

2016WL002

*The following letter was penned by Anna Richardson, a prominent 19<sup>th</sup>-century abolitionist who lived in Newcastle on Tyne, England. She and her sister-in-law Emma raised funds, pounds sterling 150, to secure Frederick Douglass' freedom. They worked through lawyers in London and the United States. Douglass' one-time "owner" Thomas Auld freed him on 5 December 1846.*

*Richardson proceeded to become a reform trailblazer. She led the "free produce movement" in the U.K. The organization boycotted goods produced through slave labor. Richardson edited and published "The Slave," the free produce movement's publication from 1851-1854. She collected stories and press releases about anti-slavery activities in a publication, "Illustrations of American Slavery." She sent the newsletter to local papers on a monthly basis. Her book, Little Laura, the Kentucky Abolitionist: An Address to the Young Friends of the Slave (Richardson, 1859), talks about slavery in a child-appropriate way. She describes her approach to writing the book in the 1842 letter reproduced below. (For more information on this booklet see the Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Pamphlet Collection contact Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.)*

*Elizabeth Pease, to whom she is writing, was a favorite friend of Wright. Elizabeth's and Wright's relationship may have had a romantic aspect, at least from his perspective. He would never have acted on untoward thoughts or intentions. He was, after all, highly moral and married, though he and his wife were estranged.*

To Elizabeth Pease...

My dear Cousin

Henry and I have been trying for many months past to get someone to write little books for children on the delicate subject [slavery in the U.S.], but hitherto without success. The very few that exist are rather grave and [drab], whereas something graphic and captivating is evidently what is wanted \_\_ It has often crossed my mind whether some of our transatlantic friends be [used to] not looking at the image. The best [or their publications], I think, they exist in narrative and in [illegible] and yet ...the graphic transcription... communicates little to the mind of a little child, When thou returns to America will thou kindly ...lay the subject before some of thy friends in that country.

---I feel almost sure they would have both heart and hand to accomplish it to one's wishes. Sometimes there is a rather odd peculiarity in their language I think which I wish thy would to [illegible], as there seems no possible advantage in hiding it – the words struck out of the hand –bill [illegible] was a specimen of what I mean.

Perhaps Jacob Abbott's style is almost perfect in its structure (sweetness) & simplicity. The sign [style] we are looking is but [put] in a T-form which might be [largely at the same time by poor,] & I believe would meet with very general [acceptance].

With love to thy self and [thy] dear mother [illegible]

very truly thy friend

Anna H. Richardson

3<sup>rd</sup> day January

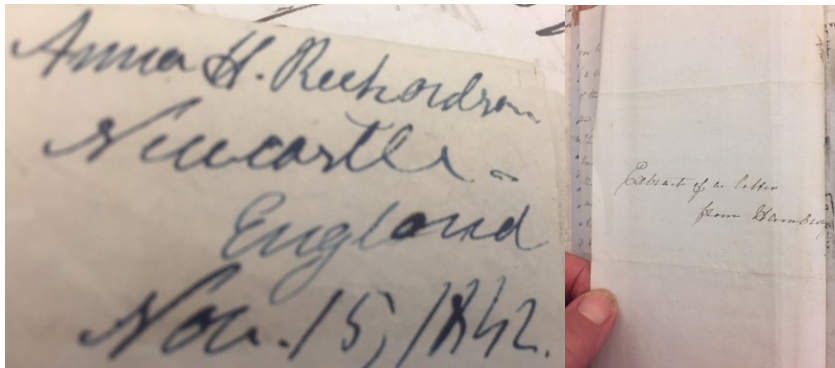
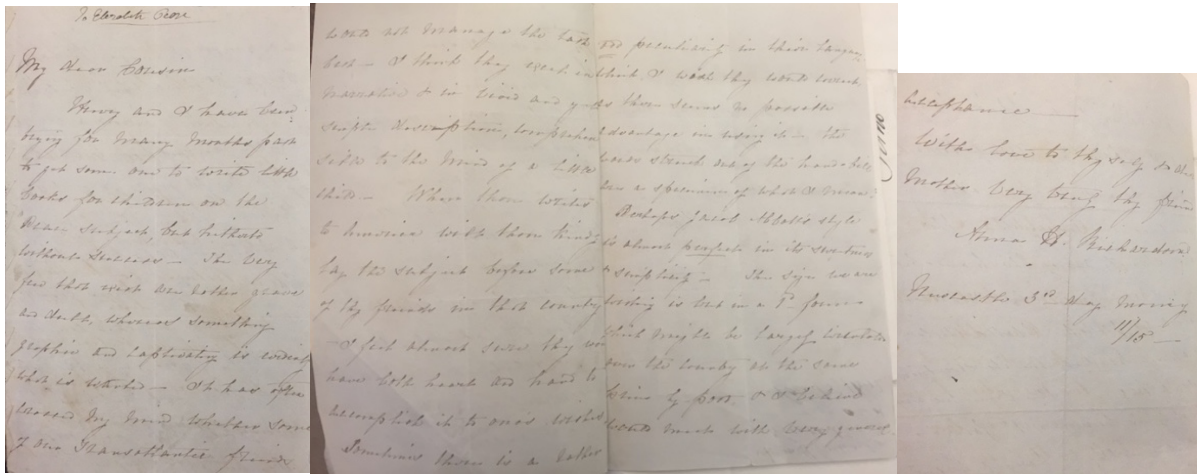
11/15 \_\_\_\_\_

