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CHAPTER IV

LOVES OF A RHAPSODIST

1789-91 Aetat.18-21

Some time after the 17th. of January 1789 Brown made the accidental discovery that his sight was not normal. As Allen and others say he found himself affected by myopism,a technical expression that means nothing more than short sight or near-sightedness. Brown describes it in a piece which he wrote entitled "Many men,many minds" published seven years later in his Literary Magazine[1]. He used it as an example of physical deformity as compared to mental. There is no evidence to show that he ever wore glasses to correct the defect.[2]

> "I was eighteen years of age before I discovered that I could not see as far and as keenly as my friends. Then,the mere accident of putting on a pair of spectacles,which enabled me to discover that a lady,on the opposite side of the street,had red hair instead of brown,as I had previously imagined,disclosed the secret to me of my own myopism. On inquiry I found,to my great surprise,that my neighbors had long enjoyed a privilege of which I was wholly destitute, without being conscious of my forlorn condition. I had often heard of the man in the moon,but I never suspected that this noted personage had precluded all doubts of his existence,by actually staring in the face of every one who turned his eyes upon that luminary. I never dreamed that the chief lineaments of his gigantic face,the eyes,nose, mouth,were plainly to be seen by every long-sighted beholder,in the round disk of a full moon,I thought the belief of his translation was founded only on the report of those ancient and grave annalists,whose industry and veracity have rescued from oblivion the memorable exploits of Jack the Giantcide,and the swallow-tamer Tom Thumb. As soon as I put on spectacles,my mind was completely illuminated on this important subject,and,to speak gravely,those mountains and gulphs in the lunar disk,which,in their local relation,

1 Vol.VI,p.249.
2 Gould:Biographic Clinics,suggests an interesting theory that tuberculosis may be a possible reflex from astygmatic eye-strain but it is probable he has the cart before the horse.

bear a fantastic resemblance to the human lineaments, were suddenly unveiled to my view, though, till then, I had never seen any thing in that orb, but a dull, uniform brightness."

Allen[1] gives an entirely different account of this[a] incident from one of Brown's letters to Wilkins where

"may be found a sentiment of a very singular nature, as it shows his propensity to extract felicity from a subject which is commonly regarded as unfortunate.... He discovers that he possesses a vision superior to that of ordinary men. He had only to apply to his eyes, what Dr. Rush calls the aid of declining vision, and he is ushered into a new and beautiful creation. He observes that it is in his power to make the sun, the stars, and all surrounding creation sparkle upon his view with renovated lustre and beauty. Not satisfied with this, he goes on to compare his situation with the situation of those who had ever beheld the sun in all his majesty and effulgence. To him he was in all his glories, a stranger: he had never been <u>familiarly</u> acquainted with so glorious a personage.

On the other hand to those who had always revelled in the magnificence of nature, they had become satiated with his glory. Creation to them could unfold no new beauty; a glance of the eye satisfied them, and it was a glory that palled upon the sense. To him all this was a territory unseen, and it seemed as if nature had veiled her radiance from his view, to the end that he might when he pleased, indulge himself in the enjoyment of her bounties. He was able to discern light enough to guide his footsteps, and to answer all the purposes of social intercourse; all beyond this was novelty, was exquisite enjoyment. To those who were surrounded with more expanse of vision, all these blessings were denied. He therefore felicitated himself on the thought that he had not the optics of ordinary men."

1 Pp.48-9, ~~2 Pp.55-6~~. retained by Dorothy; In both instances ~~it was given~~ out of chronological order.

Brown's correspondence had become sufficiently voluminaous to impress Allen with the appropriateness ~~to make~~ making at this time a general statement in regard to its character. He says:[2]

material

[2] Pp. 55-6.

" He taxed his correspondents always to make themselves the heroes of their own letters: nothing, he said, was productive of so much delight as to hear of their welfare, to share their joys and their sorrows. On the other hand, in his own letters he sedulously avoided the mention of himself, on the ground that he had nothing personal to communicate, which would give his correspondents pleasure; and his native delicacy forbade him to excite unnecessary pain. His correspondence, therefore, with his most intimate friends, wears a curious cast. On their side, is the utmost frankness in the disclosure of all the little circumstances affording them delight; on his part he joins in their joy, and revels in their intellectual hilarity; presents these circumstances again in a more fascinating shape, and makes his page the depository of all the benevolent sympathies in which he so munificently indulges. We should be led to suppose him entirely happy—that his heart was perfectly at ease. Now, in requital for all this frankness and confidence, what is communicated on his part? Literally nothing. When pressed on this subject, he declares that his own heart shall be the depository of its own gloomy sensations; and that when he cannot communicate pleasure, he will communicate nothing. He represents his afflictions as beyond the power of friendship to redress; and that it would be mean in him to excite sympathy so unavailing. "Do I wish the friendship of such men," he would say, "only to make myself a burthen to them? Must not they themselves despise me, if I thus

abuse their confidence, and endeavour to load them with the miseries which my unhappy fate has destined me to endure? Have I no other pleasure in friendship than what is derived from the miseries of my friends? No," he would say; "let me participate in all their joys and sorrows, but let my misfortunes be borne by myself." Thus does his private journal often furnish a most striking contrast to his familiar letters. By the former, we discover his heart to be oppressed with gloom and dejection; while, if we cast our eyes on a letter of the same date, we shall find him entering into all the gay and cheerful feelings of his friends—abandoning the contemplation of his own sorrows for a moment, to assist in the prolongation of their hilarity. His earliest character was formed on this romantic standard, nor did he ever renounce it afterwards. Not only in his epistolary, but in his personal intercourse with his friends, he acted on this principle: and if at any time he departed from this resolution by accident, he severely censures himself in his journal; taxes himself with pusillanimity, and makes the most ardent protestations that he will endeavour to amend. As an instance of his inflexible perseverance, he was once, at the house of a friend, afflicted with a malady[1] by which his life was put in the most imminent jeopardy. All the anxiety that he testified was, that he should become burthensome to his friends: a reflection which seemed to give him much more uneasiness than the pains with which he was afflicted."

