

LITTLE LAURA,
THE
KENTUCKY ABOLITIONIST
AN ADDRESS
TO THE YOUNG FRIENDS OF THE SLAVE.

NEWCASTLE:
PRINTED BY THOMAS PIGG AND CO., CLAYTON STREET.
1859.

This is an annotated text of *Little Laura, the Kentucky Abolitionist*, published in 1859 in Newcastle, Great Britain. Original spelling, punctuation and page citations have been retained; minor typographic errors have been corrected.

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Introduction

Antislavery literature was a transatlantic Anglo-American literature, including prolific juvenile publications. Most antislavery juvenilia consists of fiction, poetry, or homilies. However, this text is a rare example of a funds appeal directed at children. It instances the political organizing strategy of involving children in social reform movements, a strategy that the antislavery and temperance movements probably originated.

The British author of *Little Laura* remains unknown, but was likely associated with the international peace movement and its Peace Society organized by US social reformer, peace advocate, and antislavery activist Elihu Burritt. Burritt was best-known as a prominent peace activist, was involved in establishing antiwar organizations, organizing international conferences, and promoting world government. Women's peace organizations distributed Burritt's tracts and journals, including *The Herald of Peace* (1819-1900s). These women's organizations included Olive Leaf Societies and Olive Leaf Circles in the United States and Great Britain. *The Herald of Peace* published a children's supplement entitled *The Olive Leaf, or Peace Magazine for the Young* (1844-1856) and the 'olive leaf' theme was employed frequently elsewhere. As mentioned on its first page, this appeal was published after the demise of *The Olive Leaf*. The appeal organizers probably employed its British subscription lists to reach donors, but they intended it for a much broader audience.

This sextodecimo pamphlet tells the story of Laura B., a young girl who helps her father in a Kentucky newspaper that publishes antislavery articles at great risk and personal sacrifice. In a style that mixes sentiment, realism, and epistolary form, the pamphlet relates Laura's dedication to the antislavery cause, her death at age ten, and her family's financial difficulties. The appeal concludes by soliciting British children for funds to assist Laura's family.

'Laura B.' was almost certainly Laura Bailey, the daughter of William Shreve Bailey (1806-1886), a Kentucky mechanic and abolitionist. He published the *Newport News* (est. 1839), the *Kentucky Weekly News* (1851-1858), and *The Free South* (1858-1866). Bailey advocated immediate emancipation, encountered mob violence that destroyed his press in 1851 and 1859, and received support on several occasions from British abolitionist circles. US census records of 1850 for Campbell County, Kentucky, list a four year-old girl "L.V." among the Bailey family, which grew to ten children by the 1860 census but does not include either "Laura" or "L.V." Most of the Bailey family appears to have been engaged in presswork. Laura apparently was born in 1846 and died in 1856. Her family did have substantial financial difficulties as a result of their father's antislavery publishing, and British supporters eventually arranged for Bailey to undertake a speaking tour beginning in 1860. Beyond the present pamphlet, little is known of Laura Bailey's short life.

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**LITTLE LAURA,
THE KENTUCKY ABOLITIONIST.**

TO THE YOUNG FRIENDS OF THE SLAVE.

TIME was when the late Editors of the "Olive Leaf" had the pleasure of talking from month to month to many of their dear young friends. From circumstances beyond their reach, it is long since this pleasant intercourse was closed. Perhaps we may be allowed again to address them, though in another fashion. It is not, however, with the late readers of "The Olive Leaf" alone that we desire a little intercourse. We want to have a few minutes' talk with every little boy and girl whom we can reach throughout the British Islands who feels for the down-trodden American Slave, and wishes for him to be free.

In a few words we shall tell our young friends why we address ourselves *to them* on the present occasion.

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A year ago there was a dear little girl named Laura B. living in one of the Slave States of America, who longed very earnestly for the coloured people around her to be liberated from their bondage. She had seen them in chains, and her heart ached very much over their wrongs and sorrows. Laura was not alone in thinking with tenderness of the afflicted slaves. Her father was a very brave man, and her mother and eleven brothers and sisters were warm-hearted people, and for a long time past had been doing all they could to assist in liberating the poor Negroes. Laura's father has a printing press; and with this press he prints a newspaper which contains a great deal about the slaves, and urges the American government and the American people not to allow the poor blacks to be slaves any longer. The coloured race (and also many of their white neighbours) are very grateful to Laura's father for taking up the Negro's cause so boldly; but, as we may suppose, those who "own " the slaves are *not* glad, for they want the poor creatures to go on toiling for their employers without pay, and, two or three years ago, they got so angry as to hire wicked men to tear and burn down Mr. B's premises and printing-office,

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and tried their utmost, in every way they could, to put an end to his noble efforts.

