 3.44; Do. do. Broadway Hall, 8.75; Do. do. do. 6.36; Do. do. do. 2.60; Do. do. do. 11.44; Do. do. do. 6; Do. do. do. 2.25; Do. do. Asbury Church, 8.66; Do. do. do. 13.19; Do. do. do. 12.65; Do. do. Abyssinian Bap. 6.25; Do. 4th Free Church, 11.65; F. A. Perkins, Norwich, Conn. by R. G. Williams, 2; Gerrit Smith, 5; New-York Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society pledge, 25; proceeds of a ring, 25c; John Usmore, 2; Mrs. Wedgewood, England, by E. Wright, Jr. (£5) 26.25; Rev. J. Mann, 5; Ladies Literary Society 16; Sale of 1st Annual Report, 50.—Total, \$531 30
AGENT'S RECEIPTS* - - - - - 982 54

1513 94
EXPENDITURES - - - - - 1691 32

Balance against the Society - - - - - 177 38
WM. JOHNSTON, *Treasurer*.
G. M. TRACY, *Auditor*.

New-York, Jan. 1838.

* The published Report, containing the Treasurer's receipts, and my receipts, for the year anterior to the 16th Jan. 1838, is considered inadmissible testimony before "*referees under a legal order*," as my name is attached to the same document with those of the defendants. Therefore I am legally deprived of the credit of the \$982.54, which the Treasurer acknowledges in his account—acknowledged to be correct by the Auditor, George M. Tracy.

matter in dispute. They adjourned to meet on Monday the 25th of March, at six o'clock P.M., when the parties met the arbitration, and, in accordance with their suggestion, the proposed paper was presented and signed, by myself—Mr. Johnston refusing to sign it.

Mr. Johnston the Treasurer, declined further proceedings on moral grounds, before the arbitration of friends; and stated that he would have the matter referred to referees under a legal order, and very abruptly backed out from the arbitration. As I was desirous of having the matter settled, I accepted his terms, and decided to meet him on legal grounds. The matter was subsequently referred to J. W. Mulligan, L. Tappan, and H. Dresser, Esqrs., under an order from the Court of Common Pleas.

Now, whether it was in the mind of the Treasurer, William Johnston, who was bred to the legal profession, when he insisted before the arbitrators upon a

legal adjudication of the matter, to shelter himself behind legal technicalities, I will not undertake to say. But the sequel furnishes ground for suspicion at least. If Mr. Johnston has with him the law, justice is with me. It may be legally right to hold a slave—would an Abolitionist decide it to be morally right?

That I may not be misunderstood in relation to the settlement of the accounts referred to in January, 1838, permit me to call your attention to the published report of the Committee, containing their receipts and expenditures from January, 1837, to January 1838; it reads as follows:

TREASURER'S RECEIPTS.	
BALANCE FROM ACC'T. 1836, (\$29.81 (!)—Third Presbyterian Church collection, 22.80; From the Effective Com., collections at a meeting at the Phoenix Hall, 9.34; Do. do. Asbury Church, 6.59; Do. do. Phoenix Hall, 5; Do. do. Union Church, 5.92; Do. do. Broadway Hall, 31.40; Do. do. A. Zion Church, 84.23; Do. do. Frankfort-street Church, 18.36; Do. do. Asbury Church, 3.44; Do. do. Broadway Hall, 8.75; Do. do. do. 6.36; Do. do. do. 2.60; Do. do. do. 11.44; Do. do. do. 6; Do. do. do. 2.25; Do. do. Asbury Church, 8.66; Do. do. do. 13.19; Do. do. do. 12.65; Do. do. Abyssinian Bap. 6.25; Do. 4 th Free Church, 11.65; F. A. Perkins, Norwich, Conn. by R. G. Williams, 2; Gerrit Smith, 5; New-York Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society pledge, 25; proceeds of a ring, 25c; John Usmore, 2; Mrs. Wedgewood, England, by E. Wright, Jr. (£5) 26.25; Rev. J. Mann, 5; Ladies Literary Society 16; Sale of 1 st Annual Report, 50.—Total, \$531 30	982 54
AGENT'S RECEIPTS*	
EXPENDITURES - - - - -	1513 94
Balance against the Society - - - - - 177 38	
WM. JOHNSTON, <i>Treasurer</i> . G. M. TRACY, <i>Auditor</i> .	
New-York, Jan. 1838.	

* The published Report, containing the Treasurer's receipts, and my receipts, for the year anterior to the 16th Jan. 1838, is considered inadmissible testimony before "*referees under a legal order*," as my name is attached to the same document with those of the defendants. Therefore I am legally deprived of the credit of the \$982.54, which the Treasurer acknowledges in his account—acknowledged to be correct by the Auditor, George M. Tracy.

Now you will perceive that this account is audited by G. M. Tracy. It is clear that it is *correct*, or that it is *not*. If it is, Mr. Johnston, the Treasurer should not be in a difficulty. If it is *not*, David Ruggles is not to blame. Permit me here to invite your attention to the Report of the Committee, published in January 1837, which contains the Treasurer's account of the receipts and expenditures of the Society, from November 1835, to January 1837. It reads thus:

"RECEIPTS, IN AID OF THE COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE.

