Title: Letter from Joseph Priestley to Anna Aikin

Date: June 13, 1769

Location: I-Friends-2010-1
Dear Mr. Austin,

You will be surprised when I tell you I wrote this on the behalf of Pascal Paoli and the brave Corsicans, but it is strictly true. Mr. Turner of Wakefield, who says he read your poem not with astonishment, but with admiration and surprise, requests me to write to you, to request that a copy of your poem called Corsica may be sent to Mr. Boswell, with permission to publish it for the benefit of the noble islanders. He is confident that it cannot be a great deal to promote their interest, now that a subscription is open for them, by raising a generous action in the cause of liberty, and admiring their glorious struggles in its defense. It's being written by a lady, he thinks, with a circumstance very much in their favor, and not of the poem, but there is no occasion for Mr. Boswell...
to be acquainted with your name, unless it be your own choice some time hence. I own I virtuously agree with Mr. Turner in these sentiments, and therefore hope Mr. Bickin will not refuse so reasonable a request, which will at the same time lay a great obligation on the friends in England, and contribute to the relief of the poor Gloucester heroes in Cork and Conna. Consider that you are as much a general as Gisbert was, and your poems (which I am confident are much better than his) may have as great an effect as his. They may be the Cape de Grace to the French troops on that island, and Padri, who made English, will cause us to be printed in every history of that renowned island. Without any hope, I wish you would comply with this request. In this case you can only to send a corrected copy to one at Leeds, or to W. Johnson in London, and I will take care to introduce it to the notice of W. Bowdler, by means of W. Bungay, and Nath. Meeley.
in some other of the friends of liberty and
courage in London. The sooner this is
done the better. Mr. Gurne regrets very
much, that it was not done some
time ag
I shall not tell you what I think of your
poems for more than twenty reasons, of
which it is that I can not able to express it. We
are now all expectation of the speedy opening
pocket from Washington.
My piece on Persuasion is nearly ready
for the press. Come and see us before it is quite
printed, and I will engag you the whole and
try of it in a few hours. If you come a
month after, I may know no more about the
than any body else—I am able to make a
better part. When you go for the jotters, the train lead
pores or something worse. Tell Mr. Atkinson he may
buy himself that U.S. paper suitably to the
academy. On Monday next Mr. Turner
and I set out on a visit to the blackhouses at Richmond,
With all our compliments to all your noble
family. I am, with the greatest cordially
your friend, Mr. Whiteley.
Rare Autograph Letter Signed, three pages folio, Leeds, June 13, 1769.

To Miss Aikin (Anna Laetitia Barbauld) at Warrington Academy. Priestley announces "You will be surprised when I tell you I write this on the behalf of Pascal Paoli and the brave Corsicans, but it is strictly true." Then continues to that Mr. Turner of Wakefield "who says he reads your poems not with admiration but astonishment" has insisted Priestley writes to her "to request that a copy of your poem called Corsica may be sent to Mr. Boswell, with permission to publish it for the benefit of those noble islanders. He is confident that it cannot fail greatly to promote their interest, now that a subscription is open for them by raising a generous order in the cause of liberty, and admiration of their glorious struggles in its defense." Priestley further writes "It being written by a lady....will a circumstance very much in their favor, and that of the poem, but there is no occasion for Mr. Boswell to be acquainted with your name, unless it be your own choice some time hence....and therefore hope Miss. Aikin will not refuse so reasonable a request, which will at the same time lay a great obligation on friends in England, and contribute to the relief of her own heroes in Corsica." Priestley then states "They may be the Coup de Grace to the French Troops in that island, and Paoli, who reads English, will cause it to be printed in every history of that renowned island." He further urges his correspondent to comply with the request, explaining "In this case you have only to send a corrected copy to me at Leeds, or to Mr. Johnson in London, and I will take care to introduce it to the notice of Mr. Boswell....The sooner this is done the better." In conclusion Priestley offers his own praise of his correspondent's poems and also makes a reference to his own work, "My piece on Perspective is nearly ready for the press. Come and see me before it is quite printed, and I will engage to teach you the whole art....of it in a few hours. If you come a month after I may know no more about the matter than anybody else. I am about to make a bolder push than ever for the pillory....or something worse." Signed, "J. Priestley". With integral address leaf.

Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825) nee. Aikin. English Poet and Children's Author. Her work Corsica: And Ode was written in 1768. Barbauld and Priestley were associated with Warrington Academy, an early dissenters' college that existed from 1756-86. In Robert Schofield's book The Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work from 1733-1773 (1997) he quotes Priestley as having written 'Mrs. Barbauld has told me that it was the perusal of some verses of mine that first induced her to write anything in verse.' Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807) was a Corsican Patriot and Leader, designed and wrote the Constitution of this first democratic republic of the modern age. In 1769 Paoli was taking refuge in England following his defeat at the Battle of Ponte Nevu. Corsica became a French province in 1770. James Boswell (1740-1795) was a Scottish lawyer, diarist and author, best known for his biography of Samuel Johnson. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was an English author and friend of Boswell. Priestley's A Familiar Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Perspective was published in London, 1770. Lightly laid down and with two extensive, although neat, splits at the folds of the third page, slightly affecting one line of text. There is a small area of paper loss, affecting one word, caused by the removal of the seal. Two light stains to the final page and very light overall age wear.