But Laura's father was not a man to be stopped in his course by this mean and ungenerous usage, and his wife and children were equally brave-hearted, and one and all of them determined to press on, and still to publish their anti-slavery newspaper.

Mr. B. was not rich, and to effect all they desired, they had to mortgage their home (a kind of half selling it), and the children were willing to be but poorly clothed and often to have hardly sufficient food; but still they pressed on, and at last a good part of the burned buildings were restored, and the young people continued to labour hard in assisting their parent to carry on his arduous work, and even young Laura, though at that time scarcely ten years of age, learned to handle type, and was as busy as any one in helping her dear father. Time rolled on, and though pressed down by many hardships, one and all of these good people still laboured diligently; but in the spring of this year little Laura's cheek grew pale, and now she is no more, for in the latter end of July she was taken from her loving family.

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Mr. B. wrote to us on that touching occasion:—"But first I must tell you of the loss of our youngest daughter Laura, who was between 12 and 13 years old. She died on the 25th inst., and was buried yesterday. She had been ailing for some five or six months, and was the only delicate one of my children, but did not become seriously ill until about three weeks before her death. The day before she died, she sang one verse of the song

"Do they miss me at home?"

in a tender, weak, and delicate voice, bringing a shower of tears from every eye in the room where she was. So truthful were the words, 'She would be missed at borne,' that they, struck every one to the heart. So nimble were her little fingers in picking up type, and so deep was her sympathy for the coloured people, some of whom she had seen in chains, that she worked often with eagerness for their sake. I cannot describe the affecting scenes that occurred within a few days prior to her death."

On receiving this affecting intelligence we asked *Mr. B.* for a few more particulars respecting his precious child, and we have this day received his reply. On reading it, our thoughts turned to you, beloved young friends,

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and in a few hours' time we determined not only to tell you about Laura, but also to ask if YOU cannot assist her worthy family in their efforts to set the Negro free, in at least one of the Slave States.

One hundred pounds have already been sent to them, but it will require five times as much to make all straight, and for them to have their home, and all that belongs to it, as their own again; for Mr. B. and his family have worn themselves down by their untiring labours, and have left themselves short of the ordinary comforts and necessaries of life.

Before we go on, however, you must hear something more about Laura. Her father wrote to us on the 21st Sept.—" You wish some further particulars of the last few weeks of our departed daughter. During the time of her three weeks' serious illness she had but little to say. She had been in a poorly state of health for about six months, and we rather feared her confinement in the office at her printing case did not agree with her, although the rest are all hearty children. We therefore sent her to school, in which she took much interest; but her mind seemed to be bent upon the freedom of the poor coloured people, and she talked about it so

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much to her classmates, that they also became seriously interested in their freedom.

"There were three or four children who came to her school whose parents had a few slaves and these children (little girls), told our Laura that their parents did not want them to associate with her because she was an 'Abolitionist,' but this seemed to cause quite a number of children to gather around her at times of recess, both girls and boys, to talk with her and ask her questions; but Laura, God bless her, was so earnest and kind in her responses, touching the rights of the poor coloured people (whose children would often steal into the group under the shade of trees where they sat to hear her answers), that they could not help but love her. They all saw her soul was moved with righteousness—open, clear, and candid. The mark attempted to be put upon her by wealth, to avoid the little 'Abolitionist' had contrary effect. The children had no interest in the 'peculiar institution,'* further than to see and converse with 'the Abolition girl,' in whom they found nothing desperate or wicked but on the contrary humanity, kindness, and love. She would shake hands with any of the children on leaving the school, that were pre-

*The term applied to slavery in the United States

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sent when starting. She always told them they must love one another on earth, to be happy in heaven. Indeed, my friend, I am proud to have been the father of so good a child. She caused many of her companions to express the wish that *they* were good 'Abolitionists.' When she became so poorly as to be kept at home, the children came from school at noon to see her. I could see that they all loved her, and so could my wife. We were pleased to see their fond attachment for her. After she was confined to her bed, she seemed to be more concerned about the industry of her brothers and sisters, in getting up the matter for the newspaper in time, and often told them when she got well, she would make their work lighter; but as she grew worse, she inquired for, and requested, her neighbouring friends to come in and pray for her, which they did with true Christian devotion.

