

## Appendix 1: Emma Alderson's Letters

Collected here is a very limited selection from Alderson's voluminous correspondence, intended to convey something of her writing style and her impressions of life in her adopted country, including both public and personal matters. Indeed, one of the great joys in reading her correspondence lies in the way she moves between the public and the personal. Included here are all of the references from the letters to the work of producing *Our Cousins in Ohio*. The complete correspondence, from her departure from England in 1842 to her death in 1847, is reprinted with introductions and explanatory notes in Ulin, *Writing Home*.

These excerpts are given with no corrections to her often idiosyncratic spelling, grammar and punctuation except for a double space to aid the reader where we might expect a full stop. Lines are broken as in the originals, with significant variation from letter to letter depending on the size of the paper. Words stricken out by Alderson are represented as such. Her insertions are given between diagonal lines \like this/. The two-digit number identifies the letter's place in *Writing Home*, where they are lightly edited for readability. The shelf number (beginning with "HT") identifies the original letter in Correspondence of Mary Howitt (1799–1888), Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham.

The final selections in this section reproduce all references from the letters to the sisters' work on *Our Cousins in Ohio*.

### 24. To Ann Botham, 1–26 December, 1844 HT/7/2/20

*Alderson, like so many commentators on life in America, frequently extols the opportunities for self-improvement with instances like this one. Howitt incorporates this story into Our Cousins (32–3), but in this case without the commentary. In this letter, she references the split between the "Hicksite" and the "Orthodox" Quakers in which she sided with the latter, while Howitt would have identified more with the former until she resigned her membership altogether. Our Cousins avoids all reference to such controversy.*

I love to hear the stories of

the way in which the old settlers, now many of them wealthy people first began their course of careful industry & accumulation \in the West/ they will often tell one that the fine highly cultivated neighbourhood in which they reside with its rich farms was when they came a thick forest that they cut down the trees from \the grounds on/ which the old log house stands to build it & cleared bit by bit, till the country opened into the beautiful state it now is with fine pastures, noble corn fields & the still untouched & highly ornamental remains of its wilderness state in the skirting woods & the noble river. Last week a Friend of this meeting spent a few days with us, she is a little hard featured old woman a strict disciplinarian and stickler for consistency and I have often been struck with her clear-headed remarks in meetings for discipline she has known much sorrow as all her children have gone off to the Hicksites & left her in her old age in a religious sense a solitary widow. she is a native of Carolina & interested me with her accounts of many persons & things, the events of the American war & her own life she was one of those who from nothing by industry & care became wealthy at least in her own estimation, she said when she was married all her possessions were clothes of her own manufacture, a bed of her own making & a cow & calf with three sheep which her father gave her her husband had a little land but was in debt 3£, her wedding dress was all her own spinning & weaving except her cap & apron which were of fine cambric manufactured by her sister the first horse they bought was from a stranger travelling from Kentucky, he had a wild breed in a part of the Forest & offered them a “crittur” wild from the woods & eight years old for a saddle “a great coat pattern” of her own making which she had by her & 12 yards of shirting linen like some she had there in the loom they [a]greed & in a fortnight the man brought the horse as “fine & black & slick” as ever was seen & the goods which they had worked day & night to complete the husband at the saddle & she at her spinning & weaving, were delivered & for two yards more of the linen the man broke the horse & made him available to them well by persevering industry they got on so that on their removal from Carolina to this Western country they brought 2000 dollars with them.

**42. To Margaret and Herbert Howitt [from William Charles Alderson] March 7 to 26, 1846 (HT 18/4)**

*This letter here was ostensibly written by William Charles to his cousins, though the handwriting is Alderson's. Howitt draws from the first part of this passage in her description of Squire Peacham's Yankee Jumper near the end of February. The rest of this passage appears a few pages later in a form quite close to this original (42–6).*