1 His yellow fever sickness was so far as we know the only malady that threatened his life. Just what is intended is doubtful.

Such a statement comes as a distinct shock after ~~we have read~~ such letters as Brown wrote in 1788. It appears as if Allen had misrepresented, for none of the early letters now in existence show Brown inclined to gayety, even those ~~letters~~ given by Allen being equally as serious as those we get from other sources. ~~Lacking~~ Without the letters of his friends for comparison we can not be sure of the matter but the reader will at least agree that one could hardly tell ~~as~~ so much of himself in his correspondence as Brown has already done. Allen ~~was~~ appears at times a slovenly workman, he ~~probably~~ possibly read only a part of Brown's journals or was allowed to see and his statements such as ~~that~~ the one just given must ~~for our purpose~~ be stripped of his almost worthless and certainly confusing comment. At the same time that extract from the journal is ~~very~~ welcome, though we wish it had been given in full. ~~and longer.~~ he may have mixed up his notes. However

In his 1788 letters to Wilkins we have seen Brown suffering from melancholy, and about this time it ~~[illegible]~~ nearly came to a climax.

Having given up the law against the wishes of ~~many~~ the family as well as of his intimates

he ~~seems to have~~ reached about in the hope of finding ~~a few~~ at least one friend

from whom he could get the sympathy he ~~believed~~ said he needed — ~~His~~ perhaps after all he was only looking for flattery, which he called sympathy — ~~any way~~ imagination instead of ~~his unusual~~ intelligence was ~~leading~~ his ruling passion so that he ~~suffered~~ appeared to almost unbearably from despondency. He had

not made ~~any~~ satisfactory progress in his attempts at authorship, especially in a poetical line, and like ~~Gray and~~ many another author when young he allowed despondent day

to follow despondent day while ~~nothing~~ too little hard work was actually done. When he

came to write Ormond, ten years later, he put an autobiographic touch in ~~Chapter II.~~ the second ~~It~~ which may or may not be mere whimsical moonshine but could have had ~~its~~ a real foundation in his feeling at this time:

~~and reads:~~

> "The pressure of grief is sometimes such as to prompt us to seek a refuge in voluntary death. We must lay aside the burthen which we cannot sustain. If thought degenerate into a vehicle of pain, what remains but to destroy that vehicle? For this end, death is the obvious, but not the only, or morally speaking, the worst means. There is one method of obtaining the bliss of forgetfulness, in comparison with which suicide is innocent."

Letter ~~LI~~ fifty-one of Jane Talbot contains the same mysterious idea, chastened by the deeper reflections and experiences of a crowded dozen ~~couple of~~ years; a "cure-all" as if it were drawn from his journal of this time ~~and~~ needing only slight ~~noted~~ revision to fit it to the framework of his fiction.

It seems that all his arguing and assurance when he abandoned the law was perhaps after all only a part of the real reasons for his melancholy turn of mind. Besides the merciless nagging he suffered, he was torn by possible disappointment as an author and was involved in more than one ineffectual love affair.

His father's parchment-covered copy-book dated 1796 contains some verses indicated as written at this time. They are addressed "to Miss D.P---," and read:

add note on stanza III

× This stanza appears as a fragment in Jane Hunter Brown's 5 June 1868 letter to Henry Arnitt Brown. Line 1 has no commas or contraction; 2 gives the for thy and 3 has no contraction. ~~And~~ It may have been selected as the best ~~one~~ which it is ~~or may have been the only one~~ to be sent to his brother Joseph at Edenton, N.C. Curiously it is the only one that might be applied to any recipient.

"I
To thee enchanting Nymph, in artless guise,
The muse untutor'd in poetic lore,
Her freedom yielding to Love's strictest ties,
  Now suits her song thy favors to implore.

II
No longer now, thy kind regards withold,
  Nor yield reluctant to a Virgin's fears,
Nor when the secret of my love is told;
  Do thou despiteousl turn obdurate ears.

III
When absent, or conceal'd, I mourn thy flight
  Auspicious fancy decks thy portrait gay
Thy form still hovers on my raptur'd sight,
  As twilight glimmers on the skirts of day.

IV
But when thy gentle self appears in view,
  Like rosy Venus, absent from her sphere,
Flames that inactive slept revive anew,
  My Breast attenuating glows with hope & fear.

1 The word was written dispetious, it is French in origin and means malicious. Brown's authority, Johnson, traces it to Spenser (Fairy Queen, II, vii, 62.).

V

'Tis then I languish in ecstatic dream
And claim the lover's portion to be blest
What force has beauties' soft etherial beam
To raise new fervors in the impassion'd breast."

The iambic pentameter which Brown owed to the influence of Pope was a favorite in his couplets but the variation accomplished by riming every other line, which may have been inspired by Gray's Elegy, is a pleasing novelty. With no desire to be satiric the change, though obviously made for ease, is justified. With slight revisions of their occasional halting rhythm these verses could have been made excellent; as a graceful ~~jeu d'esprit~~ scintillation they have considerable charm though no lover could ever have expected only twenty lines to throw the nymph into his arms. (especially I and V)

Now, who is D.P.? In 1789 there was one eligible young lady whose initials exactly fit and she was Dolly Payne--afterwards the unfortunate Dolly Todd and finally the famous Dolly Madison, wife of the fourth President of the United States.

Dolly Payne belonged to the same family as ~~the famous~~ John Howard Payne whom we shall find Brown ~~intimate~~ acquainted with in 1806. The Payne family was one of the Philadelphia group of Quakers ~~families~~ of which the Browns were also a part. Just what beauty Dolly had when she attracted Brown is hard to be learned to-day. There is

no doubt of her sprightliness and intelligence--too many have testified to them and her ways and sayings verbal and epistolary still remain in the records. That she had personal beauty has also been traditionally recorded but unfortunately the ~~only extant~~ portrait ~~or~~ miniature ~~by T.C.Liebers,~~ that pictures her, as ~~a little~~ later than she was ~~about~~ this time, presents only the head and shoulders. For a Quaker she must have appeared to Brown ~~was a slightly~~ singularly dressed girl of a type faintly suggestive of Jewish ancestry. In Arthur Mervyn we shall see that he had a full appreciation of the type. ~~Brown was particularly impressed by~~ the beauty of ~~a Jewess~~. Save for a well developed bust no one of ~~the~~ her features ~~of Liebers'~~ ~~painting~~ can be called beautiful; in fact her head and shoulders had not even a part of the superlative ~~physical~~ beauty of such a woman as Lillian Russell.

