

MR. CHAIRMAN – Sir, Mr. Johnson appears here, as is evident from his speech, as a deeply interested witness – bearing testimony against me for himself, for his pastor the Rev. T. S. Wright, for the “Committee of Vigilance,” for the “land speculators,” and for Tom, Dick and Harry, to prove me responsible in the Libel Suit. I consider Mr. Johnson’s testimony in this case, where he testifies to the *negative* testimony of T. S. Wright and William Johnston, concerning the meeting which was held in October, 1837, at the corner of Hudson and Broome streets, of infinite importance, because it establishes my position beyond question. He admits that Wright and Johnston attended the meeting, but that they do not now recollect having authorised the Secretary to employ counsel to defend the suit. Now I hold that the negative testimony of twenty witnesses in a case is good for nothing, when the positive testimony of one witness establishes the fact.

I affirm, in the case of the Libel Suit, that the Committee authorised the Secretary to employ counsel to defend the suit. Mr. Johnson denies that the meeting which was held on the 11th Jan. at 217 William-st., was a caucus meeting. I regret that he does not understand the character of a caucus meeting: if he does, I cannot conceive how he can possess effrontery to deny, that the meeting to which I have referred was one of the most contemptible caucus meetings that was ever held by any Society; I was Secretary of the Society at the time, and the meeting was gotten up without my knowledge by certain treacherous members, to arraign me. I pronounce the meeting a caucus, because they neglected – intentionally too – to invite all parties concerned. Now, sir, the “*family affair*” to which Mr. Johnson has referred, is, in my opinion too delicate a matter for the public to scan. As Mr. Wright has furnished the public with his version of the tale, I regret that he is not present to help his representative out, as it appears to be interesting, and very much to the point, in proving me “reckless of principle” in the business of the Libel suit. Since the Rev. Theodore S. Wright and his friend have manifested so much regard for the reputation of the defenceless party, by exposing letters and making the affair a matter of public notoriety, it is proper I should state, that the “*family affair*” grew out of an honorable correspondence between myself and the defenceless party. As the consent of the guardian had been obtained by the parties, to continue the correspondence, it was not supposed that the match-making step father would have interfered on the ground that I am not a clergyman. My adversary knows that this affair is the very acorn of the umbrageous tree that shades

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us all – under which the gallows is erected and the pit is dug! – where it is decreed that the “blundering youth” must be *executed* and *buried*, without trial or benefit of CLERGY, *nolens volens*.

The land business to which Mr. Johnson has called your attention, which has been like most speculations, an unfortunate affair for all concerned, is another matter as irrelevant to the business of this meeting as would be his own private family affairs, or the business between himself and his creditors. As Mr. Cornish has remarked upon the “land speculators” in No. 104 of the *Colored American*, and as there appears to be a disposition to drag the matter up here, permit me to state, that it has no more to do with the “*Libel Suit*,” the “*Colored American*,” or the com of Vigilance, than the Revds. Samuel E. Cornish, C. B. Ray, and Theodore S. Wright’s Newark lot speculations had to do with the speculations of the clergy in the moon. Mr. Wright has manifested such an indomitable penchant to obtain matter from any and every quarter to effect me, that in March last, as I am informed, at the house of Henry Davis, where a meeting of the Union Land Co. was held, he remarked in an emphatic tone, “Brethren, if Mr. Ruggles *swims* we must *sink*! He has sent a letter to brother Cornish, bidding us all defiance – if there is anything against him here, we must have it!” The simple facts in relation to the Land Company are as follows. The Rev. Mr. Ray and myself, in 1836, agreed to participate in land speculation; accordingly sixty lots were purchased in my name in New Haven. He got up the company, who *refused* \$6000 for their lots. – Before the first installment was paid, Mr. Ray *backed out*, and some others with him. The pressure of ’37 came – and confidence left the company. In 1838 the mortgage threatened to foreclose upon us, and those who should have been peace-makers have stirred up and encouraged strife. Mr. Edward V. Clark can testify to Mr. Ray’s course in that business.

Mr. J. inquires why I did not add the names F. Chatfield and M. Strong. I can add them, with those of Messrs. Johnson and Landryne, who are members of Mr. Wright’s congregation, and are subject to his clerical dictation. – Since I have detected the treachery of Revds. Samuel E. Cornish, T. S. Wright, and C. B. Ray, in relation to the “Land Speculators,” I consider them three of the most dangerous clerical *wolves* that ever appeared in sheep’s clothing.

My difficulty with Mr. Van Rensselaer commenced with his course towards my friend J. W. Higgins, or the firm J. W. & D. Higgins, who were also “satisfied with

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me." I became bail for Mr. V., who was accused with assaulting his neighbor. On the day of the trial he left this city for New Jersey, and on his return was arrested and committed, until his pastor, the Rev. Mr. Wright, succeeded in obtaining his liberation. His excuse for deserting his bail was, that I was a minor, and could not be injured. The attempt which Weaver made upon Messrs. Patterson, Gustin and myself, before he decamped from the city, entitles him to the character of a fugitive from justice.

