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Title: Letter from Roger B. Taney to Unknown Recipient

Date: January 27, 1833

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Washington July 27. 1833

My Dear Sir

Colo. Howard mentioned to me some time ago, that Mr. Gilman thought it desirable that I should address a letter to Mr. Harper or Mr. Jenkins, in behalf of our friend Sarah's application for a divorce - and he again yesterday called my attention to the subject. - Many urgent engagements in court and out of court, have left me but little time to think what I can do or ought to do - But it appears to me that I could hardly write such a letter to either of the Delegates from Baltimore, as would be likely to stimulate their exertions in our favour. -

When I was a member of the Senate I voted against all the applications for divorces & vinculo matrimonii, - not only from the religious opinions I entertain - but because

I believed them to be wrong, on the score of policy -
and this opinion I often expressed in debate in the
Senate - I have not since changed it. - And if I
were to write a letter to any one, it would be due
to truth and to myself to express it. -

You may perhaps ask why with these opinions
I advised the application and promised to write
to any of the members - with whom I supposed
a letter from me might be of service? - I answer
that since I left the Senate, the Legislature has
been in the familiar practice of granting di-
vorses - and ~~it has become~~ ^{it has become} a part of the ordinary and
regular legislation at every Session - that what-
ever my own opinions, religious or political
may be, I have neither expected nor desired
that Sarah or her friends should make them
the guide of their conduct - and as I know their
opinions differ from mine - and believe that
the situation of Sarah, entitles her to relief, if
a divorce is granted in any case, I advised
the application - and if I were to write a letter
I could do no more, than express my opinions. -

adverse as I have stated to all divorces of this description - and represent her situation, as appealing strongly for support, ~~from~~^{to} those who hold opinions on that subject contrary to mine.

would such a letter to Mr. Jenkins or Mr. Harper be of any value to our friend? - I think not. If I had any friend there who might be unacquainted with the circumstances of her case - or who might have been deceived by misrepresentations to her disadvantage - and whose indifference or opposition to her petition arose from that cause - I supposed that a letter from me might perhaps be useful to vindicate her conduct; - And it was to a letter of that description I to persons of that description that I looked when I offered letters in her favour. - But such a letter would hardly be useful - and would hardly indeed be respectful to Mr. Harper or Mr. Jenkins, coming as they do from the city where the parties live and who may well suppose that their knowledge of ^{the} facts & of the conduct of the parties

is equal to my own - and that their judgment
is more important between them. - and when
you look at the whole matter I think you will
agree with me, that I cannot with propriety
address a letter to either of these gentlemen - ~~and~~
I have given this detailed explanation, - and
many urgent engagements, because I am un-
willing that Sarah or her friends should
believe that I have lost any of the sincere
interest which I have heretofore taken in
her welfare -

I am Sir, in respectfully

I truly yours

R. B. Torrey

R. B. Torrey
March 21
Jan 21

[Letter to unknown recipient]

Washington Jan'y 27, 1833

My dear sir

Col. Howard mentioned to me some time ago, that Mr. Gilmore thought it desirable that I should address a letter to Mr. Harper or Mr. Jenkins, in behalf of our friend Sarah's application for a divorce, and he again yesterday called my attention to the subject. Many urgent engagements in court and out of court, have left me but little time to think what I could do or ought to do. But it appears to me that I could hardly write such a letter to either of the Delegates from Baltimore, as would be likely to stimulate their exertions in her favour.

When I was a minister of the Senate I voted against all the applications for divorces *a vinculo matrimonii*, not only from the religious opinions I entertain, but because

[page 2]

I believed them to be wrong on the score of policys, and this opinion I often expressed in debate in the Senate. I have not since changed it. And if I were to write a letter to any one, it would be due to truth and to myself to express it.

You may perhaps ask why with these opinions I advised the application and promised to write to any of the members, with whom I supposed a letter from me might be of service? I answer that since I left the Senate, the Legislature has been in the familiar practice of granting divorces, and [word excised] it has become a part of the ordinary and regular legislation at every Session, that whatever my own opinions, religious or political may be, I have neither expected nor desired that Sarah or her friends should make them the guide of their conduct. And as I know their opinions differ from mine, and believe that the situation of Sarah, entitles her to relief, if a divorce is granted in any case, I advised the application. And if I were to write a letter I could do no more, than express my opinions,

[page 3]

adverse as I have stated to all divorces of this description, and represent her situation, as appealing strongly for support, [word excised] to those who hold opinions on that subject contrary to mine.

Would such a letter to Mr. Jenkins or Mr. Harper be of any value to our friend? I think not. If I had any friend there who might be unacquainted with the circumstances of her case, or who might have been deceived by misrepresentations to her disadvantage, and whose indifference or opposition to her petition arose from that course, I supposed that a letter from me might perhaps be useful to vindicate her conduct. And it was to a letter of that description & to persons of that description that I looked when I offered letters in her favour. But such a letter would hardly be useful, and would hardly indeed be respectful to Mr. Harper or Mr. Jenkins, coming as they do from the City where the parties live and who may well suppose that their knowledge of the facts & of the conduct of the parties

[page 4]

is equal to my own, and that their judgment is more impartial between them. And when you look at the whole matter I think you will agree with me, that I cannot with propriety address a letter to either of these gentlemen. I have given this detailed explanation, amid many urgent engagements, because I am unwilling that Sarah or her friends should believe that I have lost any of the sincere interest which I have heretofore taken in her welfare.

I am dr. sir respectfully
& truly yours
R. B. Taney