Now my dear cousins though the snow is quite gone and we talk of nothing but spring it is not a week since I saw one of the most primitive of Yankee Jumper it was made of two long branches of hickory which is a very supple & pliant wood, these were bent upwards to form the shafts & on the body of the sleigh was a great smooth log fixed behind stood up a long pole on the top of which a horse's tail waved as a pennon, two men were riding bravely along on this old affair & seemed well pleased with the merriment of beholders. One evening the merry sleigh bells announced an arrival at our door & our kind friends the Taylors with whom I think you must by this time feel well acquainted came in to make a call. We have been very busy this week in having a smoke-house put up, our neighbour the joiner had prepared it all ready and there was nothing to do but dig a foundation when the weather permitted & bring the frame & put it up just as you would build a play house every part of which fits together the weatherboarding and shingles are nailed on after & in a few hours we have a clever little house where no house before stood. Today father has hung up our hams & other salt meat & the first fire is set of green hickory logs, the smoke of which ~~are~~ is/ considered

best. 8<sup>th</sup> This has been such a warm bright day that we sate out on the grass & little Alice rolled upon a carpet & pulled the dry bents with great delight we staid out on the Piazza talking & repeating hymns in the moonlight & last week only 8 days ago the icy wind & sleet made us feel so cold that we did not know how to keep ourselves warm even by a good fire the ground was a foot deep in snow & behold what a change a week has made. 9. To day Father & Mother were busy gardening William is ploughing our new vinyard & I have been very busy chopping down young locust trees with my hatchet. Sister & I played at driving a drove of 3000 hogs to Claifornia, Agnes sold them to me & I had to hunt them up out of the woods, Annie was the settler to whom I took them the first drove I lost by straying & the \ravages of the/ wolves on the Rocky Mountains so on my second journey I took Fanny & Timothy & found them of great use, that time we arrived safe & the Settler paid me 6000 dollars. This last week has been a very busy one on second day they began to plough the vinyard — Father planted out some trees a weeping willow & a shumach the weeping willow here grows to an immense size & is one of the most beautiful trees we have seen, its long pendant branches droop many yards and wave most gracefully in the breeze, besides it is the first tree that is green & one of the last to lose its leaves, so you may be sure we admire it & no wonder it is a general favourite. Third-day mother & sisters & I went an errand about two miles in the country the sun shone warm & bright & the birds filled the air with their joyful notes but we often miss the sweet song of the

lark on such mornings as these Oh how sweetly would  
 it be singing in England now beneath such a bright sky  
 & warm sun; however it was very delightful without the lark  
 we went through a wood but found no flowers, but the  
 trees are some of them in bloom as the elm &c. we had  
 a fine view of the wooded hills by the river & down  
 into the deep glen where we spent a pleasant day  
 last fall. At the house to which we went grew some  
 very fine golden willows, they looked beautiful now like  
 a net work of golden wires & rods. here is the first vinyard  
 that was planted at Cincinnati it is 5 acres in extent  
 & they often make some thousand gallons of wine from  
 it they reckon a bushel of catauba grapes will make  
 4 galls of wine.

**46. To Mary Howitt, May 14 to June 14, 1846 (Ht/7/1/68)**

*This letter combines many subjects that occupy Alderson throughout the correspondence, from public issues like the plight of the “Randolph Negroes” and the treatment of incarcerated people to the everyday concerns of raising children and running a farm. It also offers a lengthy discussion of what it would mean to her to have her correspondence published, as it eventually was in Our Cousins in Ohio, though, sadly, she did not live to realise those “visions of a sofa & dinner service etc.” As postage stamps were only recently introduced for domestic mail, the cost of postage was collected from the recipient.*

I was beginning, my beloved sister to feel a little  
 weary or rather discouraged in the continuance of our journal  
 & but that thy letter has revived me, I should almost have  
 given it up fearing it was become wearisome to thee & not  
 worth the trouble or expense it must be to receive so many  
 sheets & I fear they have been \very/ expensive as I have transmitted a

