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Title: Letter from Joseph Priestley to Anna Aikin

Date: June 13, 1769

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Dear Miss Aikin

Leeds 13 Jun 1763

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. Mr Turner of Wakefield, who says he reads your poems not with admiration but astonishment, insists upon my writing 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 those noble islanders. He is confident that it cannot ~~that it cannot~~ fail greatly to promote their interest, now that a subscription is open for them, by raising a generous ardor in the cause of liberty, and admiration of their glorious struggles in its defence. Its being written by a lady, he thinks, will a circumstance very much in their favour, 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. I own I
intirely agree with Mr Turner in these sen-
timents, and therefore hope Miss Dickinson will
not refuse so reasonable a request, which will
at the same time lay a great obligation on these
friends in England, and contribute to the relief
of her own ~~Caribbean~~ heroes in Corsica:

Consider that you are as much a general
as Sydney, was and your poems (which I
am confident are much better than his
ever were) may have as great an effect
as his. 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.

Without any joke, I wish you would
comply with this request. 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
by means of Mr Langdon, or Mr Marriot,

or some other of the friends of liberty and
Cercica in London. The sooner this is
done the better. Mr Turner regrets very
much, that it was not done some
time ago.

I shall not tell you what I think of your
poems, for more than twenty years on, of
which it has I am not able to express it.

an new all expectation at the opening of my
pocket from Warrington —

My piece on Persepolis is nearly ready
for the press. Come and see me before it is quite
printed, and I will enjoy ^{to teach} you the whole art and
trick of it in a few hours. If you come a
month after, I may know no more about ^{matter} it,
than any body else. — I am about to make a
bold push than ever for the pillory, the trip lead
pinner or something worse. Tell Mr Pitts he may
buy himself that I have some connection with the
academy — ~~On~~ On Monday next Mr Turner
and I set out on a visit to the Beck Dracen at Richmond,

With all our compliments to all your worthy
family I am, with the greatest cordiality
your friend & admirer
Priestley

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.