In our study of 1788 we have seen Wilkins presenting himself as involved in a love affair with an Arabella. ~~Later we shall be able, in~~ His Trifles essays II and IX, which we shall later summarize, ~~to~~ identify this same Arabella with an Adelaide who had quarrelled ~~recalled the Arabian and the timbrel~~ with some Charles. Is it too much to conclude that Arabella and ~~Not Arabella~~ Adelaide was Dolly Payne and Charles was our author? Charles by T.C. Liebers

1 The quasi-historical play by Nirdlinger, the First Lady of the Land Boston 1914 presents Mrs. Todd as the key to the ~~enigma of the~~ Burr-Hamilton duel and the selection of Madison as Secretary of State. Mrs. Todd and Wilkins were subscribers to Smith's American Poems Litchfield (1793).

Wilkins and Dolly Payne in due course of time became ~~very~~ intimate. When her first husband Todd had died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 Wilkins was the one to ~~come forward and~~ help her disentangle her husband's legal affairs. He was fitted for the task ~~by the fact~~ in that he had first studied law in Todd's office. That he was particularly intimate with her may be seen in the fact that he was the one to whom she appealed for advice when she thought of marrying James Madison. Wilkins wrote his favorable letter to her 22 August 1794 from Brown's home 119 South Second street.[1] One of its details that has some importance for us is that he calls her Julia, a pet name derived from ~~the sequel to~~ Rousseau's Heloïse. Brown in his 16 May 1792 letter with his customary picturesque exaggeration said Wilkins resembled Edouard Bouraton from that work.

After Brown's D.P. poem with its declaration of his love we have the poem To Estrina which also fits ~~the detail of~~ Dolly Payne's ~~life~~ in that it was her father who selected Todd for her husband.[2] The second poem which shows that all Brown's hopes

1 Quoted in full, A.J. Clark: Life and Letters of Dolly Madison, Washington 1914, pp. 22-24.
2 Memoirs and Letters of Dolly Madison Boston 1887, p. 10.

add note on La Estrina *

4.22 C

The origin of the name has not been found.
* The Spanish word estrena if applied might mean first-born but

were shattered may be found in the same manuscript book in which we found the D.P. poem. It is introduced as follows by Brown's father:

> "If the following was not entirely his own, he however corrected it for he requested me to transcribe it fair, before he sent it to the printer. & I did so."

At the end he adds:

> "Many more of his pieces I have omitted"

which seems to indicate that Elijah Brown was not doubtful of its being his son's composition. In fact there is no cause to doubt it. The poem reads:

"To Estrina.

To thee Estrina, empress of my heart
Ere far from hence my wand'ring footsteps part
Deprest by fortune, rent with bitterest woe
The last sad accents of my sorrows flow.
Tho' now nor life, tranquillity or joy
My words can ask for, or my lines destroy,
Yet as to thee, than all on earth more dear,
They bear the farewell of a heart sincere.
Not with a breast where no distraction strays
My spirit dictates, and my hand obeys;
For all the warm affection of my heart,
With you appear, and as you go depart,
To you tends each sensation of my soul;
True as the needle trembles to the pole.
Ten times an hour my thoughts review the days,
Which gave your beauties to my eager gaze
As oft the impressions which delighted fame,
Made on my heart; united with your name,
E're first revealed you blest my ravish'd eyes
Come to my soul, and in my memory rise.
I call to mind what sweet sensations thrilled
Thro' all my frame, what joy, my bosom fill'd

Mid the dim gloom where hush'd each whispering voice,
I heard the soft sweet accents of your voice.
Oft I review the hours, in thought beguil'd,
With you employ'd when all creation smil'd
The social evenings, whose too swift career
Converse and books combin'd to render dear.
The pleasant walks, when spring awoke the day,
When beauty triumph'd & the world was gay,
O then array'd in heav'ly beauty bright,
You looked all lovely to raptur'd sight.
Visions of night, and images of day
Bade o'er my soul your lov'd idea stray,
And ev'ry hour that fancy made you mine
Was taught with some resplendant bliss to shine.
Deceitful visions that still awake the sigh
Still fill with tears the melancholy eye,
With pale and livid agues shake my frame
And fire my bosom with a fever's flame.
  We should have liv'd the happiest pair on earth
Form'd for each other, nature gave us birth;
And minds, and manners, taste & fortune strove
Alike in each to warm with mutual love.
What joys, what raptures, what transporting hours
Blest in our love, Estrina had been ours!
The rolling sun, had run his annual course,
And seen, return'd their undiminished force,
Month after month, had lightly passed away
Not known one instant, unrejoicing stray.
Days in succession had delight'd view'd,
With love unceasing, all our Joys renewed.
And ev'ry hour with feathery foot that hies,
And winged moment; that so swiftly flies.
Laden with bliss, and ecstacy had mov'd,
And to the admiring world our wond'rous passion prov'd,
But now dark clouds these prospects over cast,
Their beauties shrink from sorrow's blighting blast,
With Lion rage, destruction treads the green,
And desolation hovers o'er the scene;
That bright succession of supernal joys,
One dire misfortune instantly destroys:
And from the height of beatific bliss,
Hurls me to sorrow's terrible abyss.
  I fondly thought domestic joys to prove,
The sweets of filial and connubial love,
And fancy open'd on my ravish'd view
A fairy land of pleasures always new.
But with stern eye, and desolating hand,
Fell disappointment waves her frigid wand.
Before its powers my promis'd joys decay,
And expectations transports flit away.