Sir, this representative of the Committee of Vigilance, Mr. Johnson, admits the whole matter at issue – that the "Libel Suit" belongs to the Society; that they paid the money, and that \$400 per annum was not just compensation. Hear him – "*I know that his services were worth MORE, and SO DID THE COMMITTEE (!)*" We all knew that his services were *invaluable!*" Precious confession! Why did not the Committee confess *judgment* and plead *poverty* before!

The apology of my adversary for Mr. Cornish's ignorance of me, as well as for his remarks in the paper, has come too late. His prime witness and swearing representative, Mr. Bell, testifies that he was "goaded on" to the "*attack*" proving malice in his heart. How can the double-dealing, priest-ridden goat stand mum and see me exterminated on account of \$17 50, when he heard the Treasurer admit before J. W. Higgins, that it was justly applied, and other sums, to the relief of refugees.

Why has not Mr. Johnson testified to the fact, that my trouble with the Treasurer of the New York Committee of Vigilance commenced by his charging in his account \$92 71 as having been paid, on my account, to the Am. Anti-Slavery Society, which he has not paid, and \$35 to Mr. Trow, which he has not paid? Why has he not stated that the mutual arbitration of friends detected a blunder where he had charged to me in his account \$100 which had been paid, according to his book, to Piercy & Reed, and that Mr. Piercy testified to the receipt of the same before the arbitration? Why has not Mr. Johnston, the Treasurer, explained the discrepancy which appears in his account [see p. 10] to the satisfaction of the arbitration, *before he backed out?* To what purpose did the Treasurer appropriate the \$389 19? I shall hold the Committee responsible until they explain this blunder, and justice comes to my relief; for when I have asked for bread they have given me a stone – when I have asked for fish I have received a scorpion.



Now for the analysis [of some] of the poisonous exhalations to which I have referred in No. 104 of the Colored American.

On the outset I am charged with seeking a quarrel when I have expressed a willingness to bleed in silence "*for the sake of the cause,*" rather than to come into the *embrace collusive*. He declares that "heaven and earth seem to have combined and aspired [*conspired*] against the "blundering youth," and that he "is on his back." My reverend and chivalrous adversary arrogantly exclaims – "Our ambition aspires to more noble combat, and to victory over the giant armed and in his glory!" Could Goliath have said more of *David* of old? But hear him – "For five years, with his almost *invincible friends*, the Rev. T. S. Wright and Mr. Johnston of the Vigilance Committee, we have stood in the gap as outer sentinels to defend him against those who would have EATEN HIM UP: and when the smoke has gathered round him *as thick and dense as the blackness of darkness*, we have withheld our disapprobation of his conduct, lent him our countenance (!) and raised our voice to still the elements, and cheer him on to virtue and usefulness." Who can but envy the inflexible integrity of such men? For "five years," they "have stood in the gap," and cheered him on against their "disapprobation of his conduct." (!) Now when the smoke from the pro-slavery altar "has gathered round him *as thick and dense as the blackness of darkness*," they have deserted him to the mercy of the "elements" which have so long threatened him. They have cheered him on until danger was nigh, and then *they deserted* him. How have they stood in the LIBEL SUIT? When did the Rev. S. E. Cornish and the "Vigilance Committee stand by me? When treacherously deserted to the mercy of the Darg case conspirators, and committed to the felon's dungeon – who of the Committee stood to cheer him in this hour of *blackness and darkness*, except J. W. Higgins? Or, when I was summoned to appear before a criminal court for trial, what member of the Committee stood in the gap to defend me against those who would have EATEN ME UP?

My very conscientious antagonist confesses that it is a serious matter to "wreck" my "*influence*" for appropriating \$17 50 to aid our brethren on the track for liberty in queen Victoria's land. It is really a wonder he did not remark here, as he did in another place, "*This we have done because he was a colored man.*" (!) You know that if I were a white man I might wear a wig and "pass in a crowd" (!) Sir, I have come down a little to meet my adversary, who has drawn me into this embrace collusive. We all know that men's principles are not decided by their

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complexion.

In committing my cause to your enlightened understanding, permit me to inquire – What have I done to merit the popular fury? Am I responsible for the Libel Suit! Have I erred in claiming justice from [the] Committee?

Let not strong feelings for or against me – or still stronger feeling against my very senior antagonist – the stirrer up and promoter of unrighteous persecution against me lead you from the path of rectitude. Let not his blunders of by-gone days – his usual hostility to the advancement of young men – his aristocratical notions be remembered. I ask – Have the New-York Committee of Vigilance in my case practised what they preach? Have they and the editor and proprietor of the Colored American treated me justly? "Am I not a man and a brother?"

I beseech you who have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts of flesh to feel for outraged innocence crimsoned in gore, to remember that my case to-day may be yours to-morrow. I plead for *rights* – for EQUAL JUSTICE! Therefore let yours be a RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.

* * * Much of the Plea is excluded for want of room.