Also inscribed in pen as follows:

Anna H. Richardson

Newcastle \_\_

England Nov. 15, 1842



*Anna Richardson writes from Newcastle and describes arrangements for transferring money to Boston, MA. The funds bought Frederick Douglass' freedom. Her words reflect one position taken by abolitionists, while she obviously argues against a second position taken by other abolitionists. She and like-minded anti-slavery proponents felt it was imperative to buy Douglass freedom, so he could return to the U.S., live a normal life and speak out against slavery. On the other side of this issue, abolitionists argued that buying a slave's freedom was tacit acknowledgement of slaves being property. Apparently, Wright was in the second camp, or at the very least, he objected to the publicity the purchase of Douglass' freedom fomented.*

I just write a hasty line my dear friend to say that it is an entire mistake that there has been any thought at all of publically presenting F D's papers to him or of any thing passing on [to] the [illegible] duplicate delegate [illegible] in the coming meetings in Newcastle, unless any thy be so said against my own express wishes \_ I have heard of [illegible] of deposit before, I [am] chiefly against it \_ I do not know in the least how it originates \_ The papers have not yet come from America & I tell my self it could now be done if we [are] wishing it \_\_\_

As to the transaction itself it has been most thoroughly weighed \_\_\_ F D was acquainted with every step taken [illegible] in it from the very first, & not a single one has been taken without the sanction of his judgment \_\_\_ So in doing did both Garrison & Thompson subscribe to the propriety of this course [unlike] thou [by] volunteering then to [pay] to this friend for his ransom \_

If therefore my [friend] we cannot see alike in the matter, I think it must be left \_\_\_ I have done nothing at all in it without dear F D's entire approval & with the sanction of so/a lawyer/larger body of approving friends \_\_\_ fully acquainted with the whole detail then I think it will have to be left [alone] by those who cannot unite with us \_\_\_ Among the subscribers are some of the [illegible] advocates for [the cause] that the whole country can boast of \_

[Pounds Sterling]30 was in present lying in my hands as a surplus, with the[?alacrity] with which the money has been given..

- I have deposit/report of [said monies] to the parties so giving if then thy were at liberty to alter this course if upon further thought thy had the least desire for this \_\_\_ The original papers were to be placed in the hands of a lawyers fd of F D in Boston, for his wishes copies to be forwarded to me & to receive them direct from our hands\_ We have no fears at all of the time character of the transaction being undertaken in America\_ it has been openly explained \_ when called for will be explained to the world \_ So my brother in law Thos\_ [Cump/Dumphrey ]has invested \_ it is the [desire/wish] of the Master that we acknowledge not his "right"\_\_\_ I have told him to his face that "slavery is an accursed system"\_\_\_ and [is] incompatible with the opinion of the Gospel\_\_\_ I am in correspondence with many members of the American churches & I say the same thing to all of them \_