"The day before she died, she sang the last verse of the song, which I send you by this mail. I find that the odium attached to the word 'Abolitionist' has been assuaged in some circles, through the kindness and earnestness of Laura's pleading, and from believing, as I think all her acquaintances do, that she is

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now a loving angel in the arms of a blessed Redeemer."

Precious little Laura! How sweet is the thought of her standing under the shade of the green trees of Kentucky in the heat of the summer sun, and of her pleading with her school-fellows in the spirit of that Saviour, who came "to comfort all that mourn," "to heal the broken-hearted," and "to preach deliverance to the captives." It is very interesting also to know that even the coloured children were often amongst Laura's hearers. How their hearts would be gladdened by hearing her speak of these blessed truths! We fancy we hear her telling them that our Heavenly Father is "no respecter of persona" and that the hue of the skin does not in any way lessen His loving kindness and tender mercy towards those that fear Him—telling them also that Jesus is equally a Saviour *to them*, and will take ALL little children as lambs into His arms if they only come to Him as their Lord and Shepherd.

We feel quite sure, beloved children, that by this time you also love little Laura. Would you not like to assist her in her work of love and mercy? "Though dead she yet speaketh;" and we think if you try, though

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she is gone, very many of you might learn to walk in her footsteps.

Our particular business, however, just now is with the poor coloured people of Kentucky, and in assisting Laura's father to labour for their freedom. We want him and his family to have their "homestead" as their own again; for, as we said before, they mortgaged it to pay the debts incurred by the destruction of their property, and for provisions, clothing, &c., when the riotous mob burned down Mr. B.'s machine shop and printing office two or three years since.

We should like you, dear young friends, to talk over this matter with your parents and teachers, and if they *quite* approve of your collecting small sums on the slaves' behalf, it would give us very great pleasure to forward these to Mr. B. as "collected by the children of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in remembrance of his departed daughter." A great many little sums put together would form a large one, and we are much inclined to believe that in making this kind effort, you will be led to think more and more of the suffering slave. Thirty years ago (as many of you are aware), Great Britain had slaves of her own in the West India Islands.

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Happily, these have been set free. With God's blessing, this was chiefly brought about by the lovers of freedom in this country striving very, very earnestly for the Negroes' emancipation. We want the same efforts to be made for the American slaves; and being now in close correspondence with some of those who live and labour amongst them, we fully believe that by strengthening *their* hands, *we* also may aid the good work. Mr. B. lately remarked that it was not his own family alone that would be grateful for sympathy and aid from this country, but that the friends of freedom "throughout Kentucky" would thankfully rejoice at this kind help being extended.

We now leave the matter in the hands of those interested, simply supplying them with little forms for putting down subscriptions, and assuring them that if these are sent (when more or less filled up) to

*Anne H Richardson, 54, Westmoreland Terrace,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne,*

the proceeds shall be carefully forwarded to Kentucky, for the objects referred to in this appeal.

Newcastle, 10 Mo., 11th, 1859.

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The last stanza of the following sweet song, is that which was sung by little Laura the day before she died

I.

Do they miss me at home?—do they miss me?
'Twould be an assurance most dear,
To know at this moment some loved one
Were saying, I wish he were here.
To feel that the group at the fireside
Were thinking of me as I roam
O yes, 't would be joy without measure,
To know that they missed me at home.

II.

When twilight approaches, the season
That ever is sacred to song,
Does some one repeat my name over,
And sigh that I tarry so?
And is there a chord in the music
That's missed when my voice is away,
And a chord in each heart that awaketh
Regret at my wearisome stay?

III

Do they set me a chair near the table
When evening's home pleasures are nigh,
When the candles are lit in the parlour,
And the stars in the calm azure sky ?

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And when the "good nights" are repeated,
And all lay them down to their sleep,
Do they think of the absent, and waft me
A whispered "good night" while they weep?

IV.

Do they miss me at home?—do they miss me
At morning, at noon, or at night ?
And lingers one gloomy shade round them,
That only my presence can light?
Are joys less inviting and welcome,
And pleasures less hale than before,
Because one is missed from the circle,
Because I am with them no more ?

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