See thee coldly unrelenting led
Drawn like a victim to the marriage bed,
Of one to whom fair nature ne'er design'd;
Or gen'rous passion thou should'st e'er be join'd.
To thee unlike--who feels no genial heat
Dilate his heart, and in his pulses beat.

1 If her mind when young was at all like that of 1848 when she wrote the verses on Lafayette (sold 4 May 1927 at the Anderson Galleries New York, catalogue #2166 item #138) she might have made Brown a poet.

Whose soul alike unmov'd by joys,or woes,
One dull unvarying temper only knows,
And when,nor taste nor genius,save in dress
And in mechanic arts have deign'd to bless,
Coldly he takes thee to his languid arms
With face phlegmatic,gazes on thy charms.
Who all my soul with frantic passion fill
Whose charms my breast with Joys tumultuous thrill,
Whose love to heaven might teach my soul to aspire
Warmed with the influence of celestial fire.
O call to mind the energies of speech,
Which lively passion taught my voice to reach,
The change of feature gesture and of air,
By hope supported,or deprest by care.
And call to mind that dire,that fatal day,
Which rent my hopes of happiness away;
When your cool manner,and your face sedate,
To my strict searching eyes proclaim'd my fate.
And for a time (both speech and motion fled,)
I sat,a living image of the dead.
Call them to mind,and let your mem'ry trace,
With care minute the history of his face.
His words and actions,whose more happy lot,
Gives him your love,my passion,truth forgot.
And own no strong emotion have you seen,
No transcient glow of passion intervene.
Instant of joy,or momentary grief,
To give the eternal sameness some relief,
But in their place one fixed unchanging look
Has from the first his features ne'er forsook.
Save for some loud unmeaning burst of mirth,
Short as the trifling cause which gave it birth.
His, are the empty honors of a name
Which chance,not merit,has awak'd to fame.
A taller person,a more perfect health,
Productive business,and profuser wealth.
Are these,O woman! these the glorious fires,
And these the altars,where at once expires,
Each great emotion,ev'ry thought refin'd,
The glow of genius,energy of mind,
And wondrous pow'rs,which winged thy soul to rise,
And mix in kindred fervor with the skies!
Must ev'ry nobler passion of the heart,
Perish uprooted by degenerate art?
And love the heav'n born souls peculiar Fire,
At Mammon's shrine,a sacrifice expire.
Go--in the dull and tasteless round of life,
You'l lead with him,who soon shall call you wife.
In empty show,a solace seek to prove,
For the lost raptures of a genuine love.
When comes the day,as sure the day must come,
For life that takes you from your parent home,
When to a husband's unresisted claim
You yield the honors of your virgin name
You shall be led with an untrembling hand
To where your friends & priest uniting stand.
From lips which never glow'd,a cold faint kiss,
Shall be your welcome to connubial bliss,
The pomp of servants,carriages and show,

The charms and fopperies that from fashion flow,
This shall be yours,and all the bliss that lies
In place,in riches,or from rank can rise.
But my Estrina,lovely woman say
Where do the hours of fond endearment stray.
Where are the days devoted to your will,
The times your converse,yours alone can fill?
Seasons with you employ'd to search the lore
Of ancient sages,and the times of yore?
Seasons with you directed to the care
Of smiling offspring happily to rear;
To form their manners,and their minds improve
In all the modes of science and of love?
You know them not,a staid punctilious form
A strict attention ne'er with feeling warm.
Sollicitude,which tenderness forgot
In deeds appear,not occupies the thought.
And low submission,where not ease,nor grace,
Nor manly dignity retain a place.
An empty converse,where no science shines,
Nor wit enchants,or elegance refines.
These are the precious substitutes you gain,
For faith sincere and love's delightsome reign
Nor look for confidence that heart so cold
A secret,never to another told.
Of friendship ne'er conceiv'd,for self it feels,
And to its self alone its thoughts reveals.
I had receiv'd you,with transporting joy,
Of grief our days had witness'd no alloy,
One course alone had seen the minutes move,
Of fond endearment,confidence and love.
Where do I run? Ah!whither am I borne,
That love you own not,nay,you laugh to scorn;
Which can with ecstacy the breast distend,
Or with distracting woe,the Bosom rend.
Blest with success which bids the man excell
Unblest,transfixes with the pains of hell.
Or leaves condemn'd a life of woe to bear,
Lost to the world the victims of despair.
Wretch that I am,Ah! who do I address,
One that disdains my endless Truth to bless.
Who disbelieves that truth,that lover contemns
With cold unfeeling heart as feign'd condemns.
Pierced as I am,and hopeless of a cure
The very sorrows I,for her endure.
Insensate woman,is her bosom stone,
All virtue,passion,all sensation gone?
Feels not her heart? or feeling shrinks with shame
That love to acknowledge,which it dares disclaim?
O say Estrina,where has nature fled?
Thy youth,thy warmth,thy passion--are they dead?
Or yet with wicked, mean and cursed art,
Or dar'st thou stifle nature in the heart.
Root out the best affections of the soul,
For wealth to flaunt,& influence to control?
And with unblushing impudence deny,
Love's pow'r and being with an impious lie.
Beneath affection's mask,to hide a heart,