sheet & a half but I will do so no more unless thou assures me it has not been the case, here we now pay for all letters foreign or otherwise by weight, anything under  $\frac{1}{2}$  an oz comes 500 miles for ten cents & I begin to fear you are rather more restrictive with regard to foreign letters if so pray dear sister excuse my thankless I am pleased to think that these minute details bring us more intimately into acquaintance & that thou thinks our country life so interesting & so common as it is in events interesting to thee and dearest mother, we live so retired and have so little time for reading and the occupations that engage your attention that I think to thee it must seem a very unprofitable sort of existence, sewing for the family & instructing the children with the occasional interruptions of visiting & receiving company leave me no leisure to indulge in the luxury of books, I sometimes hope it may be otherwise but at present see no prospect. I have had some visions of a sofa & dinner service etc. if this should really ever prove worth thy trouble of arranging & publishing, but am not very sanguine on this head, of course my share must be very small, but I will not deny that 20 £ would make me feel very rich & I should be thankful to call as much my own. – The last day or two Charles and Agnes have been much concerned on behalf of a poor sick chicken Charles carried it about in his bosom & gave it cold water in abundance (the best possible remedy for invalid chickens,) they built it a little log-house on the grass & in the course of a few hours it is so far revived as to be able to peck & before night joined the brood under its mother's wing last morning to their great joy it came to peck the cornmeal food with the others & is now strong & healthy, it was whilst sick fed out of cups formed of the trumpet flowers & eat in the course of the two day two of these full of soaked bread....

Charles and Annie went down with their parents to the city, they saw a steam boat, the Caroline, leave the shore & steer its course westward down the Ohio for New Orleans filled with 400 soldiers, poor things the cannon were fired, guns on the shore saluted them with land reports as they passed people waved their handkerchiefs & hats, & the men on board answered with a faint cheering but it was a melancholy sight to see the poor deluded fellows going to inevitable destruction to many; pestilence & death in various forms awaits them & so had the sense of these things pressed upon their minds that upwards of one hundred deserted on the point of embarkation and what is worse a whole waggon load were driven down to the boat in a state of helpless intoxication.

This was an eventful day, they heard of the landing of 395 emancipated slaves, & I give you the account related to them by a friend who witnessed the scene. it was about 8 oclock in the morning when the steam boat which brought them arrived, they were a motley group men women & children, old & young all decently clad & bringing with them their waggons & household stuff & considerable property some say near 50000 dollars The history of their emancipation is interesting and the 9 years struggle since they obtained it between power and justice has nobly for the honor of the south terminated in their favour and they are on their way to Mercer County in this State which is chiefly settled by coloured people & where a large tract of land has been purchased for them, -- they were the property of John Randolph a

wealthy planter of Roanoke in North Carolina<sup>1</sup> he was in his life-time a strenuous & violent ~~supp~~ upholder of slavery yet even then his conscience witnessed against him & in one of these visitations of light & repentance he made his will liberating his slaves and providing handsomely for their transportation & maintenance in a free State, it is said that on his death bed when unable to speak he obtained a pencil & card & in an agony of mind wrote the word “Remorse” it was all he could accomplish, but how much does that one word convey, he felt that the redeeming act of his will did not satisfy an accusing conscience nor atone in the sight of Almighty God for a life spent in oppression & injustice. ...

The children had a delightful visit at Mount Auburn, they played with their cousin Charles & Ella climbed up into cherry trees to gather the fruit eat till they could eat no more stained all their clothes with the deep red juice of the morella cherries & came home ti[r]ed & Annie fast asleep on the carriage seat at 10 oclock at night. 4<sup>th</sup> This is a day of universal jubilee in America, on it the declaration of Independence was signed and the anniversary is kept with a feeling of national triumph and rejoicing, would that one more glorious 4<sup>th</sup> might come when the nation (then wholly great) should break the chains of slavery & declare every man & woman free free free. ...

5<sup>th</sup> Cousin Charles came up with the family from

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, Randolph was from Roanoke, Virginia. Howitt corrects Alderson’s error in the New York edition but not the London.



meeting, during his stay they, the children have had a <orn>  
 of joyous holiday, they swing, and play till they are  
 tired & swing again for rest, & then go to fulfill some  
 merry fancy till the heat & weariness bring them again  
 into the wood house to the unfailing comforter the swing. ...

