

Label:NPSDyerLetter

Just FYI: Ultimo (1st sentence in letter) means “of the previous month”

Letter from Eliphalet Dyer (*eh-lif-eh-let die-er*) to John Lawrence, Treasurer of the Connecticut State Pay Table Office:

Windham, April 7th 1786

Dear Sir,

Received yours of the 31st Ultimo in which you inform me that Norman Butler has sundry times applied for interest on Juba (*joo-buh*). He notes that your refusal to pay has made considerable talk among people who are of the opinion that you ought to pay it to Butler and that you had no right to refuse it, etc. I trust no people of consequence will concern themselves in the affair. I know Butler talks big and threatens and I suppose some other speculators join with him.

But I hope and trust that their talk will not affect you or me when we adhere to the line of Justice and right and to suppress the greatest fraud and imposition. The Negro boy's freedom or slavery depends upon it. He was born and brought up in the family as a slave. I had given him to my son when young. He brought him up at a great expense. My son offered Juba his freedom upon the only condition of serving 3 years in the Army when Juba was but just above 16 years old and upon the condition that he, i.e., my son, had his wages. My son was to supply him with necessaries needed for the war and deliver him to his call on that condition. The Negro boy, as far as he could, and myself as his guardian agreed to it and gave those instructions to his officer. His wages were made over to my son when he, the Negro, went into the Army.

The poor fellow, a minor underage and unskilled in the arts of designing men, was imposed upon and had his notes gotten from him for only 2/6 on the pound paid in [Continental currency]. He risked his life these 3 last years in the Army and with giving up to his master only these trifling, depreciated wages to purchase his freedom. And he is free only on the condition of my son taking the benefit of these notes.

So is it right? Is it just? Judge you and all mankind, that the poor fellow must remain a slave on such an imposition. It is the price of his freedom. Whoever knows this will they blame you or me? Or will a poor, young, ignorant fellow to be cheated out of his freedom by the arts and imposition of speculation? No, no. I consider myself his guardian. I have no personal interest but mean to support him against such imposition and will defend you. I expect to be up in May. Then I will bring you the proper vouchers. Suspended until that time, though Butler should be a little angry and threatens. Liberty is dear. It is too much to be lost to gratify such men.

From your humble servant,

Eliphalet Dyer

Please note: The highlighted sentence was awkwardly written in original doc so it may be helpful to think of as being written as: You and mankind in general will be judged that the poor fellow.....(we just have to be as accurate as possible to the original so we can't recast it.) Dyer doesn't think it is right at all.