Which mad for Riches feigns a lover's part?
Each way presents to my distracted brain,
A dark enigma which I can't explain.
Can there to such a face so fair be join'd
A weak unthinking,and unfeeling mind?
A face,which looks so destitute of art,
Can it conceal a dark insidious heart?
And Judas like the lips with kindness glow
While the soul meditates the secret blow.
  Is this Estrina,this the peerless maid
Whose love my bosom fir'd,my bosom sway'd?
O let me bless the fortunate Decree
Which set my spirit from her bondage Free.
Yes,--let her go,and glorying in her shame
Of love connubial gain the idle name.
And of the idol of the heart posesst,
Revel in wealth,and fancy she is blest,
Let pomp,distinction,equipage and show,
Raise her self flatter'd o'er the world below,
A while the vain delusions to enjoy,
Which truth shall chase,possession shall destroy.
As the light melts,which dim the morning sky
Before the sun's returning radiance fly.
So shall they pass,and not desir'd return
Banish the follies,they shall leave to mourn,
Deceitful passion,which my soul ensnares,
Which blasts my hopes,my peace,my life impairs.
Bear me to where thy frenzy wills to bear
But shield from woe,from Estrina spare!
For tho' destruction o'er me lift his arm
Her love inspires me,and her beauty's charm
I view her form,I gaze upon her face
Truth,virtue,honor,there I trace.
Heaven bids unequall'd charms around her move
Friends,country,Glory,what are you to love.
  Come then thou dark and damned fiend despair
With dire distraction all my bosom tear.
O bid the tears of agony to roll,
And with spasmodic anguish rack the soul.
Come with thy frantic furious demon train,
Bear me to some drear cave,or darksome glen.
Where ravens craok,ghosts yell,and serpents hiss,
And Hell seems open'd in the dread abyss.
There join'd with thee,forever let us dwell
And wait that passion which I cannot quell.
But fly Estrina,nor with ruffian force,
Presume to touch her bosom with remorse.
  O beautious woman! who while life shall last
(So in the future,as in all the past,)
Unchanged shall view,my constant love remain
Farewell--and endless pleasure be thy gain.
I go from happiness,from comfort hurl'd,
To plunge me in the dark tempestuous world;
Sadly to mingle with the motley throng

Borne wildly by the eddying waves along,
By sorrows woes and agonies distrest,
With those I loathe, to places I detest.
With forc'd sollicitude the gain to woo
My heart contemns, my fate commands pursue.
I leave that happy mean, that peaceful way
Where on thro' life, my feet would wish to stray.
To sink forgotten in the drear retreat,
Where bleak chill poverty, has fix'd her seat;
Or else to rise with wealth opprest & cloy'd,
Wealth tasteless, empty hated unenjoy'd.
Yes, unenjoy'd since without you no ray,
Of cheering joy, shall gild my gloomy day.
But be you happy, may your husband prove
More than your hope, more worthy of your love,
O, may your children, rich in ev'ry grace,
Catch the bright features of their mother's face.
And live adorn'd with all that can engage,
Joy of your youth, and solace of your age
While I shall sink untimely to the grave,
No eye to pity, outstretch'd arm to save.
Lost to ennobling praises of the good
Nor in my offspring happily renew'd;
In life afflicted desolate unpriz'd
In Death unknown neglected and despised."

The picture of the husband ~~is clear enough to~~ identify him as John Todd — "pitiful and despicable Tod" Brown calls him in his 19 May 1792 letter.[1] That Todd was wealthy is undoubted and why Brown did not ~~make a stronger case by~~ detailing his ideas of the lawyer ~~as a man~~ is ~~not known~~. The verses otherwise very clearly echo the courtship by John Todd in 1789. Estrina's sudden change of heart ~~is easily~~ may be explained by the fact that she took Todd at the request of her father. ~~Brown~~ He declares he did not desire to cause her any pain but ~~the~~ publication of the poem, if seen by her, could not ~~help but bring blushes to her cheeks~~ fail to have hurt her. Brown's Estrina, Wilkins' Arabella, their Adelaide and Julia, was married to Todd 7 January 1790.[2]

1 In 1793 their home was at 51 South Fourth street but Dolly and the two children went ~~sent~~ to Gray's Ferry where the ~~younger~~ died of the yellow fever. Dolly had the disease and recovered. The surviving child was John Payne Todd.

2 Usually erroneously given as the 28th.

Brown was no ordinary lover. With emotions as strong as we have just seen it is not surprising the lady in question preferred a husband of a milder disposition. So far as Brown was concerned the proper mate for him was not a creature who would lead him so far into the depths of love and then forsake him for another. Estrina may have been a coquette and Brown may have deceived himself but as an evidence of his sincerity and faithfulness the case leaves him disappointed and melancholy but with untarnished honor. No one need blame Estrina--she merely exercised the privilege lovely woman has always had.

So far as we have been able to discover this verse did not appear in print though it may as his father suggests have been sent to the printer. The printer probably sent it back.

As verse it deserves no extensive comment other than to call attention to the same favorite iambic pentameter and recommend some of its excellent lines, the same criticism applying here as we have seen in former cases and shall see in later ones. Besides Pope's influence in the choice of metre and stanza it shows that Brown's couplets could at times rise well above mediocrity.

To us the biographic interest of the Estrina poem is that Brown's father was doing the copying for him--an important fact--for it implies that any unpleasantness that may have existed had been at most only temporary. Evidently the family was coming to appreciate the boy's ability not only to select his own career but also to write with no ordinary power.

a little later in

~~As will be seen when we come to~~ his confidences with Bringhurst we shall find Brown saying ~~he says~~ that before this time he had been married and his wife had died within a month ~~of that event~~. If that is true and we have positive reason for it would be no ~~cause to~~ doubt ~~we have~~ a hitherto unknown explanation the reason for ~~his~~ melancholy and its resultant self-condemnation which possessed him at this time. It is ~~possible that~~ clear the probable marriage was secret, at least that is the only possible explanation ~~would explain~~ his idea that in telling ~~of~~ it he was reposing the greatest confidence in Bringhurst; ~~it would also explain his expression about his welcome at the old~~ ~~the diary record~~

Certainly later he says the family did not know of it; at least he thought they did not - which may have been mere self-deception.

~~home when his father was away~~. ~~His~~ The marriage and its disaster would ~~also~~ of course account for his absence from home. ~~though it is only too probable that he had been living with Wilcocks while studying law in the office.~~ In the Rhapsodist there we may have a touch of autobiography in his speaking of his family and, ~~in chapter XXXII of~~ in chapter XXXII of Arthur Mervyn, ~~we would have another autobiographical touch~~ in the hope of the hero for a farm for himself and Eliza. Further hints of such a [redacted] venture may be found in the letter dated 30 May 1792 where the rural retirement, spoken of in the last paragraph and then purposely left incomplete for a more favorable opportunity, suggests the idea of his having ~~when first married~~ gone to live on a farm in Passyunk--possibly the farm rented by his brothers--where he wrote Julius and found as related in the 19 May 1792 letter the

> "window which overlooks the meeting streams of Delaware and Schuylkill and from which the eye might[1] traverse the former river as far as Red Bank and Billingsport."