9<sup>th</sup> Charles and his cousin walked down to the city  
 it was a great pleasure to anticipate far before riding and the  
 two boys were up early and all impatience to be off on the  
 road they saw the “chain gang” at work mending it, they are  
 men of both colours black & white, who for several offences  
 are condemned to labour thus exposed to public view  
 they have each a long iron chain to which is attached  
 a heavy iron ball fastened round their right ankle  
 they work in silence and are not permitted to  
 hold converse with any, an overseer with a loaded  
 musket attends them, and follows the waggon  
 which conveys them to & from their work in a  
 buggy with this musket on his shoulder, it is a barbarous  
 custom & one which many feel to be a disgrace to the  
 country. after this they came to the great steam-saw-  
 mill & watched the saws at work “ripping” the boards. ...  
 Then they went down to Cousin Charles father’s store & got their  
 pockets full of almonds & spent 5 cents in a glass of soda  
 water each & afterwards refreshed themselves with  
 a shower-bath & were amused with the multitude  
 of things in the store & streets, a dray running away,  
 troops of soldiers, toys & pictures and an endless variety  
 of people & things.

11<sup>th</sup> John Randolph once offered to a friend to manumit

every slave in his possession if he could prove that they would be happier free than under his care and mild protection for he was a good master, no argument this for slavery, but he knew the injustice of his country to the poor down-trodden African & doubtless felt he could secure him more comfort than the proud white men were willing he should enjoy. And now they began to feel the truth of this judgment based on the knowledge of injustice, when they arrived at the landing place near their destination a mob met them & refused to let them proceed to take possession of their land nor to enter the country & they were obliged to turn off & form an encampment at a distance there to wait the result & they now are & possibly if allowed even to be quiet here must remain many months.

With dear love to all ours, most affectionately Emma A.  
in great haste

### Letters on the making of *Our Cousins in Ohio*

*Contemporary reviews of Our Cousins in Ohio differed in the weight they attributed to Howitt's editorial hand. One writer from The Child's Friend and Youth's Magazine asserted that a "kind of diary" was "found" after Alderson died and that Howitt "took it, and rewrote parts of it and gave to it the title, 'Our Cousins in Ohio.'" Even the leading Howitt scholar Linda Peterson, with limited access to the correspondence, described Our Cousins as "a transcription of letters from the emigrant ... to her sister" (Peterson 2011, 59). What is suggested by a closer look at the letters themselves is the intentionality of the collaboration up until Alderson's death. (See also letter #46 above.)*

#### 39. To Mary Howitt, 15–21 February 1846 (Ht/7/4/10):

You will I fear think the letters of Wm Charles to  
his cousins silly, and yet the idea possessed me so  
much from hearing thee mention the Children's Year  
that I thought I would risk it I have found  
it to myself very interesting to watch the children  
their little adventures & ways of doing & thinking  
besides if you want to be acquainted with them  
I think it will be the most likely way of making  
you know their characters, I find as our  
out of door life increases more to interest &  
relate & perhaps in the end dear Mary it  
will be somewhat original to thee & them  
to know how children in America spend their  
days & what they think & say amidst such  
a new life

#### 61. To Mary Howitt, 2 Feb 1847 (Ht/7/1/77):

Now dearest sister, I have  
a word to say to thee, should thou in arranging this journal  
find it worth publishing be so kind as not to give the real

names of the grown persons at least It would do as well to alter them & might be like telling tales, I have had much pleasure in writing it & had I had more time but especially more ability it might have been much more interesting but I intend to continue it two years thrown into one will be fuller of incident. I sent thee a description of our home will this of our woods do? if it is not right nor what thou wishes tell me.

**69. To Mary Howitt and Ann Botham, 24 July 1847 (Ht/7/2/39):**

I shall certainly attend to thy request about additions for the children's book there have been many little incidents which I have thought of transcribing but want of time has been my constant excuse & on the whole last year was a much more eventful one than this so far has been, did thou ever get the letter with the account of old Jack, his death & burial as thou never mentioned it I feared it did not reach thee

**71. Letter from Emma Alderson to Mary Howitt, Oct 1847 (Ht/7/1/79)**

I am going to try, my beloved Sister to comply with thy request & give thee a few more materials to add to the children's journal of last year I shall write without reference to dates & if thou thinks them interesting then thou canst use them as thou best approves.

**Works Cited**

Ulin, Donald Ingram, editor. *Writing Home a Quaker Immigrant On the Ohio Frontier : The Letters of Emma Botham Alderson*. Bucknell University Press, 2021.