Total Receipts, - - - - -	\$839,52
General Expenditure, - - - - -	1228,71
BALANCE AGAINST THE TREASURY - - - - -	389,19"

If Mr. Johnston rendered a correct account to the Committee and to the public in 1837 and 1838, I have not as yet discovered why I should not receive just and equal compensation for labor without so much backing and filling—nor how the editor of the *Colored American*, or any one else can have the hardihood to attempt to make me responsible for the "*reckless*" conduct of the Treasurer. If Mr. Johnston's account for 1836, as published in the Report for January, 1837, is correct, how does he explain the discrepancy between this account and the one which he rendered in 1838, containing his receipts for the year 1837. If the Society owed the Treasurer \$389, 19 on the 1st of January, 1837, how can it be possible that the balance from the account of 1836 to January 1837 was \$29,81? How the Committee can quiet their conscience and withhold from me that which is just and equal, upon the mere *ipse-dixit* of so blundering an accountant as Mr. Johnston, I cannot divine.

The N. Y. Com. of Vigilance are now indebted to me, on their own terms—\$725. According to the understanding which existed between us from 20th May 1836, to 27th Nov. 1838, they are in equity indebted to me FIFTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS. It has been stated in the *Colored Am.* that my "*financial* affairs are desperate." They are truly so—I owe, including the expense of my legal difficulties—office rent for the committee, and boy's salary, for which I am responsible, about \$800. All I ask of them is, that they treat me like "a man and a brother," that I may "owe no man anything," and seek relief from the *ophthalmy* which affects my vision.

Mr. Chairman, the duty which I am called upon here to perform by exposing the blunders of the Treasurer and the conduct of the N. York Committee of Vigilance, is to me painful in the extreme, but the circumstances of the case—my duty to the public—and justice to myself—require it. The Committee of Vigilance have, as I understand, made Mr. Cornish and the *Colored American* their organs in this matter; therefore they merit the expose to which they are subjected. Now the position which I occupy in that journal before the public to-day, may be yours to-morrow. I am *denied* the privilege of correcting the misrepresentations which have appeared in that journal in relation to myself, on the ground that the quarrel has well nigh annihilated that paper. Should the *Colored American* *cease to be*, the

Now you will perceive that this account is audited by G. M. Tracy. It is clear that it is *correct*, or that it is *not*. If it is, Mr. Johnston the Treasurer should not be in a difficulty. If it is *not*, David Ruggles is not to blame. Permit me here to invite your attention to the Report of the Committee, published in January 1837, which contains the Treasurer's account of the receipts and expenditures of the Society, from November 1835, to January 1837. It reads thus:

"RECEIPTS, IN AID OF THE COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE.

Total Receipts, - - - - -	\$839,52
General Expenditure, - - - - -	1228,71
BALANCE AGAINST THE TREASURY - - - - -	389,19"

If Mr. Johnston rendered a correct account to the Committee and to the public in 1837 and 1838, I have not as yet discovered why I should not receive just and equal compensation for labor without so much backing and filling—nor how the editor of the *Colored American*, or any one else can have the hardihood to attempt to make me responsible for the "*reckless*" conduct of the Treasurer. If Mr. Johnston's account for 1836, as published in the Report for January, 1837, is correct, how does he explain the discrepancy between this account and the one which he rendered in 1838, containing his receipts for the year 1837. If the Society owed the

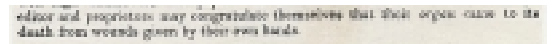
Treasurer \$389, 19 on the 1st of January, 1837, how can it be possible that the balance from the account of 1836 to January 1837 was \$29,81? How the Committee can quiet their conscience and withhold from me that which is just and equal, upon the mere *ipse-dixit* of so blundering an accountant as Mr. Johnston, I cannot divine.

The N. Y. Com. of Vigilance are now indebted to me, on their own terms—\$725. According to the understanding which existed between us from 20th May 1836, to 27th Nov. 1838, they are in equity indebted to me FIFTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS. It has been stated in the *Colored Am.* that my "*financial* affairs are desperate." They are truly so—I owe, including the expense of my legal difficulties—office rent for the committee, and boy's salary, for which I am responsible, about \$800. All I ask of them is, that they treat me like "a man and a brother," that I may "owe no man anything," and seek relief from the *ophthalmy* which affects my vision.

Mr. Chairman, the duty which I am called upon here to perform by exposing the blunders of the Treasurer and the conduct of the N. York Committee of Vigilance, is to me painful in the extreme, but the circumstances of the case—my duty to the public—and justice to myself—require it. The Committee of Vigilance have, as I understand, made Mr. Cornish and the *Colored American* their organs in this matter; therefore they merit the expose to which they are subjected. Now the position which I occupy in that journal before the public to-day, may be yours to-morrow. I am *denied* the privilege of correcting the misrepresentations which have appeared in that journal in relation to myself, on the ground that the quarrel has well nigh annihilated that paper. Should the *Colored American* *cease to be*, the

July 18, 1839
Ruggles, David
A Plea for "A Man and A Brother" by David Ruggles
Presscopy – Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts – Anti-Slavery Pamphlets

editor and proprietors may congratulate themselves that their organ came to its
death from wounds given by their own hands.



editor and proprietors may congratulate themselves that their organ came to its
death from wounds given by their own hands.