1 What there was to obstruct the view between League and Red Bank islands is not clear.

There are several instances where people with tainted minds and imaginations may find hints that might lead some to believe his life was not as upright as it might have been—but there is no certainty about his conduct at this time. That he had some of the sensual in his nature,is undoubtedly true,as it is of all human beings of artistic temperament. The thought of some that he was influenced by the ideas of Godwin and the French revolutionists shows an astounding ignorance of Brown and Godwin as well as the French. Certain verses and some of the situations in his works of fiction would seem to suggest this,but it is very doubtful if we have any right at all to think an author's fictions are founded on experience. His wide use of the words virtue,passion, love,and other expressions that were used freely then but to-day have only a single connotation confuses the matter for any superficial student and makes it impossible,without further evidence, to come to a decision on the matter. All mature persons know well how some youths at a certain age have a fondness for bragging of deeds that will startle their comrades but that have never had any

other sphere of action than the narrator's growing fancy. Brown was a boy of that stamp at the time of his adolescence.

Superficial students such as Allen and Dunlap have been confused by some such details as they found in Brown's life and work. In the case of Allen it is perhaps excusable on the ground of his age (39) but in the case of Dunlap it is not for he was not only old enough (49) to have known better but he was actively connected with two of the arts the followers of which are generally and unjustly treated to the most vulgar slander of all. Neither one thought of the matter long enough or had sufficient knowledge of humanity and its ways to see the wisdom of making clear the meaning of Brown's explanation of his virtuous honesty. The passage referred to is given by Allen[1] and retained by Dunlap and reads:

1 P.49.

It has been already remarked, that he inherited from nature a frail, delicate, and a sickly constitution; a constitution which incapacitated him from athletic exercise. In another letter to one of his correspondents, he congratulates himself on this infirmity. He is by the benevolence of nature rendered in a manner an exile from many of the temptations that infest the minds of ardent youth. Possessing such a constitutional infirmity, he had nothing to apprehend from those enticements which usually sway the minds of young men. He had by nature been devoted to contemplation. Whatever his wishes might have been, his benevolent destiny had prevented him from running into the frivolities of youth. He ascribes to this cause his love of letters and his predominant anxiety to excel in whatever was a glorious subject of competition. Had he been furnished with the nerves and muscles of his comrades, it was very far from being impossible that he might have relinquished intellectual pleasures. Nature had benevolently rendered him incapable of encountering such severe trials.

From hence a question arose whether it was virtue in him to refrain from those pleasures for which he felt no appetite to indulge. He gravely dismisses the argument with his opinion that there was not. Far from repining, however, he earnestly prays that he may never be allowed a constitution sufficient to enable him to stand a trial so severe; that if his virtue must be placed under the patronage of nature, he may never be deserted by his guardian; that his [illegible] imbecility may prevent his falling a victim to those temptations which he has not virtue enough to avoid.

All that is not only highly exaggerated but it is decidedly fanciful. Had it been even partially true that Brown lacked moral stamina it is impossible that he would have lived the life which we shall in due course of time see that he did live. It is true that at this time he was on friendly terms with Wilkins,whom he pictures as being licentious;but Wilkins was another of those youthful braggarts of which we have spoken and so far as we know--and the matter has been closely searched--had no vices. Brown's parents could hardly be expected to approve of Wilkins as an intimate of their son's when shocking exaggerations were made concerning his character. When studying law Brown roomed with Wilkins. By that he probably shocked his parents more than ever. Possibly his first marriage as confessed to Bringhurst to be given later was to a woman not of the Quakers. That would intelligently explain his estrangement and his idea that he was disowned by the Friends;just as his second marriage to a Presbyterian will be seen to have produced the same result.

The truth about Wilkins is that he was a very exceptional young man and was,notwithstanding any possible bad habits,a very stimul-

ating mind for Brown. His life and his achievements in law, ~~are sufficient of a recommendation and~~ justly compensate for any youthful bragga-docio in love affairs.

~~It is from the memoir by Bringhurst we learn~~ Wilkins was not only a writer of both verse and prose but imitating Brown ~~and~~ published some of his moral essays under the title of the Columbian Observer in Matthew Carey's American Museum for 1791.[2] These essays and others later to be noticed ~~presently~~ show the admirable quality of mind of their author and have many important points of contact with Brown. Their subjects run the range of Brown's interests, echo many of the details which may be found in our author's life and may have been suggested ~~to Wilkins~~ by ~~Brown~~ him. This group may be summarized as follows: (because certainly Brown influenced several of his friends to publish their literary efforts.)

~~1 Pp. 19 and 29.~~

2 In the February number acknowledgments "B.C. is inadmissable" may be a refusal of Brown's.

WILKINS' COLUMBIAN OBSERVER ESSAYS

I signed Simon Spectacles1 (February 1791, Vol.IX, pp.73-4) "To catch the living manners as they rise". The author is to be assisted by aids de camp-(?) Brown, Bringhurst and other club members.

II signed S.S. (Simon Spectacles) (February 1791, Vol. IX, pp.74-77) A Modern Improvement. Satire on delicate subjects--Wilkins' braggadocio.

III signed X (February 1791, Vol.IX, pp.77-79) Great good thoughts on great good breeding. Impudence necessary to prosper. Satire on broken promises, lack of conscience, etc. Nincum Littlebrains dealer cent per cents--a fine slap and better left unidentified.

IV by L.M. from Boston (March 1791, Vol.IX, pp.138-40) An interesting story (table of contents) affecting story (heading) of seduction--to illustrate ideas suggested in II.

V (March 1791, Vol.IX, pp.140-43) Begin where your fathers began. Goes directly at fashionable luxury. Recommends the plough as the firmest foundation. Wilkins' morals presented as absolutely sound.