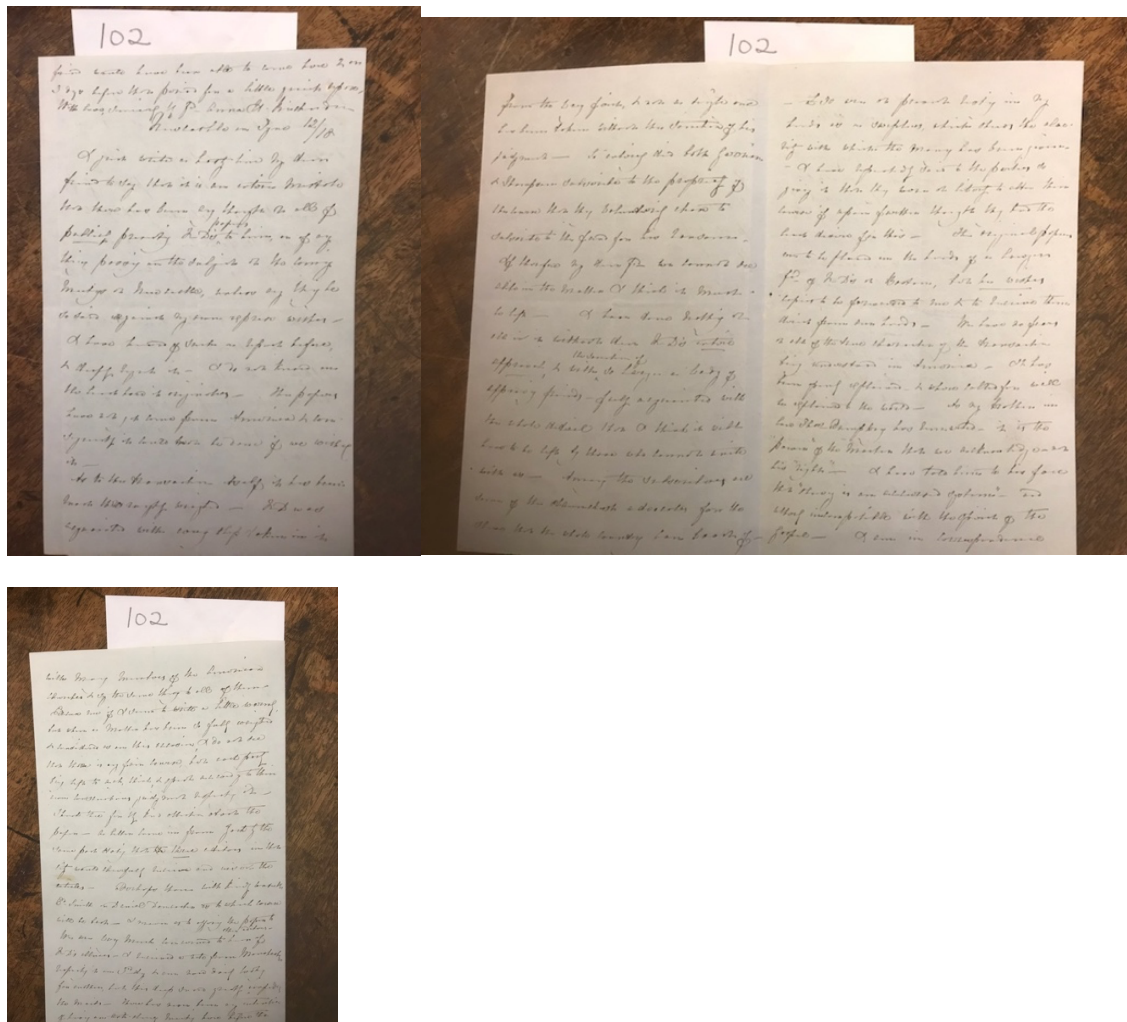
Excuse me if I seem to write a little warning but when a matter has [been] so fully weighed & understood as on this occasion, I do not see that there is any fair course, but each party being left to each, & speak according to their own [scrupulous] judgment respecting it \_

Thank thee for thy kind attention about the papers \_\_ a letter came in from York by the same post noting that three editors in that city would cheerfully retrieve and insert the articles \_ Perhaps thou will kindly consult E-Smith or Daniel Dom [illegible] as to which course will be best \_\_ I mean as to offering the papers to other editors.

We were very much concerned to hear of F-D's illness \_ I received a note from Manchester purporting to 3<sup>rd</sup> day I am now doing looking for another but this deep snow greatly impeding the mails \_\_ There has more been every intention of having an anti-slavery meeting here before the 20<sup>th</sup> but we had much hoped that our [dear] friend would have been able to come here 3 days before thou poised for a little quiet repose

With love, [illegible] yr fd \_ Anna H Richardson

Newcastle on Tyne 12/18



## References

*Sources: [radicaltyneside.org](http://radicaltyneside.org) and *Wikipedia**

Richardson, Anna (1859): Little Laura, the Kentucky Abolitionist: An Address to the Young Friends of the Slave. Newcastle-on-Tyne, England: Thomas Pigg and Co.