VI signed W. (April 1791, Vol.IX, pp.194-5) Sound ideas of future life and earth as a training for the soul. "The man of passion is the man of woe"--example Lorenzo. Except for loss of parents and death Lorenzo may have been intended as a picture of Brown.

VII signed Z. (April 1791, Vol.IX, pp.195-8) Comparison of ancient and modern ladies. Picture of my aunt, Maria Cordelia Fardingale. Slap at fashion as in V.

VIII signed N. (May 1791, Vol.IX, pp.246-7) On painting the face. Fine article with an ending that should make Wilkins famous.

IX signed X.Y. (May 1791, Vol.IX, pp.247-8) On poetry. Panegyric--short and effective even though some of the poets mentioned have not attained immortal fame.

X R.W. sends letter to Simon Spectacles (June 1791, Vol.IX, pp.297-9) Essay on works of imagination. Poet and novelist compared. Richardson and Homer. Questions good morals of Clarissa. Grandison more moral. Pamela tame and dead. Homer still read. Richardson not.

XI Z.K. to Simon Spectacles (June 1791, Vol.IX, pp. 299-300) On taciturnity. Loquacity and taciturnity compared--latter (Brown) recommended. Friend with black eyes and bruises. Reference to the bar and politics.

Cf. Rhapsodist II where Brown is an "enemy to conversation"

2 To Correspondents "The sixth number of the Columbian Observer is the production of a young gentleman, a member of the Franklinian society, in which it was read."

1 Possibly Brown's discovery of his myopism ~~may have~~ had been ~~found~~ made with Wilkins' spectacles!

XII A.B.C.D. of Lancaster.1 (June 1791,Vol.IX,pp. 300-2) On garrulity and impertinence. Echo of III but influenced by XI. Mr.B. and party of novel readers may be Brown's circle. Mr.Loquens might be satirical of Brown. Reference to lawyers as too loquacious. Cf. ~~Rhapsodist II where Brown says he is an "enemy to conversation".~~ XI.

XIII Katy Brittletemper to Mr.Spectacles. (July 1791, Vol.X,pp.18-20) Domestic difficulties. Philosophical and material mortals who like pain as provocative of virtue=Brown.

XIV Honorus to Spectacles. (August 1791,Vol.X,pp. 70-2) Human nature. Honorus=Wilkins (?) Mr. Ruffle. Mr.Cutcapers.

XV A ploughman to Mr.Spectacles. (October 1791, Vol.X,pp.163-4) Sovereignty of the people. Reference to laws, ~~and their sovereignty.~~

XVI (November 1791,Vol.X,pp.213-14) Cursory reflections on superstition and idolatry. Argument for sound religion.

XVII Alexis to Mr.Observer. (December 1791,Vol.X, pp.264-5) History of Alexis;or the gentleman born. Possibly a colored account of Wilkins' own life. If so Mitio=Brown.[2] (Latin, mild)

1 Acknowledged as received to correspondents in May number.
2 If Mitio is Brown the article in the Literary Magazine Vol. VIII,p.67 signed W.(Wilkins) is a picture of our author, as it well might be.

~~signed William W.W.—a very good way of designating William Wood~~

~~Wilkins. They may be summarized thus:~~

WILKINS' TRIFLES ESSAYS

Trifles I signed W. (7 November 1792) on bank Scrip is a discussion between Honestus and Callidus (Wilkins?) The language of the former is Brown's. In one paragraph he is represented as single in another as married.

Trifles II signed I. (14 November) on Contradiction is between Charles (Brown?) and the writer, concerning Adelaide beloved by the former. The language and actions of Charles are Brown's. Adelaide recalls Estrina to us.

Trifles III signed L. (21 November) on Genius is probably Wilkins' method of calling Brown's attention to the faults of his character.

Trifles IV signed L. (5 December) an Essay on the Trial by Jury may be an answer to Brown's objections but at least is a very creditable piece of work and might even to-day be read ~~by lawyers~~

with profit, especially by lawyers.

Trifles V signed I.(12 December) Remarks upon Epic Poetry presents some extracts from the Turkeyad an epic of a war between turkeys and cats. It is represented as being by a friend but probably is a satirical slap of Wilkins at Barlow and Dwight.

Trifles VI signed A.(19 December) Proem to an Epic Poem is the opening of the Turkeyad as promised in V. The picture of the wife and the farm life may be a slap at Brown's dreams, though the name of Joe may make it refer to Bringhurst.

Trifles VII signed M.(26 December) with no title may be Wilkins' advice to Brown. The Walk quoted is Brownish and resembles his rambles in the State House park.

Trifles VIII not signed (2 January 1793) Epic Poetry in the Suds; a Tale is an excellent piece of satire aimed at all would-be poets--Brown included.

Trifles IX signed W. (9 January) On Marriage by Adelaide, who had quarrelled with Charles in II, contains a hint for Brown not to make personal his use of the Wilkins story which, years later became the foundation of Clara Howard.

Trifles X signed W.(23 January--the 16 January number not containing any of Wilkins' essays) On the profession of the law through the words of Albert presents the arguments which were probably brought to bear on Brown when he thought of renouncing the profession. It has ~~an echo of Wilkins' service for Dolly Madison, the lawyer Todd's widow, and~~ a faint hint of the sufferings of the father, as later pictured, in Clara Howard.

~~Probably~~ The extent of any wickedness of Brown's at this time was to be found in the fact that when he had become intimate with Wilkins he acquired the habit of staying away from church, he had no formal religious services in the house, he ~~tried~~ experimented with ~~learned to like~~ an occasional glass of liquor, he was attracted by the glamor of the theatre and he actually had been seen with a cigar in his mouth puffing away to his heart's content. To any Quakers of the old school he must have appeared to be ~~going straight to hell~~.

~~Because~~ Self-condemnation is natural to an ~~imaginative~~ youth of his ~~age~~ and ~~it explairs his attitude of reserve toward his parents and~~

extreme sensibility and vivid imagination.

rushing headlong ~~hastily~~ down the ~~precipitative~~ path to eternal damnation.

~~friends~~. When we have seen how all during his life he consistently fabled and exaggerated it is easy to understand how he manufactured his self-condemnation out of trivial affairs. That he thought it serious enough to warrant his considering the idea of suicide more than once does not indicate that it was not ~~entirely~~ less imaginary; it merely shows the force of his imagination. So far as we know, and as we shall see actually in operation, his consideration of suicide was absolute guarantee that it would not be committed ~~just as the belief of a person that he is insane is the guarantee of his sanity~~.

Be the truth what it may the important points ~~for us~~ are that though he would die rather than change it, he did not approve of his own conduct, he suffered miserably ~~and~~ because every one he respected disapproved his conduct but he thereby proved his sterling virtue. It is simply absurd to believe that either by nature or by will he lacked a sound moral character.

Disappointed in love and dissatisfied with conditions in Philadelphia Brown followed the path that he afterwards pictured his love-lorn heroes following in Jane Talbot and Clara Howard: his health and his heart made the choice and he picked up a few effects and wandered away. ~~off for a~~

~~change of mind and place~~. Where he got the means to do so is not known--perhaps his father supplied it--perhaps one of his brothers in business gave him money, as the tradition goes. Allowance, income or earnings--no matter!

Miller, who surely should have known, says:[1]

> "Educated for the Bar, but wholly averse to its public conflicts--of a diffident and gentle nature, and deeply enamoured of the Muses--he relinquished forensic practise, to the great disappointment of his friends. Dissatisfied with himself, and with gloomy prospects, but to escape importunities and reproaches, he rambled away from home, and, without, apparently, any definite object, visited New York."

It is very doubtful if he visited New York as early as this and the statement may be due to Miller's memory which allowed him to put together the abandonment of law and ~~the~~ his early acquaintance with Brown at New York. So far as we know the two were in time distinct and separated by several years.

If the reference ~~to be seen presented~~ in the Rhapsodist is accurately autobiographic it may be thought that he actually went so far as the banks of the Ohio, ~~just~~ as later he pictures his heroes ~~of Jno. Talbot and Clara Howard~~ to have done; but we have nothing more to confirm the suggestion that he travelled so far into the wilderness; though he may have. We can also surmise that he went to live among the Indians.

1 Life of Samuel Miller, Philadelphia 1861, pp.114-15.

add note on Col. Mag. 432 B

December number,

1 ~~Later~~ Wilkins contributed a poem "To Mira" to the ~~same periodical~~ ~~that Brown did, the Columbian Magazine for 1789~~, p. 745. It was dated 24 November from Philadelphia. ~~1811, 1.334.~~ The name could have come from Goldsmith's madrigal.

With our author in such a mental condition it is not surprising to find that he left Philadelphia and sought a change of mind and people--it was the natural thing to do under the circumstances and deserves no other comment. When we find Brown not only made the change but at the same time changed his literary work it is remarkably important. We have seen that much of his suffering had been endured under the belief that he was to be a poet. When,metaphorically speaking,he rode his sensibility hobby to the verge of suicide,when he threw his law books out of the window,he also gave up his poetical ambition taking the first step in his desertion of the muse. So it came about that the change he made started him on his road to fame as a writer of prose.

It was during 1789 that he made his first public appearance as a prose author with the Rhapsodist essays which appeared in a well-established periodical the Columbian Magazine,or Monthly Miscellany published at Philadelphia by James Trenchard and edited by Alexander J. Dallas. Just when the work was written is not known but its four instalments appeared in the numbers for August,September,October and November.

For those who like that sort of amusement the years 1790 and 1791, for which no authentic information of biographical importance has come to us, are very happy fields of conjecture. They supply enough time for almost anything to be done by Brown but in them we cannot surmise a trip to England, ~~which would~~ merely to lend probability to the fictitious dating of certain letters which we are soon to have, for the simple reason that Brown says distinctly in the Jaunt to Rockaway[1] that he had never seen the ocean until seven years previous--1796. We do know that during ~~that time~~ 1790 and 1791 Brown was turning from ~~the~~ poetic ~~mube~~ attempts to writing prose so that any information ever found will be of paramount interest in a literary way. But what he wrote and where it was published, if published, we know not. Perhaps some day evidence will be found to show he was the author of some of the Drone essays of the New York Magazine and other prose and possibly some verse of Carey's American Museum.

There is no doubt the "Society for the Attainment of Useful Knowledge", which was the offshoot of the Belles Lettres Club ~~kept on the even tenor of its way~~ continued through these years. Wilkins, ~~according to the Bringhurst memoirs,~~ was admitted to membership on the 18th. of June 1790. He and Bringhurst remained Brown's closest friends.

1 Dunlap, Vol.I, p.63 ff. ~~2 P.U.S.~~

The 1790 census (~~as~~ reprinted ~~by the Government at~~ Washington ~~in~~ 1908) gives Elijah Brown's residence as Moyamensing and Passyunk Township. His family consisted of two males sixteen years of age and over, one under sixteen, three females, no slaves. Elijah senior and Elijah junior may have been the two listed, Armitt could have been the one under sixteen, and Brown's mother, his sister Elizabeth, and a servant could have completed the listing. In the same work some Charles Brown lived alone in the Northern Liberties of Philadelphia but that he was our author is not certain. It appears remarkable that in his father's home there were not three males sixteen years of age and over. If Brown lived at home Elijah junior did not. At the present time it is impossible to decide where our author was during these years~~, a separate home is possible, for his father recognised his early maturity and permitted him a man's independence. Brown at that time was in precisely the mood to try such a scheme of living~~. The 1791 city directory gives Elijah Brown's residence as 159 Vine street[1] so that it is ~~probable~~ possible our author was trying another "Bachelor's Hall" in one of his father's pieces of real-estate, the same as he had done with Wilcocks when he was studying law in Wilcock's Office.

1 This may be the same house as occupied from 1757-60 by Thomas Brown. Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Philadelphia 1892, Vol.XVI, p.237. It was burned in the 9 July 1850 fire.